

UDC: 37.016:811.111:004

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24195/2414-4665-2018-2-21>

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## USING PODCASTS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH (THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF “ENGLISH WITH OLESEYA” RADIO ENGLISH LESSONS AND PODCASTS)

*The article deals with the issue of teaching English by using podcasts. The theoretical resources review has shown that in the context of the rapid spreading of new high-tech applications among the younger generation, the use of podcasts serves as an innovative and effective means of teaching English. Audio and video educational podcasts enhance learners' comprehension and further discussion, increase students' motivation to learn, promote teaching effectiveness, reinforce lecture material and provide additional information, and serve as a new interesting activity in the classroom and/or at home. The peculiarities of the authorial Project “English with Oleseya” podcasting (55 episodes), developed as an entertainment show and an English language lesson, have been described.*

**Keywords:** *podcast, foreign language teaching, innovative technologies, radio, listening skills, speaking skills, English with Oleseya.*

### Introduction

At the beginning of the XXI century, the English language is considered to be a dominant business language, as well as the way of communication of billions of people all over the world. European integration, which has been a key foreign policy priority of Ukraine in recent years, is impossible without encouraging the Ukrainian population to learn English to use available ways of the English language learning. Thus, the government initiated a national campaign aimed to intensify the study of English in Ukraine. On November 16, 2015 President Petro Poroshenko signed the Decree № 641/2015 “On Declaring 2016 the Year of English Language in Ukraine”. Some of the Year of English Language in Ukraine goals were as follows: to develop exchange programs between Ukrainian and English-speaking educational institutions; to introduce certification of foreign language teachers according to European recommendations on language teaching; to organize language courses for public servants, local government officials; to broadcast movies in English with the Ukrainian subtitles, etc. Also according to the Decree, it was planned to establish radio programs for learning English for different categories of the population (Decree of President of Ukraine № 641/2015 “On Declaring 2016 the Year of English Language in Ukraine”).

Though the popularity and effectiveness of podcasting (iTunes, iPods, etc.) as one of new mobile high-tech applications and an attractive learning technology has been proved by foreign researchers (Kavaliauskienė, 2009; McKinney, 2009 and others); the use of podcasting in teaching English at class (Li, 2010; Ho, 2016; Thus, Sze, 2006) deals with developing students' listening and speaking skills through ELT podcasts, while Rosell-Aguila states that podcasting may be studied as a language teaching and learning tool (Rosell-Aguila, 2015). The Ukrainian

scholars (Grytsyk, 2015; Drobit, 2011; Shyian, 2010) investigated podcasting technology as an effective tool of teaching English; Dmytrovskii focused on peculiarities of podcasting as a main component of Internet radio (Dmytrovskii, 2017).

### Aim and Tasks

The article aims to examine podcasting as a means of teaching English (by example of “English with Oleseya” radio English lessons and podcasts).

The tasks set in the paper are as follows:

- to analyze the peculiarities of the authorial Project – 55 podcasts of “English with Oleseya” English radio show and podcasts;
- to check the efficacy of the use of the suggested podcasts experimentally.

### Research Methods

In the framework of the theoretical study, we carried out the review of various sources dealing with the issue of teaching and learning English by means of different innovative technologies, including podcasts in order to examine the views of scientists and pedagogues concerning their experience of their application.

Besides, we also analyzed 55 podcasts of “English with Oleseya” English radio show and podcasts in order to characterize the peculiarities of the project and assess its potential efficiency for learning English.

A pedagogical experiment at Donbas State Pedagogical University (Sloviansk, Ukraine) was carried out in order to check the efficiency of using podcasts for teaching English. It involved 26 students of the first year of study and was conducted within the framework of the discipline “Practical Phonetics of the English language”. Before the experiment, all the participants took an initial test that included tasks on listening and comprehension, pronunciation and transcription. The students were divided into two

groups – a control group (14 students) and an experimental group (12 students). Both groups studied the discipline “Practical Phonetics of the English Language” during one semester, while the students from the experimental group additionally listened to five new podcasts of “English with Oleseya” per week at home (they could listen to the episodes as many times as they wanted).

