
DEVELOPING LISTENING SKILLS THROUGH PODCASTS AND AUDIOBOOKS IN TEACHING RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract:	Keywords
Currently, audio learning tools such as podcasts and audiobooks are becoming increasingly popular in teaching Russian as a foreign language. This research project focuses on the role of podcasts and audiobooks in developing listening skills among students. By analyzing literature and conducting practical research, the project identifies the advantages of using podcasts and audiobooks in teaching Russian. Podcasts provide a wide selection of topics and speech styles, helping students get accustomed to various accents and themes. Audiobooks, in turn, allow students to immerse themselves in authentic language material and develop listening comprehension skills in context. The study evaluates the effectiveness of using podcasts and audiobooks in the educational process, identifying optimal strategies for integrating these resources into the curriculum. The author emphasizes the need for systematic use of audio materials to improve listening skills and focuses on supporting students in working with audio resources. The results of this research may be useful for teachers of Russian as a foreign language, students, and researchers interested in developing listening skills through audio learning.	Audio learning, linguistic diversity, podcasts, technological progress, listening, speech.

Introduction

Listening to podcasts and audiobooks can help people develop language comprehension skills. When we listen to native speakers' speech or the dramatic sound presentation of a book, we perceive language differently than when reading. We must focus on each word and phrase and cannot skip or speed through the content as we might when reading. The audio format in podcasts or audiobooks encourages listeners to pay close attention to the story or information, making them think more actively about it. This can allow learners to become more familiar with the language used and understand how information is structured and conveyed in a natural context.

Audiobooks are particularly useful for students who might find long texts in a new language challenging. The fact that audiobooks allow students to hear the flow and rhythm of the language can make it more accessible to them and reduce reading anxiety. Furthermore, listening to a narrative from an experienced narrator can bring the language to life and introduce intonation, emotions, and emphasis into words and phrases in a way that students

might not achieve by simply reading silently. When students encounter language in the wider world—whether it be an overheard conversation in a shop, a recorded announcement, or a public speech—being able to "tune in" and understand is a critical skill. Podcasts and audiobooks can provide students with regular and diverse examples of how language is actually used in real situations outside the classroom. This can include nuances of meaning and expression that cannot be learned from textbooks, or understanding of different genres and formats used for various purposes. [1]

For example, students can listen to interviews, discussions, reviews, dramas, documentaries, and everyday conversations in podcasts, each of which uses language in slightly different ways. Through regular exposure to this range of language use, tied to context, they can develop a broad understanding of how to interpret language and respond to it, as well as the methods through which information can be conveyed.

Literature Review

Language comprehension involves understanding spoken, written speech, or sign language. It's a critical skill for learning and using a language, as students must be able to comprehend the language directed at them. Audio content introduces students to various speech styles and dialects of the same language, aiding them in learning to understand and interpret conversational speech, especially in situations where the speaker may not use the standard form of the language, like in movies and TV shows. Additionally, listening to audio recordings in the target language can help listeners grasp the range of intonations, rhythm, and the melodic line of spoken language—all vital components of successful verbal communication. Moreover, students are more likely to stay engaged and focused when listening to something of interest. Podcasts and audiobooks come in a wide variety of genres, so listeners can find something that matches their interests and hobbies. This continual exposure to conversational language develops the skill of focusing on the flow of speech, which may not be supported by other visual cues, to begin deciphering the meaning of spoken language. [2]

Furthermore, listening to podcasts and audiobooks indeed engages different learning styles and intelligences, such as auditory learning. As a result, improving auditory perception and language awareness positively affects reading and writing skills. For instance, Dr. J. Tea Hansen, an associate professor of Spanish at the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Case Western Reserve University, shared that her students use podcasts in their classes. She claimed her students noticed significant improvements in both listening and reading comprehension in Spanish after listening to podcasts and describing what they listened to. She believes podcasts not only offer students an additional tool for growth and demonstrating their understanding of the material but also another method to aid students' progress and growth in language learning. [3]

Using podcasts and audiobooks, students can immerse themselves in a wide range of vocabulary usage. By listening to real-life narratives or dialogues, students can intentionally search for unknown words or phrases and identify different forms of a single

word in various contexts. In a one-hour podcast episode, students might encounter from 2,000 to 3,000 words of a new language, depending on their current level of proficiency. One effective way to utilize this vast vocabulary is using a so-called frequency list of words—a set of the most commonly used words in a language designed to increase language learning efficiency. According to language acquisition research, the first 1,000 frequently used words typically make up 85-90% of the vocabulary in an average spoken or written text, whereas the first 3,000 words usually cover up to 95%. By structuring vocabulary learning using a frequency list and integrating listening and speaking practice, especially in the context of podcasts and audiobooks, students can systematically expand their word bank and gradually increase their language proficiency. [4]

