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## PECULIARITIES OF INCORPORATING TED TALKS VIDEOS IN ENGLISH CLASSES FOR ECOLOGY STUDENTS

*TED Talks lectures have gained worldwide popularity as a powerful resource which has a tremendous educational potential to facilitate learning. Some of their peculiarities, including authenticity, accessibility, versatility, lexical diversity, motivating and appealing content are discussed in this article.*

*The author proves the necessity and possibility of incorporating TED Talks materials in the educational process, a foreign language acquisition in particular, emphasizing their efficacy for the development of listening and note-taking skills of the learners, as well as speaking proficiency, critical thinking and reasoning, vocabulary enrichment etc. Frequent TED listening practices can lead to the improvement in lecture listening skills in a foreign language at university.*

*The author is sure that TED Talks videos are highly suitable not only for offline, but also for online or distance classes, and for self-work assignments which these types of learning imply. If integrated in ESP classes, they can help efficiently prepare students for their communication in the academic and professional environment. To ensure this, the author presents a list of TED Talks for ecology students, divided into such categories as: natural resources, biology and wildlife, nature conservation, weather and natural disasters, sustainability, climate change etc. It is emphasized that using interactive environmentally-oriented TED Talks at English classes will enhance ecological literacy and sustainability awareness of ecology students as well as promote their autonomous and independent learning. The results of the survey conducted among the senior students of Ecology department concerning their attitude and efficacy of TED Talks videos are presented in the article.*

*Special attention is given by the author to the criteria for selecting TED Talks materials, including their relevance to learning objectives, academic course/theme, expediency, students' language proficiency level and their preferences, video duration and vocabulary complexity etc. The author outlines demotivating factors for lower-proficiency students and suggests recommendations on how to ensure their successful comprehension of TED Talks.*

**Key words:** TED Talks videos, authenticity, foreign language acquisition, ecological awareness, listening and speaking skills, public speaking skills, independent learning.

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## ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ВІДЕОМАТЕРІАЛІВ TED TALKS У НАВЧАННІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ СТУДЕНТІВ-ЕКОЛОГІВ

*Відеоматеріали проекту TED Talks набули світової популярності як потужний освітній ресурс, який має величезний потенціал, спрямований на полегшення навчання. Деякі особливості лекцій, включаючи автентичність, доступність, зручність, різноплановість, лексичне різноманіття, мотивуючий і привабливий контент, обговорюються в статті.*

*Автор доводить необхідність та можливість впровадження лекцій TED Talks в освітній процес, зокрема у навчання іноземної мови, наголошуючи на їх ефективності для розширення словникового запасу та розвитку мовленнєвих навичок студентів, зокрема слухання й говоріння, конспектування, ораторської майстерності, критичного мислення та міркування тощо.*

*Автор впевнений, що відео TED Talks можуть використовуватися як для офлайн занять, так й для онлайн та дистанційного навчання в якості завдань для самостійного опрацювання. Якщо інтегрувати TED Talks у заняття з іноземної мови для професійного спілкування, зокрема для майбутніх екологів, це може сприяти їх кращій підготовці до спілкування в професійному та академічному середовищі.*

*У статті запропоновано список презентацій TED Talks екологічної спрямованості, поділених на категорії: природні ресурси, біологія, охорона навколишнього середовища, проблеми сталого розвитку, кліматичні зміни та ін. Застосування подібних відеоматеріалів може позитивно вплинути на розвиток екологічної свідомості та культури студентів. Результати опитування, проведеного серед студентів старших курсів екологічного департаменту щодо їх ставлення та ефективності ресурсу TED Talks, представлено в статті.*

*Особлива увага приділяється автором критеріям відбору матеріалів TED Talks, а саме: доцільності, відповідності цілям навчання, академічному курсу, темі, рівню володіння студентами іноземною мовою, їхнім впровадженням, а також тривалості відео, словниковому навантаженню тощо. Автор вказує на демотивуючі фактори та пропонує рекомендації для студентів з нижчим рівнем знань щодо покращення розуміння ними прослуханої інформації.*

**Ключові слова:** відеоматеріали TED Talks, автентичність, вивчення іноземної мови, екологічна свідомість, навички слухання/говоріння, ораторська майстерність, самоосвіта.

**Problem statement.** Nowadays e-learning with its constantly evolving educational platforms and products is gaining popularity as the most prospective and efficient means of learning which provides quick access to numerous learning resources and is able to adapt the educational process to learners' needs and abilities. Innovative Internet technologies have become indispensable for foreign languages acquisition, allowing the learners to fully immerse into the target language environment, get acquainted with its socio-cultural peculiarities and master their basic language skills and professional competencies. In particular, great possibilities are offered by TED.com, a famous platform launched in 1984 to promote «the ideas that are worth spreading». Now more than 3,500 TED Talks are freely available online, and hundreds of them are added weekly. Prominent educators, environmentalists, businessmen, scientists, artists, and philanthropists are invited to TED conferences organized worldwide to share their views. TED lectures and TED-Ed Animations have gained worldwide notoriety as the resources which have a tremendous educational potential to facilitate learning.