The empirical research included the following stages:

1) conducting the pre-experimental test to determine the initial level of the students’ English language competence (listening and comprehension, pronunciation and transcription);

2) carrying out the teaching of English using the podcasts suggested;

3) implementing the post-experimental review to determine the final level of the students’ English language competence after the experiment.

The following methods were considered appropriate to collect data for this research: empirical (testing and expert assessment), mathematical processing of obtained data. The written multiple choice test included tasks aimed at revealing the students’ listening and comprehension (listening to different monologues/dialogues and choosing the best answers (A, B or C) and completing the sentences) as well as knowledge of transcription rules (listening to English words and transcribing them). Oral testing was focused on pronunciation skills and phonetic appropriateness (clarity, correctness, confidence, etc.) and included reading a text, retelling it and making dialogues, based on the given information.

#### **The Peculiarities of “English with Oleseya” Radio English Lessons and Podcasts**

Podcasting as an online communication innovative technology is a comparatively new way to inspire learning. Due to high-tech development, this approach to teaching English listening and speaking skills has rapidly become popular among Internet users. Published audio recordings on the Internet with a possibility to download the content were first called a “podcast” in 2004 and a year later, in 2005, the editors of The New Oxford American Dictionary chose the term “podcast” as the “Word of the Year” (Kavaliauskienė, 2009).

The concept of implementation of innovative methods and approaches in education continues to be one of the most important issues among teachers as technology expands in many directions. At the beginning of the 2000s, educators have brought increasing attention to the use of podcasts in the classroom. This recent fastest-growing technology that has a monthly 15% increase in number of podcast users around the world should be effectively used in education (Li, 2010).

In general terms, podcasting is a synthesis of two words – “iPod” and “broadcasting”, while the term “podcast” is “a digital media file, or a related collection of such files, which is distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and personal computers” (Ho, 2016). The Merriam Webster Dictionary states that it is “a program (as of music or talk)

made available in digital format for automatic download over the Internet” (The Merriam Webster Dictionary). Sze defined podcasting as “audio (sometimes video) programs on the Web which are usually updated on regular intervals” (Sze, 2006).

Thus, the use of podcasts is characterized by the following features – availability of audio/video file, regularity of production, connection to the Internet, possibility to download it on a media player. The length of the files, the number of podcasts within the series, topics, etc. may differ in accordance with the main goal of the podcasting and the interests/needs of Internet users.

Modern researchers assume making podcasts for teaching English may include a wide range of materials: lectures, student presentations, talks to guest expert/lecturer, interviews from the field, supplementary material (music, authentic materials (conversations, book reading, pronunciation drills by native speakers), songs, sound-bites from movies, etc.), short language lessons (Hrytsyk, 2015; Drobit, 2011; Li, 2010; Sze, 2006).

As mentioned above, educators all over the world seek new ways to teach and increase students’ motivation for learning, using all available tools and teaching resources. Audio cassettes, CD, DVD were the earlier predecessors of the podcasts that served for the same purpose – to enhance learning experience, increase motivation, capture students’ attention and as an adequate addition to the teacher’s lectures. Currently, the existence and growing use of podcasts by students question the leading role of a teacher in the education process. For example, McKinney in “iTunes University and the classroom: Can Podcasts Replace Professors?” (McKinney, 2009) posited that modern students have never lived without cell phones, tablets, personal computers; thus they are open and eager to use technology in their education processes.

The authors discuss the impact of non-traditional learning on classroom performance and bring the result of their study: the students who took notes while listening to the podcasts (of lectures by a professor) scored highly at exams, as compared to those who listened to the same lectures by a professor, given in person. The students who listened to the podcasts could do it multiple times and their notes were more complete (they could stop and/replay the audio). As a result, the readiness of the current generation of the learners to use new IT applications in their study and accessibility of educational podcasts take the students e-learning (electronic learning) and/or to m-learning (mobile learning).

