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USE OF ONLINE RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF PROSPECTIVE PHD STUDENTS

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ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ІНТЕРНЕТ-РЕСУРСІВ ДЛЯ ФОРМУВАННЯ ІНШОМОВНОЇ КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТІ МАЙБУТНІХ ДОКТОРІВ ФІЛОСОФІЇ

Abstract. This article investigates the role of medical podcasts as an innovative digital tool for fostering the foreign language communicative competence of PhD students in medical universities. The study proposes a structured model for improving listening and reading skills through podcast integration in courses on foreign language for scientific communication. Emphasis is placed on podcast-based learning technologies, which align with established approaches to working with audio texts and follow a clearly defined sequence of actions on the part of both instructors and postgraduate students (pre-instruction; listening and comprehension tasks). The analysis highlights the linguistic and pedagogical value of authentic medical podcasts, particularly their role in enhancing lexical acquisition and speech skills. Special attention is given to the function of supplementary tasks, including the use of subtitles as verbal scaffolding for listening comprehension at different levels of complexity. The findings underscore the benefits of medical podcasts in terms of thematic diversity, accessibility, repeatability, flexibility, and adaptability to different proficiency levels, making them a valuable resource in postgraduate language education.

Key words: foreign language for scientific communication; medical podcast; audio text; speech skills and abilities; PhD student.

Анотація. У статті проаналізовано особливості використання подкасту як засобу навчання іноземної мови майбутніх докторів філософії медичних університетів, розкрито модель удосконалення навичок аудіювання та читання крізь призму роботи з медичними подкастами на заняттях з іноземної мови наукового спілкування. Акцентовано увагу на технологіях роботи з подкастом, яка збігається з роботою над аудіотекстом і має чітку послідовність у діях як викладача, так і PhD-студентів (попередній інструктаж; завдання до сприйняття і розуміння інформації подкасту). З'ясовано роль змістового наповнення автентичних медичних подкастів (для опанування лексичного аспекту мови, навичок та умінь мовлення) і завдань до подкастів, що можуть містити субтитри як вербальну опору для аудіювання, спрямовану саме на формування навичок аудіювання відповідно до рівнів складності. Встановлено позитивні аспекти використання на заняттях з іноземної мови наукового спілкування медичних подкастів (різновекторна тематика, автоматичне та безоплатне завантаження, багаторазове прослуховування, необмежений час, різні рівні подкастів).

Ключові слова: іноземна мова наукового спілкування; медичний подкаст; аудіо текст; навички й уміння мовлення; доктор філософії.

Introduction. Modern technologies in foreign language education encompass professionally oriented, developmental, and productive learning methods. These include the project method, the use of educational software, distance learning technologies, the creation of presentations using PowerPoint, and the integration of online resources such as educational websites, podcasts, forums, blogs, and wikis, as well as innovative testing technologies. Learning based on high-quality, up-to-date authentic materials enables PhD students to apply foreign languages actively and consciously in their future professional and personal lives.

The discipline "Foreign Language for Scientific Communication", studied by postgraduate students in medical universities, is an integrative course that combines the revision of grammar, vocabulary, and orthography with the acquisition of specialized medical vocabulary and stylistics. Medical English can be considered a language within a language, as it rep-

resents a separate course closely linked to clinical subjects within the general biomedical cycle. Active mastery of foreign languages is therefore an essential factor in shaping a competent medical professional. Contemporary medical publications and international conferences are predominantly conducted in English, and the most authoritative scientific and medical journals are published in this language. At the current stage of medical development, English has established itself as the dominant language of global communication, science, and medicine.

In today's globalized world, a new method of language learning has become widespread – namely, the use of authentic internet-based resources such as podcasts. The incorporation of authentic audio materials has the potential to enrich and diversify the learning process. Practice demonstrates that listening comprehension, as a receptive skill, often lags behind other language skills, partly due to the insufficient availability of high-quality learning materials. One of the principles of foreign language teaching methodology is that instruction should be based on the development of students' auditory-motor connections through oral exercises and individual practice (Vashchylo, 2015). Traditional textbooks frequently fail to meet these requirements. O. Baltina argues that conventional forms of instruction are no longer effective, while methodological specialists emphasize that the exercises offered in such textbooks are not always communicatively oriented (Baltina).