**Research analysis.** Literature review shows that application of TED Talks materials has been actively discussed by some foreign scientists, including A. Takaesu, M. Mallinder, C. Pell, U. Nurmukhamedov who consider TED videos to be a valuable teaching and learning tool which can be productively exploited for language learning purposes. Among the possible expected outcomes, learners are likely to master their listening skills and get listening fluency, enrich their vocabulary, improve pronunciation, grammar, develop note-taking and public speaking skills etc.

The recent researches conducted by I. Humeniuk, H. Korniyush, N. Stetsenko, K. Baisha etc. have practically proved the possibility of incorporating TED videos into the English classes, for teaching professionally oriented language, in particular, to management, finance and engineering students. The positive dynamics the students demonstrated involved a discernible improvement in such language skills as listening comprehension and speaking proficiency, along with broadening their outlook in general (Humeniuk, 2021).

It is emphasized that the so-called 'authenticity' and 'naturalness' are crucial features that differ live performances in TED Talks videos from some artificially created video and audio learning materials where speakers simply reproduce what has been written by someone else. Indeed, TED speeches are a good example of a living language which is spoken, understood and recognized by many, even despite the fact that some of them are produced by non-native speakers who have specific accents, not perfect pronunciation and grammar, which is exactly what learners are likely to encounter in real-life situations, and which makes them not be afraid or feel embarrassed about making mistakes while speaking (Mallinder, 2016). The authentic listening materials can help them become used to real aural input (Takaesu, 2012).

L. Rubenstein highlights that many TED Talks address what motivates people and inspires them to learn (Rubenstein, 2012). Indeed, TED videos are engaging and learner-friendly, suitable for different ages and preferences. Being versatile, they cover a wide array of topics, including technology and science, art and education, entertainment and design, global issues etc. Some videos provide well-grounded, accurate information based on scientific research and experiments. However, there are plenty of experience-sharing presentations which are intended to spark curiosity of listeners, inspiring them to do some activity, for example, learn a new language or get rid of a bad habit. Despite differences in visual format and content, all TED videos have some features in common – they are interesting, true-to-life, motivating and appealing, free, humane and democratic, and have a tremendous potential for the effective preparation of learners for communication in the academic and professional environment (Korniyush, 2019).

Taking into consideration the essential features of TED Talks videos, the **aim of this research** is to analyze the ways how they can be incorporated in the process of teaching a foreign language in the conditions of online or blended education, identifying their advantages for the development of communicative competence and ecological awareness of Ecology students and analyzing possible limitations of their implementation.

**The main material presentation.** Undoubtedly, TED Talks integration in the educational process, in a foreign language acquisition in particular, can help the language teacher achieve several goals simultaneously: on the one hand, this can guarantee modern, interesting, appealing content delivered by a speaker whose language is authentic, fluent, phonetically colored, and on the other hand, provide learners with a more or less expert opinion in the field of knowledge they specialize in. They get a chance to learn about somebody's creative ideas or innovative approaches, start reasoning and thinking critically. This makes TED videos highly suitable for ESP courses.

In accordance with the ecological themes defined in ESP curriculum for bachelor students majoring in Ecology, such categories of environmentally-oriented TED videos may be offered for consideration:

- *biology, animals and plants extinction* (How trees talk to each other// The future of fashion is made from mushrooms// Are insect brains the secret to great AI// Do insects have personalities?// Why bees are disappearing etc.)

- *nature conservation* (Who owns the «wilderness»?// Why protect national parks?// A new way to restore the Earth's biodiversity// How to restore a rainforest// Creating a world without pollution and waste etc.)

- *sustainability issues; reuse, reduce and recycle* (Ink made of air pollution// Creative houses from reclaimed stuff// Turning trash into toys for learning// Old books reborn as art// The warmth and wisdom of mud buildings etc.)

- *natural resources* (Innovating to zero!// High-altitude wind energy from kites!// Why don't we cover deserts with solar panels?// What if buildings created energy instead of consuming it etc.)

- *weather and natural disasters* (Why are earthquakes hard to predict?// How accurate is the weather forecast?)

- *climate change* (Why lakes and rivers should have the same rights as humans// My country will be under water soon// Climate change will displace millions etc.)

The content analysis of more than 50 TED Talks videos dedicated to the environmental issues shows they are rich in highly specialized vocabulary and specific terms, as well as common words, proper names, phraseological units and set expressions. It's evident that TED Talks designed to reach a wider audience have a lower scientific load and use less terminology than university lectures, but playing a supplementary role, they can form a sufficient basis for learners to conduct their everyday communication and even professional activity in a foreign language.

Moreover, frequent TED listening practices can lead to the improvement in lecture listening skills in a foreign language at university.

