2.2 PODCASTS AS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

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Abstract. The article focuses on podcasts as an effective innovative technology for teaching a foreign language, particularly English. In the present research, the author tries to answer the question of how using podcasts will help improve students' foreign language skills as well as their communication and listening comprehension. The subject of the study is authentic and educational podcasts of Great Britain and their use as additional material in English classes. The research paper presents a complex general scientific methodology where the methods of analysis, induction, hypothesis, generalization, explanation, systematization, observation and description are used. The purpose of the study is to analyze the most popular podcasts in English and show their effectiveness during remote teaching of this foreign language. The author comes to the conclusion that using podcasts as an additional material to the English language class allows to significantly improve students' communication skills, which becomes especially important during distance learning. The prospects of the conducted research are to reveal the main criteria by which podcasts should be selected for conducting an educational session, as well as to conduct empirical research on the effectiveness of using podcasts in a student audience.

1. Introduction

Teaching a foreign language involves constant movement forward, mastering new methods and approaches to language learning. Language is a living organism that always develops and evolves, and new ways of learning it develop as well. Speaking about teaching English, we emphasize that new methods and approaches to its study are mainly aimed at improving communication skills.

To be able to speak like a native speaker, to understand all the subtleties of the language, figurative meanings, idioms and phraseological units – this is probably the goal that unites all who learn English. And this, of course, is the deep meaning of mastering not only English, but also any other foreign language, because, as Nelson Mandela once noted, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart."

Thus, the novelty of the presented research lies in the disclosure of new technologies for learning English in the information epoch, namely podcasts. At the same time, the relevance of the chosen topic is determined by the rapid development of podcasts for learning the English language, their variability and accessibility for Internet users.

The purpose of the study is to analyze the most popular podcasts in English and show their effectiveness during remote teaching of this foreign language. In order to achieve the set purpose, the author has to solve the following scientific and research tasks:
- define the concept of podcast in scientific literature;
- analyze the main approaches to studying podcasts;
- identify the most effective educational podcasts in the Internet space;
- prove the high effectiveness of podcasts as important means of improving students' listening skills as well as their general English language proficiency.

2. Research Methodology

The research paper presents a complex general scientific methodology within the framework of which the methods of analysis (of theoretical provisions, definitions, ideas, approaches to interpreting podcasts in scientific literature), induction (the study of separate educational podcasts, which made it possible to draw conclusions about the general features of educational podcasts and their ability to improve students' listening skills), hypothesis (in particular, the research hypothesizes that the use of podcasts in the educational process will help to develop students'communication skills, which is especially important for the processes of student socialization during the period of online education), generalization (of theoretical propositions, scientific ideas, etc.), explanation (of terminology, research views), systematization (of theoretical propositions, identification of logical connections between them), observation (of current educational podcasts), description (of scientific ideas, data, their characteristics) etc. are used.

The findings of the research will be helpful for teachers, students, and everyone who wants to improve their communicative and listening skills in English.

3. Research Outcomes

What is a podcast? The term podcast was for the first time used by a British journalist Ben Hammersley in his article for *The Guardian* in 2004. This neologism combines the terms broadcast and pod, which refers to the Apple device iPod and the widespread practice of listening to music files and audio using portable players [1, p. 26]. Many researchers note the important role of podcasts in the educational process. Obviously, the benefits of using podcasts are clear – podcasts present real language in real situations, i.e. language as it is spoken.

Moreover, teachers may use podcasts to encourage students to talk more, to join in the discussion of the topics and issues raised in a particular episode of the podcast. Researchers Md. Masudul Hasan and Tan Bee Hoon distinguish the following types of podcasts: television podcasts, radio podcasts, classroom podcasts, individual and group podcasts [5, p. 5]. Recently, researchers have paid special attention to educational podcasts in scientific literature. For instance, scholars A. Carle, D. Jaffee and D. Miller investigate podcasts as 'positive learning tools that can have the tangible benefit of bringing teachers and learners together, often across long distances… a means for engaging students in ways that might motivate them in learning content and increasing rapport between teacher and students' [3, p. 377].

Obviously, the issue of podcasts and their use in the educational process is sufficiently covered in scientific sources. However, the question arises: if we use podcasts as one of the methods of learning English, which podcasts will be the most effective? How exactly using podcasts will help improve students' foreign language skills as well as their communication and listening comprehension?