Scholars in foreign language pedagogy stress that the Internet should not only be regarded as a tool for information dissemination but also as a medium for communication, writing, and publishing texts. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are increasingly becoming indispensable instruments of interaction for a growing number of people worldwide. According to global internet statistics, approximately 1.5 billion individuals – about one in every four inhabitants of the planet – engage in educational, professional, and personal communication through ICT on a regular basis, and this figure continues to rise. This trend indicates that in the modern world it is virtually impossible to conduct professional and interpersonal activities effectively without the integration of information and communication technologies.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The works of N. Borysko, V. Volkova, H. Kytaihorodska and L. Pukhovska are devoted to the professional development of students in the process of foreign language acquisition. Despite the achievements in developing intercultural communication skills, the matter of foreign language training for specialists in the medical field remains unresolved. The application of information and communication technologies (ICT) in foreign language teaching at higher education institutions has been investigated by N. Ivanytska, Yu. Kolos, A. Yankovets and oth-

ers. These researchers argue that ICT can considerably intensify the learning process, both in methodological and presentational dimensions. The use of podcasts in foreign language instruction has been examined and analyzed in the studies of O. Baltina, O. Betsko, O. Vashchylo, R. Vikovych, N. Hrytsyk, N. Shevtsova and others. S. Morhunova explored the didactic potential of podcasts as a tool for enhancing foreign language learning at university level (Morhunova, 2018, p. 184). N. Hrytsyk described podcasting technology in teaching English for Specific Purposes (Hrytsyk, 2015, p. 24). The research of O. Vashchylo was dedicated to developing procedures for organizing the instruction of future mechanical engineers in producing professionally oriented monologues using podcasting technologies (Vashchylo, 2019, p. 19). N. Shevtsova provided a methodological characterization of podcasts for the formation of foreign-language sociocultural competence (Shevtsova, 2019, p. 236). Nevertheless, despite sufficient scholarly attention to the issue, Ukrainian educators, as practice demonstrates, rarely employ podcasts in foreign language classes at higher education institutions.

As O. Betsko emphasises, the teaching of foreign languages through podcasts may incorporate a wide range of educational and methodological materials, including lectures, presentations, discussions with invited experts or lecturers, interviews, authentic resources (such as everyday conversations or book readings), as well as audio fragments from feature and documentary films (Betsko).

The aim of this article is to explore the specific features of using podcasts as a tool for teaching foreign languages to postgraduate students in the field of medicine.

Theoretical framework. One of the principal objectives of teaching foreign languages to undergraduate and postgraduate students is the development of foreign language communicative competence, encompassing its various components (linguistic, discursive, sociocultural, cognitive, etc.). Within this context, the level of communicative competence should be assessed not only by the ability to interact in a foreign language in face-to-face communication, but also by the capacity to engage effectively through diverse online services and platforms.

E-learning represents one of the tools that enables the organisation of education in line with contemporary demands. E-learning (Electronic Learning) is a system of electronic education and is synonymous with such terms as distance learning, computer-assisted learning, network-based learning, virtual learning, and learning supported by information, electronic, and multimedia technologies. Among the technologies that contribute to the development of foreign language communicative competence are blogs, chats, forums, wikis, podcasting, e-mail, online dictionaries, and online translation tools.

One of the most effective means of optimising the process of foreign language learning is the podcast. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a podcast as "an audio or video file distributed via the Internet for playback on a computer or mobile device, accessible to the user at any convenient time" (Oxford English Dictionary). Depending on their content and orientation, social services are divided into numerous categories, some of which can be used for language learning as they allow learners to communicate online in the target language.

Since their emergence in 2004, podcasts – audio or video broadcasts distributed via the Internet – have gained a wide audience. Podcasts may be regarded as audio blogs. A podcast is a type of social service that enables users to listen to, view, create, and distribute audio and video content on the web. Unlike traditional television or radio, podcasts allow users to access content at any convenient time, rather than in real-time broadcasting. All that is required is to download the chosen file onto a personal computer. Postgraduate students can both listen to podcasts and create their own on a wide range of topics. The duration of podcasts may vary from a few minutes to several hours. Online, one can find authentic podcasts created for medical professionals as well as educational podcasts designed for instructional purposes.