Many educators support practicing TED Talks videos as a classroom offline activity. Nevertheless, they may be suitable for online or distance classes as well, and for self-work assignments which these types of learning imply. Taking a TED video as a basis, teachers can design a lesson in their own style and make it more informative, entertaining and interactive.

However, selecting an appropriate video from a vast library is quite a challenging task for a teacher who should take into account a lot of factors, primarily its expediency, relevance to learning objectives/academic course/theme, complexity of the material, language proficiency level and preferences of students, etc. When the content is intrinsically appealing to students, they feel more and more motivated to do the activity. Topics which contain novelty, contradiction or intrigue, for example, «These animals are also plants ... wait, what?», «Are birds real?» or «Architecture that repairs itself», as a rule, arouse more of their interest, while those which are familiar to them are easier to comprehend, which is also beneficial. In other words, the complexity of the material can be balanced by the interest and background knowledge students have.

Assessing the learning materials to be appropriate for the level of learners is an important step, especially considering difference in language proficiency of the learners within a single academic group, as well as a relatively high vocabulary load and speakers' speech rate in many TED Talks presentations. U. Nurmukhamedov suggests using them with more advanced learners, and before doing it as a classroom activity, he points out, language teachers should make sure that their students know at least 2,000 most frequently used words (Nurmukhamedov, 2017: 781).

To reduce the vocabulary overload and ensure successful comprehension, teachers can start with pre-listening/pre-viewing tasks, identify the list of new words from the presentation and pre-teach them through various activities. When watching, for example, at home, visual support in the form of subtitles and scripts may be helpful either, allowing learners to establish a pronunciation-spelling-meaning link concerning new words.

The length of the chosen video is also an important criterion to retain concentration of the audience and keep them interested. The longer it is, the higher the risk is that students will lose focus and fail to grasp the main idea. It can't be neglected that duration, together with vocabulary complexity and speaking speed, may become restraining, demotivating fac-

tors for many lower-proficiency students who have weaker listening skills and an insufficient level in English in general to get fully engaged in these activities. To ease their perception, shorter videos should be selected. Still, if the video is quite long, it is recommended to divide it into segments and make stops to identify problem areas and clarify, or take notes. If necessary, they can be downloaded at home and listened to plenty of times.

To achieve the learning goals in the class, the time allotted for watching and doing pre-, during- or post-listening/viewing tasks must be distributed properly. With lower-level students, post-listening tasks should be modified to make them more manageable, thus less frustrating (Takaesu, 2012).

It should also be noted that based on TED Talks materials, a teacher can focus students' attention on various methods and techniques of delivering public speeches, making them analyze the ways how to hold audience attention, get feedback, use proper gestures, eye contact, mimics and other elements of body language. Taking into consideration the fact that ecology students actively participate in conferences, round-table debates where they are supposed to express their opinions and present the results of their findings in a more appropriate way, knowing these peculiarities can be an asset.

To inspire thoughtful practice, language teachers can also organize post-viewing environmentally-oriented discussions or debates in which students can share their opinions, give arguments, defend their viewpoints and generally master the art of public speaking. This can be done even in the conditions of online education.

The results of the survey conducted among the senior students of Ecology department of Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University have revealed that 79% of the students admit having certain positive outcomes after watching the TED Talks. They reported they enjoyed the content/topics presented in the videos and discussed afterwards, saying they were extremely cognitive and enhanced their ecological lit-

eracy and sustainability awareness. Apart from that, they emphasized learning additional vocabulary, both general and professional (81%), improving listening and speaking skills (72%). It is noteworthy that TED presentations motivated 63% of ecology students to go deeper in learning, developing, acting, doing some research in the field of ecology and nature conservation.

Another questionnaire embraced various aspects which could somehow influence students' comprehension while watching TED Talks videos. The most frequently mentioned limiting factors were: vocabulary complexity (81%), speaker's accent (63%), speech rate (79%) and video length (71%). Even after getting acquainted with the new vocabulary, some students reported it was difficult, especially on the initial stage, to catch up with fast speed speaking. Those videos were difficult to focus on which were more than 8–10 minutes long, but sometimes the complexity of the material was compensated by the interest they evoked.

About 45% feel they are motivated enough to do listening on their own, without any instruction or force, to a wider range of topics, not only concerning the environmental issues. It is definitely inspiring when watching TED Talks goes beyond the class, promoting self-directed and independent learning (Rubenstein, 2012).

**Conclusion.** To sum up, TED Talks resources have a tremendous potential as an educational tool which allows solving the problem of learners' efficient immersion into the authentic language environment and is able to get adapted to their needs and abilities. Taking into consideration their benefits, including their importance for the development of learners' communicative competence, more attention should be paid to incorporating them in a foreign language acquisition, particularly in the conditions of online or blended education. Moreover, using interactive environmentally-oriented TED Talks at English classes can enhance ecological literacy and sustainability awareness of ecology students as well as promote their autonomous and independent learning.

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