Online podcasts for classroom use: the problem of choice

When it comes to using podcasts in the educational process, the first problem a foreign language teacher faces is the problem of choice. In this study, we tried to group Internet podcasts into separate categories and analyze the advantages and disadvantages of using each of them.

1. Authentic podcasts. As already mentioned, using authentic podcasts when teaching English is one of the best options due to the fact that presenters use live,

spoken language, as it happens in real life. Authentic podcasts come in a wide variety – news, business, science, culture etc., allowing the teacher to choose a podcast according to the topic of the lesson. In our opinion, depending on the genre classification, the most effective UK podcasts for learning English are:

• *Global News.* It is commonly known that one of the best ways to learn a foreign language, the rules of intonation and pronunciation is listening to television news. The *Global News podcast* presents a great variety of episodes concerning current news in Great Britain and the world – from the vicissitudes of life of the royal family to the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The teacher can use this podcast as an additional discussion material in each lesson, which will encourage students to discuss current news and thus develop their communication skills. The use of the mentioned podcast will be especially appropriate when teaching English to students of the faculty of international relations, as it is directly related to their specialization;

• *BBC Inside Science.* The podcast has weekly episodes dedicated to scientific discoveries that are changing our world. In addition to the unquestionable benefit of learning new facts and phenomena of life, listening to a scientific podcast will help students expand their vocabulary of specific scientific terminology, which is often perceived by them as boring, uninteresting and, accordingly, not worth paying attention to.

Thus, in the educational process, the use of a scientific podcast will allow teachers to present difficult material in an interesting and entertaining way, which will help students to learn it more effectively. In our opinion, it would be appropriate to assign students the task of listening to one episode of the podcast per class, and then devote a separate lesson to discussing the latest scientific discoveries.

• *This is History: A Dynasty to Die For.* Considering the possibility of using historical podcasts in teaching practice, we should note that the historical subject, like the above-mentioned scientific one, is one of the most difficult to discuss. However, it depends on the teacher how the students perceive it – as boring or full of fantastic adventures and new discoveries. And not the last role here is played by the role of the podcast host. In *This is History: A Dynasty to Die For* podcast a British historian Dan Jones presents a new perspective on the history of the Middle Ages and their most famous families finding out how it shaped the world we live in today. We recommend using the podcast as part of students' extracurricular work.

• *Best Movie Worst Movie.* Undoubtedly, listening to podcasts about movies is one of the most effective ways to improve a foreign language. This provides many opportunities for discussion and development of students' communication skills. In the *Best Movie Worst Movie* podcast, the hosts Cody Miller, John Campea and Robert Meyer Burnett discuss and debate on different movie genres and categories such as romantic comedies, superhero films, action movies etc.

Therefore, in our opinion, the use of such a podcast in teaching practice is very necessary. If you use a student-centered approach to teaching, we believe this is the podcast that will get the most attention and enthusiasm from students.

2. Educational podcasts. Educational podcasts create a separate group of podcasts which include specially created audio recordings that improve the level of foreign language proficiency, enrich the speaker's vocabulary, improve listening skills and general language competence. As K. Hew rightly notes, 'a growing number of

higher education institutions around the world have incorporated podcasts into both on-campus e-learning modules' [6, p. 340]. There is also an approach to podcasts as 'a means for engaging students in ways that might motivate them in learning content and increasing rapport between teacher and students' [3, p. 378]. We fully support these scientific approaches, and it is worth noting that there is a wide variety of educational podcasts in the UK. We tried to highlight and characterize the best of them.

• *Speak Better English with Harry*. The podcast is designed for advanced English learners. Its episodes present short English lessons with an experienced native English teacher. Special attention is paid towards adjectives for describing different experiences, e.g. travelling, leisure, work, communication verbs, advanced English idioms etc. In our opinion, the podcast will be useful for English language teachers in their daily practice.

• *To Fluency Podcast: English with Jack.* The podcast provides listeners with learning advice and detailed lessons which help to improve their vocabulary so that they are able to understand native speakers. The podcast will be beneficial for students wanting to reach an advanced level of English. Therefore, in our opinion, it is advisable to use it in classes with stronger groups, since the podcast may be too difficult for intermediate students.

• *Learn English Through Listening.* The podcast presents an effective teaching approach that encourages students to learn through listening. The host Hilary Platt publishes two new English audio lessons with full transcripts weekly.