On the other hand, many materials are filled with cultural references that might be very difficult or nearly impossible to explain in another language. When materials are created by locals for a native audience, they are typically written and spoken in a way that assumes a certain level of cultural knowledge and awareness of the audience. Learning cultural references in the target language not only gives us insights into the life and culture of a society but also helps us understand and appreciate the historical and social movements within that community. It also assists us in comparing cultural differences between the language's place of origin and cultures we are familiar with, forming a critical view of cultures and societies, and helping us become better global citizens.

Methodology

I.V. Robert notes that the practice of creating educational podcasts in the field of teaching Russian as a foreign language is almost non-existent. On the other hand, the researcher mentions that authentic Russian-language podcasts could become a leading tool in developing auditory and communicative competencies. However, this requires careful analysis and selection of podcasts for each specific thematic block and educational level. Using podcasts as audio material in teaching Russian to foreign students has several advantages:

- The narrator's speech in a podcast is usually well-structured, with clear diction and lexical forms. This facilitates understanding and learning certain "academic" patterns of spoken language.
- Podcasts allow for a deep dive into the details of the subject matter, learn about the development of science in the chosen field, and study the Russian language.
- Podcasts are examples of "living" Russian language.

Considering that for Uzbekistan, this is a relatively new information phenomenon created "by the young for the young," it means a student will hear in the podcast the same speech they might encounter in everyday life. This contributes to the formation of necessary speech competencies and speech etiquette. Podcasts "allow solving a whole range of methodological tasks: forming auditory skills and abilities to understand foreign speech by ear, forming and improving listening and pronunciation skills, expanding and enriching

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vocabulary, forming and improving grammatical skills, developing speaking and writing skills." [5, 6, 7]

Russian authentic podcasts for use in the course "Russian as a Foreign Language" can be conditionally divided into two groups: linguocultural and linguoprofessional. Linguocultural podcasts cover socially popular topics. Their use as audio materials can help not only in developing students' speech competence but also in building a "dialogue of cultures," which is important considering the high level of precedence and phraseology in the Russian language. These podcasts contain concepts that belong more to the group of neologisms or barbarisms currently popular among the Russian-speaking population. The productive aspect in this case is that such podcasts reflect the contemporary state of the Russian language. For students studying Russian as a foreign language at the elementary and basic levels (A1), linguocultural podcasts will be useful in terms of containing neutral vocabulary, examples of its combination, and use in speech. Students who are more advanced in Russian (B1, B2) can work on understanding and using specific language units (neologisms, barbarisms, slang, precedent, and phraseological units) while listening. [8]

Results

When discussing listening mechanisms, it's important to consider the challenges of this process, which typically fall into three groups:

- Auditory difficulties caused by the linguistic features of spoken language (phonemic difficulties: the discrepancy between the graphic and acoustic image of a word in its incomplete pronunciation); rhythmic and intonational peculiarities; lexical difficulties related to polysemy, the use of articles, etc.; difficulty in perceiving expressive and stylistically colored speech, generated, for example, by idioms.
- Difficulties in understanding the semantic aspect of information, caused by understanding the objective content of the information; understanding the logic of the presentation; understanding the overall idea of the message, understanding the motives of the speaker, and forming an attitude towards what is heard.
- Communicative difficulties related to the conditions of communication due to the one-time presentation of information (no opportunity to analyze each word); the speaker's pace (the need to perceive speech in an imposed speed mode); deviation from the usual speech, normative style; cases of discrepancy between different language components in different language cultures; lack of visual support and feedback from the information source.

With this in mind, educators should be aware of all the above problems that complicate the work of psychophysiological listening mechanisms, as in real listening, communication mechanisms work almost simultaneously. Listening training (a system of exercises) i.e., understanding speech requires command of language means. Listening work includes: 1) language units, mastering them as skills; 2) the ability to understand speech using these skills. The listening process begins with perception, which can be correct, incorrect, or

accurate. Correct perception is based on the foundation of diligent work on forming auditory and pronunciation skills. [9, 10]

Naturally, any individual feature of pronunciation, voice timbre, sufficiently rapid tempo, and certain speech defects will complicate its understanding. To overcome difficulties related to understanding the speech of language speakers, it is necessary from the beginning of training to listen to their speech, gradually reducing the number of educational texts presented by the teacher. It should also be remembered that the more language speakers the student listens to, the easier it will be for them to adapt to individual speech manners.