Special attention should be paid to practical aspect of podcasting for English learners. Firstly, the use of podcasting motivates students’ desire to learn. In other words, the use of any innovative means is attractive and convenient for students who use hi-tech applications in their everyday lives. Secondly, interactive discussion (comments) under the podcasts provide opportunities for students to involve in real communication with other students debating over the information they got from listening to a podcast and

learn in virtual multicultural surrounding. The other benefits of using podcasts in education includes the following:

- 24-hour availability (students listen to the downloaded podcasts any time and in any place, and as many times as they need);
- wide range of content (students themselves choose what is interesting for them),
- flexibility of learning (students learn at their own space);
- portability (students download the podcasts on media players, PC, laptops, tablets, smartphones);
- acceptable price (majority of podcasts are free to download, and cheap to produce);
- easy to find (students do not need to order and wait, all they need is the Internet connection and some time while the podcasts are downloaded).

Thus, educational podcasts enhance learners' comprehension and further discussion, increase students' motivation to learn, promote teacher effectiveness, reinforce lecture material and provide additional information, serve as a new and fun activity in the classroom and/or at home.

Despite the fact that podcasting is still a very new technology in Ukraine and there is lack of related research studies in Ukrainian schools and Universities, a domestic

scholar N. Drobit emphasizes that “podcasting is an additional means of learning that stimulates the foreign language learning individualization, encourages students to be involved into research activity, and extends their intellectual horizon” (Drobit, 2011).

Thus, “English with Oleseya” was developed as a 3-4-minute language lesson and an entertainment show, taking into account the limits of what can be learned in such a short period of time. The radio programs were broadcasted on the Radio Army FM, (Kyiv, Ukraine) and Radio M (Sloviansk, Ukraine) in 2015-2016 and also releases podcasts, so more than a thousand people have listened to and/or download them. The bi-lingual format ensures that listeners can enjoy and understand the program, providing high-repetition of useful and contemporary English phrases that they can share with each other.

The new format of an English-Lesson-Radio-Show includes wholly authentic English, both native and non-native, with sound bites of the native speakers, the Ukrainians in the street, reinforced by music from popular movies and songs. While listening to the podcasts, the target audience also gets encouragement, appreciation and fun from learning new things.

The description of the peculiarities of the authorial Project “English with Oleseya” podcasting (55 episodes), developed as an entertainment show and an English language lesson is given in Table 1.

Table 1.

*The Episode/Podcasts Characteristics of “English with Oleseya” English Lessons*

<b>Duration of a podcast:</b>	3-4 minute
<b>Content Area:</b>	English as a second foreign language
<b>Materials and Technology</b>	Radio receiver/MP3
<b>Language format:</b>	Bi-lingual: Ukrainian and English
<b>Objective:</b>	Activate and enhance listeners' listening, comprehension and speaking skills by learning useful and contemporary English phrases that they use in everyday situations; to motivate the students to study English; to encourage start speaking English using short and simple phrases.
<b>The innovative peculiarities:</b>	- each episode is an entertaining show and language lesson, - includes a wholly authentic English, both native and non-native, -comprises sound bites of the soldiers themselves, their families and loved ones, Ukrainians on the street, -reinforced by sound-bites from popular English and Ukrainian films and songs.

**Empirical Research Results**

The students of the experimental group discussed the podcasts at the “Practical Phonetics of English language” lessons at the university for 5-7 minutes, including practicing new English vocabulary, repeating the sound bites from authentic English/Ukrainian movies, singing the lines from authentic English/American songs, discussing the general

American/Ukrainian background information (holidays, traditions, etc.), provided in the podcasts they listened to that week. The final test that comprised the listed above sections of tasks and questions was made in both groups at the end of the experimental study. The comparative results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

A Comparative Table of Mean Values of Pre- and Post-Experimental Testing

Criteria	Levels, %	Pre -experiment		Post - experiment	
		Experimental Group (12 people)	Control Group (14 people)	Experimental Group (12 people)	Control Group (14 people)
Listening and Comprehension	high	2 = 17%	2=14%	5=42%	2=14%
	average	4=33%	5=36%	6=50%	7=50%
	low	6=50%	7=50%	1=8%	5=36%
Pronunciation and Transcription	high	1=8%	1=7%	4=33%	3=22%
	average	4=36%	6=43%	6=50%	9=64%
	low	7=56%	7=50%	2=17%	2=14%

The comparison of the results shows that in the experimental group where the students listened to English teaching podcasts the average score has increased. Thus, according to the first criterion, the students improved their listening and comprehension skills from 17% to 42%, according to the second one – there is a considerable growth from 8% to 33%.