The lessons motivate the students to speak English in ways that are interesting and lead to success. The podcast has all difficulty levels on many topics from recent political events in the UK to philosophical reflections on life and other issues. We believe that the podcast will be useful both for work in the classroom and for distance teaching practice.

• *Simple English News Daily.* Unlike typical news podcasts, this podcast presents daily world news in clear English which will best suit intermediate English learners.

The teachers may use it on a regular basis as an additional material for their lessons.

• *Easy Stories in English.* The podcast's host, Ariel Goodbody, author and language teacher, presents stories adapted to different levels of English, mainly beginner and intermediate. The podcast will be essential for school teachers.

However, we note that university teachers should concentrate on more complex podcasts with a higher level of difficulty as the topics and issues raised in the podcast may seem too easy for university students.

Basically, we believe these are the most effective podcasts that will help improve the general level of English language skills as well as develop students' listening and speaking skills.

Undoubtedly, the list is not exhaustive, and the teacher can select individual podcasts according to the subject of the lesson, whether it is health or fitness, sports, leisure, crime and punishment etc.

3.1 Podcasts in Teaching: Challenges on the Way

Taking into account all the obvious advantages of using educational and authentic podcasts in the educational process, we should note that the use of such a method in teaching a foreign language can be problematic due to many factors, in particular:

• *a student may face the problem of not understanding the content of a podcast, separate words and expressions, idioms, etc.* How can this problem be solved? Firstly, a teacher should select podcasts that correspond to the level of students' English language proficiency, whether it is intermediate, upper- intermediate or advanced. UK podcasts are designed for all language levels, therefore the issue can be resolved. Secondly, podcasts should be discussed in class, where a teacher will randomly explain all unclear words and expressions;

• *a podcast may be uninteresting for a student or have no relation to the topic of the lesson.* The problem can be avoided if, before using a podcast, the teacher conducts a survey among students, wondering what they would be interested in listening to and choosing podcasts that would be relevant to the topic of the lesson.

• *some podcasts last too long,* which leads to a decrease in the level of student concentration, rapid fatigue and lack of interest in using podcasts in the educational process.

In our opinion, the right decision in such a situation would be to choose a shorter podcast or to split a long episode into several sessions in order to maintain the students' concentration and get the maximum benefit from using this educational technology.

3.2 The Hidden Benefits of Podcasting in Education

When considering any educational innovation technology, it is worth comparing its advantages and disadvantages with the real results it represents. Analyzing the advantages of using podcasts as an innovative technology that can and should be actively integrated into the modern practice of teaching a foreign language, we came to the conclusion that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. Using UK podcasts in teaching English to students of the Faculty of International Relations of the National Aviation University, we have seen the following results:

• all groups of students became much more confident in expressing their opinions about the problems raised in the podcasts, actively participating in the discussions, offering their own ways to solve a particular problem outlined in the podcast;

• students who regularly listen to podcasts on various topics have significantly improved their communication skills, expanded their English vocabulary, significantly improved their pronunciation skills;

• the use of podcasts in class also helped to motivate and engage those students who did not show much interest in learning the language.

As the practice of language teaching shows, many students find language learning something difficult and boring. However, the use of non-traditional teaching methods makes it possible to successfully solve this problem: after finding an interesting topic or a series of podcasts, the student 'opens up' by actively getting involved in learning the language, because he understands that the language is not just a set of rules and examples of their use. It is a living system, a living organism that is constantly developing and never stands still;

• another advantage of using podcasts in English lessons is their ease of use during distance learning. Podcasts are readily available on the Internet and can be downloaded or listened to online for free. Podcast episodes can be listened to in class or given for independent study as part of homework and then discussed in class.

4. Conclusions

The results of the study confirm the effectiveness of using innovative technologies for learning English in the information epoch, in particular podcasts. Podcasts come in great variety – authentic and educational, entertaining and informational etc.

A teacher can choose a podcast based on the students' level of English, their tastes and interests. The research proves that using podcasts as an additional material to the English language class allows to significantly improve students' communication skills, which becomes especially important during distance learning. The prospects of the conducted research are to reveal the main criteria by which podcasts should be selected for conducting an educational session, as well as to conduct empirical research on the effectiveness of using podcasts in a student audience.

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