

PODCASTS IN TEACHING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

P.V. Sysoyev

Department at Derzhavin Tambov State University, Professor at Foreign Language Department
at Sholokhov Moscow State University for Humanities
(Tambov; Moscow, Russian Federation).
E-mail: psysoyev@yandex.ru

Abstract. This paper addresses the issue of the use of podcasts in teaching a foreign language to secondary school and university students. The author: a) gives definition of the term “podcast”; b) describes didactic characteristics and methodological functions of podcasts in teaching a foreign language; c) discusses the typology of texts for developing listening and speaking skills via podcasts; d) develops an algorithm of the development of speaking and listening skills via using podcasts in language teaching; e) suggests a list of listening and speaking skills, which can be developed by using podcasts in foreign language teaching.

Keywords: podcast; listening skills; speaking skills; ICT; informatization of language education.

Under the informatization of linguistic education of special importance is the regular use of new information and communication technologies in teaching a foreign language [1-3]. **Podcast** is an audio or video recording made by any person and available for listening or viewing on the Web. Social service of podcasts is a kind of social service Web 2.0 allowing us to listen, view, create and distribute audio and video recordings. Unlike conventional television or radio podcast allows listening to audio files and viewing video transmissions not live, but at any time convenient for the user. Logging on to the server of podcasts, the user can view the chosen podcast online or download the selected file to his / her computer. The duration of podcasts can vary from a few minutes to several hours. On the Internet we can find both authentic podcasts created for native speakers (e.g. BBC news) and educational podcasts created for educational purposes. The most effective way to find the podcast you want is to reach a directory of podcasts, select a category and browse the list of podcasts available for downloading. For English language learners the directory of podcasts is available at www.podomatic.com, www.bbc.co.uk. For those studying the German language - www.podcast.de, for students studying French - www.worldlanguagespodcasting.com/wlangp/french.php.

Service of podcasts allows students to listen and view posted on the Internet podcasts and to record and place on one of the servers their own podcasts on any topic. The most popular is the podcast server YouTube.

On YouTube every registered user can post his or her video podcast, browse other podcasts posted on the service, as well as participate in discussing / commenting podcasts in micro-blogs.

Podcast service has the following didactic properties:

- the possibility for placing on the Internet at the podcast service personal podcasts of the users;
- the possibility for creating the user's personal area at the podcast service (user's personal area is necessary for organizing a network discussion of podcast);
- the possibility for organizing a network discussion of a podcast in the user's personal area in the micro-blog;
- creation of user's personal area, its approval is carried out by the author of the podcast;
- placement of comments under the network discussion of a podcast is done chronologically;
- availability of a podcast for all registered users of the service.

Didactic and methodological properties of a podcast service that must be considered when developing a method of teaching a foreign language through podcasts are presented in the Table 1 (based on the generalization of works by P.V. Sysoyev, M.N. Evstigneev, A.G. Solomatina) [4-6].

Table 1

Didactic and methodological properties of a podcast service in foreign language teaching

Didactic properties of a podcast service	Methodological properties of a podcast service in foreign language teaching
Possibility for placing on the Internet at the podcast service personal podcasts of the users	Educational podcasts are created by the students in the foreign language. Substantive content of a podcast is determined by the thematic content of a curriculum and the standard of general secondary education or GEF VPO in the areas of training in a foreign language. Duration, type of recording and format of a podcast are defined by the teacher. Students can create educational podcasts and place them on the podcasts server www.podOmatic.com . Under preparation of the podcast material and its recording the learners can develop all kinds of speech activity, especially speaking
Possibility for creating the user's personal area at the podcast service (user's personal area is necessary for organizing a network discussion of the podcast)	Each student creates on the podcasts server a personal zone - personal page on which he or she places created podcasts and on which a discussion of the podcasts can be organized. Other students after viewing the podcast of each student can participate in the network discussion of podcasts in micro-blogging. Posting personal information on the user's personal page is performed in a foreign language (reading and writing)
Possibility for organizing a network discussion of a podcast in the user's personal area in the micro-blog	Students listen or watch podcasts of their classmates recorded in a foreign language (listening). Using micro-blog function the

