TEACHING TIP

ANYTUNE SLOWS DOWN SOUND TRACKS FOR LANGUAGE PRACTICE

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INTRODUCTION

Anytune[TM], a slow-downer app designed for musicians and singers, allows you to adjust the tempo of a music track without changing the pitch. Learning to speak a new language fluently is like learning music. When a phrase, dialog, story, or speech is played through Anytune, a learner can slow it down and practice it easily. Anytune loads all songs in your iTunes library; then you pick a track to practice. Within the track, you can set A and B points around difficult phrases to create a loop that plays at a percentage of the original tempo. The loop automatically restarts and plays from A to B so that you can practice the phrase again and again. The Step-it-up Trainer function repeats a section, incrementally increasing the speed from 50% to 100% in ten repetitions. The tempo and number of repetitions can be adjusted to your liking. These features allow you, as a teacher, to tailor the way you present a recorded model to your students. Students using Anytune can use these controls independently to build pronunciation accuracy, speed, rhythm, expression, and fluency. I have no connection with Anytune developers, but I do find this 5-star music practice app useful for personal use as well as for my language learning students. This article will explain how to use a selection of its features that are especially useful for language learners.

Download and install the app

Anytune[1] is available for Mac OS and iOS devices (iPad/iPod/iPhone); purchase it from Apple iTunes App Store. I use the free version of Anytune for iPhone and iPad; a student of mine prefers Anytune for Mac, which is available for purchase from the Mac App Store. From the free app, you can make in-app purchases for additional features. At the time of this writing, the Anytunes.us website states that versions for Windows OS and Android are coming.

Import sound files

First, make sure that all of your desired language sound files (AKA "songs") have been imported into the iTunes library on your Mac or Windows computer or iCloud. You may want to put these into a playlist separate from your real music.

Second, sync your iPad[2] to your iTunes library, making sure that your new playlist, if you created one, is check-marked. Please note: the audio files must be synced from iTunes; if you create a file on your iPad or download one from the Internet, you must upload it to your iTunes library and then sync it to the Music library on your iPad.

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[1] Anytune, Inc. http://anytune.us
[2] I will herein use iPad to refer to iPhone and iPod as well

Third, import the desired file(s) into the Anytune library from the Music library on your iPad. When you launch Anytune, you'll see a message: "Anytune would like to access Apple Music and your media library." Click OK to allow this. Then "Choose a song"–you'll be able to choose from your whole Music library. To find a song, tap the "<" on iPhone or "Songs" on iPad. Tap the track to import it. You can browse content in your Music library by Songs, Playlists, Artists, and Albums. (Reminder: the "song" audio file must reside in the Music library on your device.)

Play a sound file

When you choose a sound file, Anytune first analyzes it. In the major part of the main view, you will see the sound formation, which can be zoomed by pinching, and a red vertical line designating the position of the playhead.

Tap the triangular ▶ at the bottom of the screen to play the sound; it will play from the beginning to end until and unless you press || to pause it.

Buttons and menu items will glow blue when activated or selected.

Control the tempo

Slowing down the model helps learners practice the pronunciation of sounds as well as the phrasing, rhythm, intonation, and expression. The Tempo control is on the left side of the screen. Tap the – (minus) to slow down the sound tap the + (plus) to speed up the tempo. Changing the tempo in Anytune does not change the pitch. (If you need to change the pitch for music, tap the flat and sharp symbols.) Experiment with different starting tempos–say, 50% or 65%–in addition to the number of attempts at a given tempo before speeding it up.

Create a loop and practice a segment repeatedly

Often it's better to practice short segments of speech, especially ones that are more challenging for the speaker. This is where a loop comes in handy. Listen and find the segment that you'd like (your students) to practice. Press the oval loop between the Tempo control and Pitch control to reveal the Loop controls. Tapping it again returns it to the Tempo controls.

Tap **A** to designate the start of a loop. Tap **B** to designate the end of a loop.

To enable Looping, tap the oval Loop in the bottom left corner. The looped section turns orange.

Once you've created a loop, you can change the practice segment by dragging the **A** and **B** with your finger to different start and stop spots.
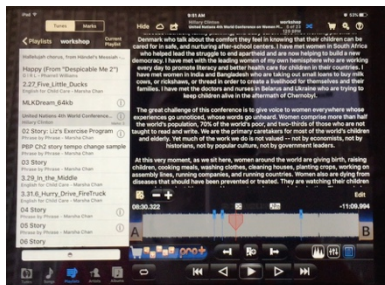
Step it up from slower to normal tempo

Besides controlling the tempo manually, you can have Anytune start slow and step up the tempo each time it plays. Tap the icon that looks like steps with a loop. The Step-it-up Trainer plays your sound file, in its entirety or in a looped segment, at automatically increasing speeds. The default is 50% to 100% in ten steps. Unless it's a manageable utterance, I recommend using the Step-it-up Trainer after a student has practiced difficult segments in loops prior to attempting the entire sentence, paragraph, or longer speech.

Transcript

Instead of reading the text (transcript) of your sound file on paper or in a book, you can read it on the iPad while playing the sound file in Anytune. Tap the Mode selection near the bottom right (the one that looks like text opens the Lyrics window). You can enter the text manually on the iPad in Anytune or prior to syncing from iTunes to your device's Music library. By the way, popular song lyrics and transcripts of public speeches such as Hillary Clinton's plenary speech to the United Nations 4th world Conference on Women "Human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights" shown in this figure are readily available on the web–you can copy and paste them in the Lyrics section of the sound file.

Support

You can watch the video clip I created on this topic here: https://youtu.be/Rx-K3ydYYFk
The developer provides a user guide on its website. Anytune iOS User Guide
http://anytune.us/ios-user-guide/
Video tutorials are available on the Anytune Youtube Channel
https://www.youtube.com/user/AnytuneApp

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Marsha J. Chan is an educational consultant, speaker, owner of a small business, Sunburst Media for Language Learners, and Professor Emerita of English as a Second Language at Mission College, Santa Clara, California. She has presented over 250 professional seminars and workshops at regional, national, and international conferences and at educational institutions in the USA and abroad. She is the recipient of numerous excellence awards. She is co-founder of CATESOL's Teaching of Pronunciation Interest Group (TOP-IG) and former officer of TESOL's Speech Pronunciation and Listening Interest Section (SPLIS). Author of several English language textbooks, she has created thousands of learning objects in print, audio, and video formats. As Pronunciation Doctor, she provides 2000 free instructional videos at http://www.youtube.com/PronunciationDoctor.