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## **EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY FOR IMPROVING ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS**

***Анотація.** Стаття присвячена питанню використання онлайн технологій для покращення навичок говоріння англійською мовою. На сучасному етапі розвитку суспільства, акцент при викладанні та вивченні іноземних мов робиться на онлайн ресурси та інструменти, а не на традиційні методики. Так, у роботі досліджені п'ять ресурсів, робота з якими значно покращує процес навчання та робить його більш ефективним та інтерактивним: YouGlish, Forvo, VOA Pronunciation Gide, Dialogs for Everyday Use та ESL Video.*

***Ключові слова:** онлайн технології, говоріння, онлайн інструменти, методика, англійська мова.*

Nowadays the focus of teaching and learning is moving at a fast pace from the physical environment to online and virtual reality. Both teachers and students are getting used to new circumstances. Drastic changes require sharp and immediate reactions. Thus, the process of teaching is getting more advanced and extensive. Educational tools that proved to work perfectly in classrooms are often not appropriate for working online. One of the most challenging aspects of teaching English online is developing and mastering speaking skills.

Speaking is a broad notion, which embraces several aspects. S. Torky regards speaking as an interactive phenomenon occurring in real-time and playing the important role in building messages while communicating [3]. K. V. Rao describes it as the crucial skill needed for “the practical usage of a foreign language” [1, p. 101]. Many researchers, including J. C. Richards [2], believe that mastering speaking skills is a priority for various language learners.

Speaking skills include not only practice of communication and interaction with other participants of the communicative act but also pronunciation and fluency in understanding and reaction to the oral message. To master them, developers of online educational products offer several options.

One of the most popular and easiest to use is *YouGlish*. This is a YouTube-based online dictionary on pronunciation. It provides users with numerous real-life examples

of how a word or a word-phrase is pronounced by real people in a certain context. A person can choose among three variants of pronunciation: British, American, and Australian (Fig. 1). In addition to a video, YouGlish also has a script with the word / word-phrase a person is looking for.



Fig. 1 The example of a word search on YouGlish

For example, printing “speaking skills” in the search bar gave 353 results with this term, 240 of which is pronounced in American English; 52 – in British English; and 61 – in Australian English. In case, a person needs to save examples, it is rather easy to do for registered people. YouGlish helps improve not exclusively English pronunciation. The language database varies from Arabic and Chinese to Polish and Turkish (16 languages in total).

Another useful online resource is *FORVO*, a platform allowing people to access many pronunciation audio files. The difference between YouGlish and FORVO is that users can create and download their own files called clips on FORVO and have the right to vote for the best / worst clip (Fig. 2).

The range of languages is more diverse comparing with that on YouGlish. The most popular ones are German, Spanish, English, French, Russian, Tatar, Portuguese and Japanese. Besides, it is possible to search pronunciation by categories: cities, idioms, animals, male surnames, food, etc. In general, there are more than 100 categories in both English and other languages.

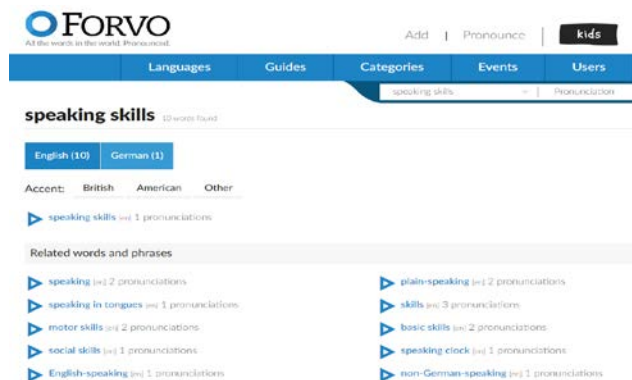


Fig. 2 The FORVO interface

If a student has a task to analyze and reflect on current news, s/he always has some problems with pronunciation of proper names. To deal with it, in 2000, Voice of America created their own resource *VOA Pronunciation Guide* with a database comprising about 7,000 entries (Fig. 3). It is based on VOA News, which records materials specifically for those who are learning English. The resource enables people to search by categories: What’s Hot; Browse; and Help (Pronunciation Keys, Languages, and Correctness).

		MADURO, NICOLAS	nee-koh-LAHSÁ Á Á mah-DOO-roh
		PRAYUTH CHAN-OCHA	prah-YOOT chahn oh-CHAH
		PUTIN, VLADIMIR	vlah-DEE-meerÁ Á Á POO-tihn
		SOLEIMANI, QASSEM	KAH -sum Sole áĈ“ ah -MAHN - ee
		SUGA, YOSHIHIDE	yow-shee-HEE-day SOO-guh
		ZELENSKY, VOLODYMYR	VOH loh-dee-meer Zeh-LEN-ski

Fig. 3 “HOT” on VOA Pronunciation Guide

The result of the search is displayed as a table, where the first column is an audio file, the second one is the name itself, and the third one is transcription. The rules of transcribing are provided in the Pronunciation Keys tab.

To practice speaking online, the United Department of State and its resource center American English offer their users a collection of situational dialogues based on everyday situations called “*Dialogs for Everyday Use.*” Each dialogue has Language Notes where creators provide a short description and explanation of the most important phrases. However, one of the main disadvantages of this collection is that its format is

text without audio tracks. To hear how to pronounce a phrase or a word, a person can use YouGlish as a supplementary website.

To combine speaking and listening skills, teachers can integrate videos from *ESL Video* into their teaching. These videos are divided into categories under the level of a watcher: Beginning, Low Intermediate, Intermediate, High Intermediate, and Advanced. A set of tasks, such as multiple-choice questions or a gap-filling, follows each video (Fig. 4).

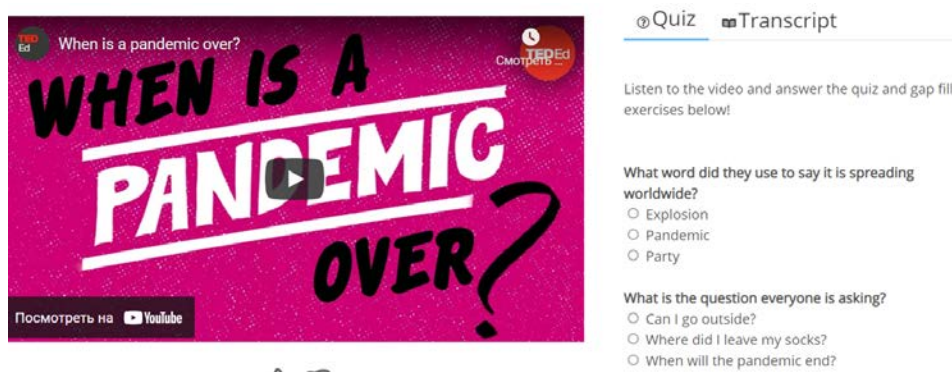


Fig. 4 The video lesson on ESL Video

To alleviate difficulties in understanding, the authors of the resource offer a transcript of the material a person is working with. To make the search easier, a student can use a Categories tab. Besides, it is possible to use ESL Conversation Questions cards and imitate a dialogue between people.

Thus, teaching speaking online can be an easy and engaging process. The modern virtual environment enables educators to find materials appropriate for certain situations and people of different levels of English proficiency.

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