Didactic properties of a podcast service	Methodological properties of a podcast service in foreign language teaching
	teacher can organize a panel network discussion of students' podcasts in a foreign language directly at the personal pages of each student (reading, writing). Depending on the learning task, after listening to each podcast the students can post in micro-blog zone from one to several comments. Discussion takes place in a foreign language. In the comments they can: 1) express their opinion on the subject under discussion; 2) express agreement or disagreement with the opinion of the author of the podcast; 3) highlight the positive and negative moments in the content of the podcast ; 4) comment on the linguistic side of the podcast (linguistic correctness, using active vocabulary, etc.). The teacher determines the algorithm of comments placement on the author's personal webpage
Creation of user's personal area, its approval is carried out by the author of the podcast	Each student, author of a podcast, is a moderator of his personal zone - personal page on the podcasts server. He or she posts podcasts on a server, choose the color, font, font size on his page, can delete or respond to messages posted in micro-blogging, can post his photo, add his personal information, etc. All personal information may be submitted in a foreign language
Placement of comments under the network discussion of a podcast is done chronologically. Users are unable to introduce changes into the posted comments	Unlike Wiki technology which allows several users simultaneously participate in the work on the content, podcasts service allows you to organize individual work under creation and placement of podcasts. Group work can be enrolled in the organization of a network discussion of students' podcasts when each student should visit the personal pages of several classmates and post comments in micro-blogging. However, comments will be of private (not collective) authorship. Discussion takes place in a foreign language
Availability of a podcast for all registered users of the service	Podcasts servers are available to any Internet user. Access to hosted podcasts is open to all registered users of the podcasts service. It means that students' educational podcasts can be viewed by other users from every corner of the world. In this regard, the service provides private access to the placed podcasts and area of network discussion. Using the same password, students can gain access to the personal pages of their classmates

Given that the social podcasts service allows both listening / viewing the entries placed on it, and placing new accounts, this service can be used in learning a foreign language for the development of listening and speaking skills. Let us consider the features of development of foreign language teaching methods based on the podcast.

Typology of texts

Development of listening skills should be implemented on the material of the types of the texts which students meet in real life when learning a foreign language in the country or visiting it. Here are examples of these types of texts:

- weather forecast, news, sport commentaries;
- lectures on school / higher school subjects;
- lectures during excursions to cultural and historical places of foreign language countries;
- ads on radio, television, in the airports, railway stations, public transport;
- instructions (how to get there, how to do something, the recommendations of a doctor, teacher);
- movies, theater performances, television programs;
- interviews, interviews during exams;
- communication with peers and discussion of various socially controversial topics.

This list is not intended to be universal, but it adequately presents most spheres of communication in a foreign language. Most types of texts are also indicated in the standard of secondary education in foreign languages (FES, 2010) [7].

During training, the students should be able to carry out intellectual actions (from understanding the general meaning to the interpretation of the acquired information) on the basis of texts of the mentioned types in accordance with the theme (they are defined by the state standards and sample programs in foreign languages) of a specific level of schooling.

The modern educational standard refers to the necessity to use authentic texts when teaching listening, i.e. recorded by native speakers. We will not challenge the provisions of the federal document. Indeed, the students should be able to hear, make out the speech and accent of their teacher, the speech of native speakers. Often under the authentic text they mean the text read by an educated native speaker with Received Pronunciation - the classic version of the English language. Such records are of certain value, because, in addition to authenticity, they also introduce a new accent to the students. However, arriving in the countries of a foreign language (UK, USA) we hear the "other" accents: accents of native speakers and foreigners in the country [8]. In addition, very often on a daily level, we are dealing with people

from different countries using English as a language of international communication. This is of particular relevance when visiting countries as tourists and communicating at the household level (to learn the rules of using public transport, to find the route to the desired site, to ask a neighbor for help etc.), when in the center of the city you can meet not the residents of the country's, but mostly foreigners from Europe, Latin America, Asia, CIS and Russia. In the era when English is the language of international communication, in our opinion, it makes sense to prepare the students for listening to a variety of accents and developing abilities to communicate with representatives of other countries and cultures in a foreign language and in the country of a foreign language.

It is worth mentioning that the three-stage model aims to develop the basic skills necessary for listening to a foreign language. The development of these skills is indicated in the demands of modern educational standards in a foreign language and sample programs in a foreign language. However, we must remember that only the development of all the skills in their integrity will help to prepare students to audition in real life situations in different unpredictable foreign language communications.