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge of language usage norms in various situations and command of situational variants of expressing the same communicative intention, accordingly, the listener should know these variants and understand the reasons for using one of them in the context of a specific communication situation. Sociocultural competence implies knowledge of the rules and social norms of behavior of language speakers, traditions, history, culture, and social system of the country of the studied language. Therefore, the student should have the skills to perceive and understand oral texts from the perspective of intercultural communication, for which they need background knowledge. [11]

Linguoprofessional podcasts can be considered those covering narrow topics, talking about a certain field of scientific or cultural activity using specialized language and terminology. Such podcasts can include the series of podcasts on the art of the electronic journal "Arzamas," podcasts of the "Lectorium" group from the "Radio Mayak" station, podcasts of the scientific Internet community "Post Science." However, they can be used as a source of additional data in the field studied by students. By perceiving the information transmitted by these sources, students are uniquely involved in the modern scientific discourse, expand their terminological vocabulary in the chosen specialty, and learn and interpret certain reliable facts. Analyzing one of the podcasts of the "Arzamas" journal — "The World of Vladimir Nabokov," one can note the presence of certain literary and philological terminology: postmodernism, authorial style, allegory, critical article, contextual synonyms, syntactic analysis, personification, rhetorical question, reader's view, artistic perception, indent, phonetic means, preamble, exposition, climax, parceling, epigram, literary circle, literary direction, comparison, hypertext, archetype, expressive means, antithesis, author's personality, literary hero, epilogue, author's intent, plot line, prototype, literary criticism, romantic hero, drama, co-authorship, creative portrait, linguistic portrait. For students of a technical direction studying these branches of knowledge, such a podcast would be useful in terms of deepening specialization and developing the skill of perceiving the language of science by ear, contributing to further successful training, and therefore, success in the chosen profession. [12, 13]

Discussions

The use of podcasts and audiobooks in teaching Russian as a foreign language is an important and effective method for developing listening comprehension skills. These audio

resources provide students with access to real language samples, which they can study at their own pace and in a comfortable environment. Podcasts offer a variety of topics and styles of speech, helping students adapt to different communication situations and accents. Through podcasts, they can hear different pronunciation variants of words and expressions, which promotes better understanding and confidence in using the language. Audiobooks, in turn, allow students to immerse themselves in authentic texts and expand their vocabulary. By listening to audiobooks, they learn to recognize the speech features of native speakers, enriching their knowledge of the culture and traditions of the country of the language they are studying. However, for maximum effectiveness of using podcasts and audiobooks, it is essential to correctly select materials that match the students' level of preparation, as well as to conduct further discussions and analyze the content together with the teacher. Such an approach helps stimulate active student participation and advance their learning of the Russian language.

Conclusions

In the current era, where technology becomes an increasingly integral part of the educational process, podcasts and audiobooks represent effective tools for developing listening comprehension skills in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Research has shown that the use of podcasts allows students to immerse themselves in diverse topics and styles of speech, which in turn aids in developing resilience to different accents, speeds of speech, and intonations. Furthermore, audiobooks offer the opportunity to listen to authentic Russian texts, enhancing speech comprehension skills in context and expanding vocabulary. It's important to note that integrating podcasts and audiobooks into the educational process requires careful planning and support from teachers. Students should be provided access to a variety of audio materials that match their level of language preparation and interests. It's also crucial to equip students with the necessary strategies and tools for effective analysis and understanding of audio resources.

Using podcasts and audiobooks in learning Russian can be particularly beneficial for students studying the language outside its country of origin, as it offers them an opportunity for immersion in the linguistic environment and to improve their language skills in real-time. Overall, this study highlights the significance of audio learning in developing listening comprehension skills in teaching Russian as a foreign language. Podcasts and audiobooks not only enrich the learning process but also motivate students to independently study the language outside the classroom.

Listening to podcasts and audiobooks is not just an effective way to improve language skills but also an opportunity to learn about different cultures and societies. When we read books, we can imagine characters, settings, and situations in ways familiar to us. However, many podcast and audiobook materials are spoken with various social and regional accents, often reflecting the diversity of the speakers' cultural traditions. Familiarity with different accents and sound patterns, especially listening to materials created for native speakers, helps us

understand the natural flow of the language. Moreover, it enhances our listening skills, teaching us to listen to conversations more effectively.

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