Moreover, it should be emphasized that the students of the experimental group also mentioned that listening to the podcasts enabled them to use the new vocabulary in everyday communication, and the short, highly-repeated, and fun episodes positively influenced their perception of teaching English as well as helped them to overcome the fear of speaking English.

Thus, the results of the experiment have proved the effectiveness of using podcasts for teaching the English language, including “English with Oleseya” radio English lessons and podcasts for developing students’ listening, comprehension and pronunciation skills.

### Conclusion

To sum up, it should be stated that podcasting is an effective means to get students motivated in learning the English language. Although, the length of the files, number

of podcasts within the series, topics, etc. may differ in accordance with the main goal of the podcasting and the interests/needs of the Internet users, the common characteristics (availability of audio/video file, regularity of production, connection to Internet, possibility to download it on media player). While developing podcasts it is possible to record lectures, student presentations, talk to guest expert/lecturer, interview from the field or other supplementary material (music, authentic materials (conversations, book reading, pronunciation drills by native speakers), songs, sound-bites from movies, etc.). It can also have a format of a short English language lesson as in “English with Oleseya” radio podcasts. The peculiarities of the mentioned podcasts include soldiers and civil Ukrainians’ voices, sound bites from English and Ukrainian movies and songs, etc.

The efficiency of “English with Oleseya” radio podcasts has been checked experimentally, thus it can be applied in the process of both teaching and learning English (by teachers or students independently).

Our further research is planned to deal with teaching English grammar podcasting, in particular, video podcasts.

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### **ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ПОДКАСТІВ ДЛЯ НАВЧАННЯ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ РАДІО-ЗАНЯТЬ “ENGLISH WITH OLESEYA” ТА ПОДКАСТІВ)**

У статті розглянуто особливості викладання англійської мови за допомогою подкастів. Аналіз наукової літератури показав, що в контексті швидкого поширення нових додатків високих технологій серед сучасної молоді використання подкастів у навчанні англійської мови є інноваційним та ефективним педагогічним засобом. Аудіо та відео подкасти (розроблені викладачами або студентами чи з використанням існуючих аутентичних ресурсів) сприяють розумінню учнями матеріалу заняття, а також дискусії; мотивують студентів на подальше вивчення англійської мови; зміцнюють лекційний матеріал і надають додаткову інформацію; є новим видом діяльності у рамках заняття з англійської мови або самостійної роботи студентів. Хоча популярність і ефективність подкастів (iTunes, iPods тощо) як одного з нових мобільних додатків високих технологій, які використовуються у навчальному процесі, вивчалися багатьма іноземними та вітчизняними дослідниками – важливо підкреслити, що розробка та запис подкастів з викладання англійської мови для потенційної цільової аудиторії (специфічної категорії населення) вимагає спеціального підходу і знання особливостей, потреб та інтересів таких студентів. Метою статті було дослідження особливостей подкастингу як ефективного засобу викладання англійської мови на прикладі англійських занять по радіо та подкастів програми «English with Oleseya». Подкасти цих занять (55 програм) було розроблено, з одного боку, як 3-4 хвилинне заняття з англійської мови, а з іншого – як розважальне шоу. У підготовці подкастів можуть використовуватися такі матеріали: лекції, презентації студентів, інтерв'ю з експертом, пісні, аутентичні матеріали (діалоги, читання вголос, фонетичні вправи, презентації, зроблені носіями мови), уроки з англійської мови. Слід зазначити, що загальними характеристиками подкастів є наявність аудіо чи відео файлів, регулярність поповнення новими файлами (або визначена кількість файлів) у рамках теми, можливість завантаження файлів на персональний комп'ютер, мобільний телефон, тощо. Довжина аудіо/відео файлів, кількість подкастів, різноманітність тем залежить від головної мети подкастингу, потреб та інтересів студентів. За результатами проведеного експерименту було встановлено ефективність навчання студентів за допомогою подкастів.

**Ключові слова:** подкаст, навчання іноземних мов, інноваційні методи викладання, радіо, навички прослуховування, навички говоріння, English with Oleseya.

*Submitted on January, 23, 2018*

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