Listening tasks are represented in many national and international standardized tests in a foreign language. However, very often they control not all but only some of listening skills. And, unfortunately, it should be noted: very often, instead of developing all the listening skills as it is required by the state standard, many teachers develop only some of the skills, following only the standardized test format. In our view, foreign language teaching should not and cannot be reduced to training students for the test format. Development of all the mentioned skills at the foreign language lessons will already be preparation to a standardized test, and most important - to a real communication of the students in the new unpredictable situations.

Authentic materials are usually understood as materials created by native speakers for storage and transmission of certain information in real-life communicative situations and not initially intended for educational purposes. Such authentic materials for listening can be ads at the airports and railway stations, radio and TV programs, films, lectures at schools and universities, etc. Relevance of using the authentic materials is not in doubt, but we would not categorically assert the ineffectiveness of inauthentic materials (created for educational purposes by native and often non-native speakers). Moreover, we stand for the rational use of unauthentic materials in the educational process and their combination with authentic. First, inauthentic materials may be used in cases where authentic materials for objective and subjective reasons are simply not available in adequate amounts.

Secondly, in real life, when communicating in a foreign language, students will inevitably come across a lot of inauthentic material, which, along with the authentic, aims to transference and interpretation of infor-

mation (e.g. news programs in English from around the world via satellite television and the Internet). Working with inauthentic material will contribute to the development of students' additional communication strategies [9, 10].

Third, the exception of inauthentic materials from the educational process in many cases would deprive students of a number of unlimited possibilities both of cultural and informational and cognitive perspective. For example, the exclusion from the educational process, for reasons of inauthenticity, an interview or lecture of the famous Russian scientist or cultural worker in a foreign language (Internet or satellite TV), would rather make the educational process poorer than enrich it (in such cases, can hardly be a question of "adequate replacement"). Therefore, in this case we stand for a reasonable and balanced use of materials of varying degrees of authenticity if their selection does not contradict to the modern educational standards, the interests and needs of students, and promotes the development of communicative skills.

Completely different is the case with authentic tasks. Under the "authentic tasks" L. Bachmann and A. Palmer [11] understand the extent to which the task corresponds to real-life communicative situation. In other words, when performing authentic tasks the students must perform the same communicative and cognitive functions that they perform in a similar situation in real life. For example, if in real life, listening to the weather forecast for the next day, we conclude how to dress, the authentic communicative task should be aimed at the similar solution. Or, if in real life we listen to the news program with two major objectives: a) to review the major events taking place in the country or in the world (a general understanding of information), and b) to know the details of specific events (understanding of the details), then in the educational process a text of such a functional type as a news program can be used for training and monitoring a common understanding of the text and understanding the details of the message. Therefore, the communicative task should be characterized by authenticity.

In this regard, special attention should be paid to the correspondence of the functional type of the text used in the task to the goals of listening, and, consequently, to the directly controlled skills. Table 2 summarizes the functional types of texts with the relevant objectives of listening.

Table 2

Functional types of texts with relevant oral skills

Functional type of audio text / Goal of listening	General understanding	Understanding of details	Complete understanding
1. Weather forecasts, news programs, sport news	+	+++	+++
2. Ads on the radio, television, at the airports, railway stations, public transport		+++	+++

Functional type of audio text / Goal of listening	General understanding	Understanding of details	Complete understanding
3. Lectures on school / higher school subjects	+	++	+++
4. Lectures of the guides while visiting museums, cultural and historical places in the country of foreign language	+++	+	+
5. Instructions (how to get there, how to do something, recommendations of a doctor, teacher, etc.)		+++	+++
6. Movies, theater performances, TV programs	+++	+	
7. Interviews, interviews during exams		+++	+++
8. Communication with peers and discussion of various socially controversial topics	+	+++	+

Note: “+” and “+ + +” refer to the probability of involvement of these particular skills while listening to the particular functional type of the text, “+” indicates a lower probability, “+ + +” a greater probability.