From a methodological perspective, podcasts contribute to the development of oral foreign language skills among postgraduate students. They provide lecturers with engaging opportunities to introduce unfamiliar lexical material and instructional content, enrich the learners' semantic field, and work through language input while simultaneously fostering their sociocultural competence (Vashchylo, 2019). Podcasts are employed not only as materials for receptive activities but also as a means of enhancing communicative skills. They support monitoring of the learning process and facilitate both prepared and spontaneous oral production during classroom activities and independent study.

Typical features of an educational podcast include a native speaker presenting information on a specific topic in a range of contexts; an average duration of between five and ten minutes; the use of current and relevant themes; and the availability of both the transcript and audio file on the hosting website.

Podcasts primarily serve to develop listening skills. They are produced by radio stations, television channels, or independent creators (podcasters). A wide range of podcasts is available for medical professionals, which can be used both to improve professional competence and to enhance foreign language learning. The use of podcasts generally involves several simple steps: (1) downloading the audio file and transcript; (2) listening to the material on a computer, media player, or mobile phone at a convenient time; (3) carrying out additional work with the transcript (e.g., focusing on vocabulary and grammar) to aid comprehension; and (4) applying the acquired knowledge before downloading the next podcast. Some podcasts must be downloaded within a week of release, after which they are no longer available, while others remain accessible indefinitely.

Podcasts can be categorised into three main groups: audio podcasts, which present information in MP3 audio format; video podcasts, which provide information in the form of video files; and screencasts, which combine video recordings with audio commentary through specialised software. Each type of podcast offers significant pedagogical potential in foreign language education by extending the learning environment beyond the classroom, addressing issues of intercultural communication and interaction, reducing psychological barriers, and providing additional opportunities for language practice (Babenko, 2020, p. 354).

The characteristics of podcasting technology may be summarised as follows: relevance, as users can subscribe and regularly update their archive of online materials; authenticity, since the use of genuine content makes foreign language learning more engaging and effective; media competence, as students develop basic skills in working with digital platforms and services; multifunctionality, through the possibility of developing multiple language skills (reading, speaking, listening, writing) alongside sociocultural competence; multimodal perception, based on the simultaneous reception of auditory and visual information; interactivity, whereby learners engage in a dialogic mode with their mobile device, selecting the content, speed, and sequence of delivery; mobility, which extends the learning environment by enabling access to materials at any time and beyond the institution; sustained motivation, generated by the satisfaction of cognitive needs in the process of language learning; autonomy, allowing learners to work at their own pace and according to their individual learning needs; and productivity, which provides a strong impetus for language learning within an activity- based approach, as students create and publish their own audio or video materials online and thereby engage with advanced information technologies in authentic communicative contexts (Hlushok).

Lecturers generally employ podcasts in two primary ways: (1) for the revision of previously covered material (repetitive), such as recording lectures that include slides and demonstration materials (screencasts); and (2) for the provision of supplementary information (supplemental), including listening to interviews, additional audio materials on specific topics, radio programmes, announcements, commentary, and instructions related to practical tasks for PhD students.

It is advisable to use podcasts at the beginning of a lesson to create a favourable linguistic atmosphere for subsequent activities with PhD students (replacing the traditional "warm-up"), as well as to intro-

duce new lexical or grammatical items. Podcasts may also be used for individual practice in speech fluency through a simple exercise: students attempt to imitate the speaker's timbre, intonation, and speech rate.

These characteristics collectively support the consideration of podcasts as a didactic tool in foreign language teaching. The pedagogical potential of podcasting is extensive. Podcasts allow for the placement, listening, or viewing of audio and video files on podcast platforms; facilitate discussion of content via microblogs; and contribute to the development of students' cognitive abilities, collaborative learning skills, and independent study habits. For instance, Hrynova, Rafalska, and Polodiuk highlight that recording educational podcasts in a foreign language promotes speaking skills, while listening to or viewing podcasts produced by peers enhances listening comprehension (Hrynova et al., 2023, p. 15).