Development of students’ oral skills by podcasts

Unusual and unconventional is the use of podcasts in the development of oral skills - mostly monologues. A number of studies show that the use of podcasts just in the developing of oral skills significantly increases the motivation of students and brings diversity in the process of language teaching at schools and universities [12]. Particular interest for Russian pupils and students, as well as for all Internet users will present created by the students materials about Russia, its history, culture and modernity. Along with the development of oral skills the students will develop another important skill - to act as a representative of their country, city and culture. Creation of podcasts, as well as their placement on the Internet, is quite a simple matter requiring no special computer skills. It’s enough to go to one of the sites of the podcasts service and follow the instructions (www.podomatic.com). In Table 3 we suggest one of the possible algorithms for the development of oral and listening skills through podcasts, consisting of three stages and eleven steps. Table 3 contains a detailed itemized description of the actions of the teacher and students at every step.

Table 3

Algorithm for developing students’ oral and listening skills by [podcasts

Stage I. SETUP

Step 1. Setup and planning.

The teacher explains to students the purpose and objectives of the project, introduces the service platform, on which the placement of student’ podcasts and their network interaction will take place, introduces the assessment criteria for their participation in educational activities

Teacher	Students
explains to students the essence of their educational activity	ask organizational questions
explains what kind of final result is expected	
introduces assessment and self-assessment criteria	
introduces the algorithm	
Step 2. Introduces the rules for posting podcasts on the podcasts service and rules for posting comments for organizing network discussion	
Teacher	Students
gives to the students a web address at the podcasts service PodOmatic, at which the oral and listening skills will be developed	get a web address at the podcasts service PodOmatic, at which the oral and listening skills will be developed
register the students	get registered at the podcasts service
explains the regulations for posting podcasts at the PodOmatic service	get acquainted with the regulations for posting audio or video files at PodOmatic
explains the regulations for posting comments to a podcast in micro-blog	get acquainted with the regulations for posting comments to a podcast in micro-blog
Step 3. Creation by the teacher of a page of podcasts on a certain topic for the students Using social service podOmatic (www.podomatic.com), the teacher can create a separate page for his group of students. This page gives a description of the task or project, so as it was clear for all visitors what the posted podcasts are devoted to (subjects) and who is their creator (pupils / students). It is recommended that the teacher himself would create a podcast duration of 1-2 minutes in a foreign language in which explained the task and presented the project participants	
Teacher	Students
creates a podcast and posts it at the podcasts service	look, memorize, ask questions
defines a topic on which the students will create their podcasts	
determines the volume of students' podcasts	
explains where and how the network interaction of the students on discussing each other's podcasts will take place	
Step 4. Discussing the issues of information security of the students under creation of a podcast (in the classroom). The teacher explains to the students the rules of information security on the Internet	
Teacher	Students
The teacher explains to the students the rules of information security on the Internet	-
STAGE II. PROCEDURAL	
Step 5. Choosing a subject and creation of a text of a podcast by the students. Students are encouraged to prepare the text of a speech (podcast). At the outset, each student can introduce himself, indicate his age, place of residence and study. Next a podcast should be devoted to a selected topic. At this step, students also develop writing skills - depending on the purpose they create texts of a descriptive, argumentative, comparative nature. Teacher should help students to prepare grammatically and lexically literate text of a speech, which will subsequently be recorded and posted on the podcast service for further discussion	
Teacher	Students
monitors the students' self-study	create the text of a podcast
edits the texts of the students' podcasts	-

Step 6. Recording of a podcast. Using the modern network software available at podOmatic (www.podomatic.com) the students can record their speeches. Network software allows recording a performance as many times as necessary until the student is satisfied with the quality. Only after that a podcast will be saved in the network and will be available to all project participants

Teacher	Students
ensures that all the students have placed their podcasts on the Internet at the service PodOmatic.com	record and place their podcasts on the Internet at the service PodOmatic.com

Step 7. Listening (viewing) of students' podcasts. Each of the podcasts created by the students should be viewed or listened attentively by classmates and teacher in extracurricular time

Teacher	Students
ensures that all the students have viewed (or listened to) their classmates podcasts	view (or listen to) their classmates podcasts

Step 8. Network discussion of the podcasts.

After listening to each student's podcast all the students are invited to participate in the network discussion of podcasts. Students may receive a task: view or listen to a podcast and post in the micro-blog your brief reviews and comments on the content and / or structure of the podcast

Teacher	Students
ensures that all the students have posted their comments to each podcast	post their comments to each podcast in the micro-blog at the page of a podcast

Step 9. Discussion of podcasts in the classroom. After network discussion the students are invited to participate in the common discussion and discuss their favourite podcasts.

Teacher	Students
organize the group discussion of students' podcasts	discuss the best podcasts

STAGE III. ASSESSMENT

Step 10. Self-assessment (students evaluate how they managed to reveal the essence of the problem under discussion, trying to comprehend what kind of difficulties and why they experienced during the project, articulate what they should do to improve next time)

Step 11. Assessment by the teacher (The teacher evaluates the students' results according to pre-defined criteria)

As it is shown in the proposed algorithm of the actions of students and teacher, a considerable amount of training activities is carried out by the students independently. On the one hand, it considerably expands the methodological potential of the proposed methodology in the context of the implementation of the second generation of educational standards of secondary school and the third generation of standards of higher professional education, according to which there is a significant reduction of academic load on classroom work. On the other hand, this technique, along with the formation of communicative competence of the students in a foreign language, aims to develop their skills of independent learning activities [13] and language teaching on individual trajectory [14-16].

Special attention is paid to the maturity of the teacher's ICT competence [17-19] and to his role in the implementation of the Internet project. Despite the fact that quite an impressive amount of work is performed by the

students out of class, the teacher constantly monitors the self-study of the students on the Internet (preparation of podcasts texts, recording and posting the podcasts on the students' personal pages, participation in the network discussion of each other's podcasts, etc.) and, if necessary, provide assistance to students.

In the suggested algorithm a special attention is paid to the information security of the students during their participation in the Internet projects [20]. That is why one of the important steps at the initial stage of training is the discussion of issues of information security. The students can discuss the same issues at the final phase of training.

It should also be emphasized that at the final stage of training the students evaluate their participation in the project activities. Self-assessment and reflection are important components of any activity. They allow executors to realize their real strength, successes, failures in a specific activity with a view to its improvement in the future.

During network discussions of this kind, it is important that students expressed their opinions without fear of making a mistake and lose points for it. Experience shows: the statements and surveys of the students indicate that in some cases it is difficult for them to express their thoughts in a foreign language; when communicating they use lexical items and grammatical constructions corresponding to a significantly lower level of proficiency compared to the level at which they should be proficient in the language in the 10th grade of secondary school; in some cases they simply have nothing to say and add, although this may be explained by the choice of a particular subject. However, and that is most important, students communicate in a foreign language in authentic situations that correspond to real-life situations (communication in blogs and forums with Internet users from any point of the world). In the process of the systematic use of similar assignments (projects) each student will accumulate waste cliché, formulas for initiating, maintaining, completing discussions etc.

Nomenclature of oral skills developed with the students when working with podcasts

Analysis of a number of theoretical and empirical studies allows determining the range of oral skills being developed through podcasts. These include the following skills:

Listening skills:

- to understand the purpose of communication / audio-text;
- to understand the subject of audio-text;
- to determine the parties of communication;
- to understand the main ideas of an audio-text;
- to separate important information from irrelevant;

- to extract the relevant information from audio-text;
- to allocate the facts and arguments in accordance with the issues;
- to determine the logic of presenting the information or argument (a sequence of facts, events);
- to understand the relationship between the facts, causes, events, etc.;
- to analyze the content of audio-text;
- to identify the attitude of a speaker to the subject under discussion;
- to predict developments;
- to express their judgments, opinions about what they have listened to;

Oral skills:

- to comprehend the goal of communication;
- to comprehend the subject of a message;
- to describe the main participants of a message;
- to enlarge on the main content of what they have seen / heard;
- to present the requested / selective information;
- to present basic facts and arguments in accordance with the issues;
- to characterize the personages of a fiction, theater performance, film and the like;
- to express and explain their point of view on the subject under discussion;
- to draw conclusions;
- to evaluate the acquired information.

The nomenclature of the identified oral skills shows that most of the skills on the kinds of speech activity (listening and speaking) correspond with the skills outlined in the requirements for the level of training of the students at all the three stages of education (primary, secondary and senior) at a secondary school and university. This means that usage of podcasts in foreign language teaching can take place on a daily basis. Devoting a lesson or two to the work with podcasts, as described in the Table 3, later on the teacher can move the work with podcasts in the afterhours. This applies both to the preparation and recording of podcasts and discussing them, for example, on the classroom blog or forum [21]. However, one thing is clear: the use of podcasts in foreign language teaching will help students to create strategies for education and self-education by means of a foreign language in the afterhours.

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