Key advantages of using podcasts include their general accessibility and free availability; diversification of resources for distance learning; informative and creative content presentation; exposure to various accents and language variants, broadening linguistic horizons and adaptability; availability at multiple proficiency levels; provision of common linguistic expressions (formulaic language) that support speech production; support for students with dyslexia or other learning differences; and facilitation of more effective independent study for PhD students (Kirshova, 2021, p. 283).

The use of educational podcasts enables the achievement of several methodological objectives, such as expanding and enriching students' lexical repertoire, developing and refining their grammatical skills, and enhancing speaking and writing abilities. Educational podcasts can support speaking development through activities such as creating messages that convey the most important information on a topic, summarizing the content of received information, composing narratives about oneself, one's environment, or future plans, justifying one's intentions or actions, reflecting on facts or events with examples, arguments, and conclusions, and expressing opinions on specific issues.

To develop listening skills, it is essential to understand the purpose and topic of the text, the logical sequence of information or argumentation (including the order of facts or events), the interrelationship between facts, causes, and events, the speaker's attitude toward the subject, the ability to predict subsequent developments, and the opportunity to express one's own judgement or opinion on the material.

A typical workflow for podcast-based activities aimed at improving speaking and listening begins with the lecturer explaining the aims and objectives of the project to the PhD students, familiarizing them with the rules of the podcast platform, specifying procedures for posting content and online interaction between students and the lecturer, defining the algorithm for working with the podcast, and establishing criteria for assessing student participation. This initial stage concludes with the lecturer creating a thematic podcast page for the students, which can be hosted on a social service such as www.podomatic.com, providing information about the project creator and describing the tasks to be completed. During the main stage, students select a topic and prepare the text for their podcast, ensuring that each participant has the opportunity to present themselves.

The lecturer monitors the students' independent work, assisting them in producing grammatically and lexically accurate scripts, which are subsequently recorded and uploaded to the podcast platform for further discussion.

Students and lecturers listen to or view the podcasts outside class time and are encouraged to participate in online discussions by posting brief reviews and comments regarding the content or structure. All students are encouraged to participate in an online discussion of the podcast, posting brief reviews and comments on a microblog regarding its content and/or structure. The lecturer then facilitates a group discussion and analysis of the podcasts that were well-received. In the final stage, students conduct self-assessment, reflecting on how effectively they addressed the topic, the difficulties encountered, and suggestions for improving future work. The lecturer completes the assessment of student performance based on previously established criteria.

Conclusions and Research Prospects. Podcasts can be employed as either a primary or supplementary tool for foreign language instruction within the framework of the communicative approach, as they facilitate discussions, group and pair work on text analysis, brainstorming, interactive presentations, practical communication, and topic-based debate, all of which are directed towards the development of communicative competence. Their use not only enhances PhD-students' receptive and productive skills but also provides opportunities for autonomous learning, enabling learners to engage with authentic language materials outside the classroom and at their own pace.

From a methodological perspective, podcasts support differentiated learning, allowing instructors to tailor materials to various proficiency levels and learning styles. They encourage the integration of digital literacy skills alongside language acquisition, fostering students' abilities to navigate online resources, critically evaluate content, and participate in digital discourse.

In terms of research prospects, further empirical studies are warranted to examine the long-term effects of podcast-based learning on foreign language acquisition, particularly in specialised contexts such

as medical English or other fields. Future research could investigate the impact of podcasts on the development of specific skills, including pragmatic competence. Additionally, the potential of podcasts to enhance intercultural competence, motivation, and learner autonomy represents an important avenue for exploration. Comparative studies could also evaluate the effectiveness of podcasts relative to other digital and traditional instructional tools.

In conclusion, the integration of podcasts into foreign language for scientific communication curricula offers both pedagogical and research opportunities. Their flexibility, accessibility, and capacity to engage learners in authentic communicative practices make them a valuable resource for enhancing language learning outcomes, while ongoing research can inform best practices and optimise their use in diverse educational settings.

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