

## Formation of the ability to listen in English

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the formation of listening skills among students learning a foreign language. In addition, the article deals with the problem of formation of listening skills stages and ways of formation of these skills using short popular science texts selected taking into account engineering specialties. Special attention is paid to the methods of working with students with multi-level formation of listening skills in general, and in the professional field in particular.

Recommendations are presented for the use of educational audio materials in the independent work of students, including using an electronic educational environment, as well as the principles of selection of audio texts and the principles of the organization of educational material in general.

The article also defines a new method for teaching listening, identifies goals and objectives, mechanisms of listening.

The role of listening in the process of mastering a foreign language as a means of communication is emphasized, arguments are given in favor of the constant expansion of vocabulary and the study of conversational grammar, some recommendations are given on the organization of practical listening classes in the student audience.

**Key words:** listening, extensive listening, intensive listening, foreign language texts, audio materials, listening skills, effective communication, communicative competence, phonological competence

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### Introduction

In the context of the communicative orientation of teaching students a foreign language and in accordance with the main purpose of teaching a foreign language at school – the formation of communicative competence, i.e. the ability and willingness to carry out interpersonal and intercultural communication - the problem of teaching listening is particularly relevant.

Listening is a very complex type of speech activity, since the processes of listening in real communication are irreversible and practically impossible to analyze and fix. What has already been said irrevocably "flies away", new information replaces the old one, there is not enough time to think about the incoming information, and therefore, understanding is often not achieved and the communication process can be nullified.

Listening or listening is the ability to receive and accurately interpret messages in the process of communication. Listening is the key to effective communication. The communication process will be doomed to failure without the ability to effectively listen to the message and understand it. A good listener will try to hear not only what is being said, but also what remains unsaid or only partially voiced (Schmidt, 2016).

A student should understand from the very first lessons that a significant impact on the effectiveness of his communication in a foreign language and the quality of his relationships with other people is how well he hears and understands the speaker, for example:

- I'm listening to get information;
- I'm listening to understand;
- I listen for pleasure;
- I listen in order to learn something.

In fact, most people, even following all the rules, are not able to remember 100% of the information. Studies show that only 25 to 50% of the information we hear can be remembered. This means that when we talk to our students, supervisor, colleagues for 10 minutes, they pay attention to less than half of the conversation. If we receive instructions or new information, we don't hear the whole message. What if important information is not perceived? It is obvious that by improving and improving listening skills, we increase the effectiveness of communication. This is an integral part of the successful acquisition of a foreign language and the formation of communicative competence among linguistics students. Moreover, it makes it possible to avoid misunderstandings, misunderstandings and even conflict situations in the process of communication, especially in a foreign language (Brown, 2011).

Effective listening in real communication involves observing body language, as it is quite common to notice a discrepancy between verbal and nonverbal messages.

Improving their listening skills in a foreign language depends on the level of development of students' phonological competence, which includes not only the correction of pronunciation of English sounds, but also the formation of listening skills, the correct use of their speech organs to reproduce English sounds and intonation. One of the most difficult tasks is to understand a native English speaker.

### **Some theoretical backgrounds**

To solve this problem, it is necessary to pay special attention to phonetic phenomena typical of spoken English: positional length of vowels; strong and weak forms; reduction (for example, the phrase "We have come for the books" is much easier to hear and understand [wi: həv klt fo: sAm buks] than [wi:v klt fa sm buks]); elision [him - im]; assimilation [les Jai - leJJai]; fusion [wud ju: laik... - wuifeu laik...], etc. (Abdelhafez, 2006).

Language begins with hearing. When we hear a sound, we try to repeat it, and even if we cannot achieve a perfect pronunciation identical to a native speaker, then we can definitely achieve a good sound and understand the interlocutor.

Following certain strategies, the student will be able to get the maximum benefit and get the best result from practical training at the very initial stage. Here are examples of some strategies aimed at understanding English speech (Ak, 2012).

#### Phonetic strategies

1. First try to forget about the meaning of words, listen to their sound, pay attention to the sound of the same sound throughout the listening, concentrate on it.
2. Try to catch the difference between the trained sound and similar to it in your native language, feel this difference and say out loud the words with the trained sound.
3. Listen carefully and pronounce words and sentences out loud, and not to yourself, in order not to create a false idea about the quality of our sound.
4. Do not forget that words that are pronounced the same can have completely different spellings and meanings (thread and through). At the same time, identical letters or letter combinations in words do not always give the same sound (the combination of the letters "ough" in different words is pronounced differently "through" [9ru:] and "though" [9u]). It is necessary to develop auditory skills.
5. Imagine the sound before you pronounce it, try to visualize how you are going to pronounce it.
6. Train to pronounce new sounds and distinguish them, remember that you are teaching your speech organs to move in a new way and use new muscles that did not participate in the work when pronouncing the sounds of your native language. It is necessary to practice daily (Berne, 2004).

## Phonological strategies

1. It is important to pronounce words clearly and avoid phonological errors that distort the meaning of the statement (Are you fond of working here? / Are you fond of walking here?).

2. Listen and imitate, listen not only to individual sounds, but pay attention to the pauses, the movement of the speaker's voice up or down, his intonation. This is no less important than pronouncing sounds.

The next stage is to practice "active listening" and learn globally detailed listening, i.e. to form the ability to perceive and retain in memory not only the essence, but also the details of information. This involves not only a conscious effort to hear individual words, but, more importantly, to try to understand the meaning of the full message. In live communication, special attention is paid to the communication partner. Consideration of counterarguments is carried out at the end of the statement. To form this skill, work is carried out in static, dynamic and variational pairs. The most effective, in our opinion, is the work of students in a dynamic pair, since this type of activity involves changing partners "diagonally and vertically", as well as in a variation pair, in which work is carried out "along the chain". Working in a static pair with a regular partner makes the task easier, and the concentration of attention weakens (Bouchareb, 2010).

For the formation of listening skills, it is necessary to use authentic material in the classroom that corresponds to the level of language proficiency, relevant to the topics studied and vocabulary. The presence of a record optimizes the work process, as it makes it possible to process information an unlimited number of times. The use of the audiovisual technique will make it possible to better understand the content of authentic audiovisual materials and at the same time improve skills in various types of foreign language speech activity, including listening.

It is recommended to use these techniques in the practice of teaching listening skills, paying attention to the methodological tools and material posted on the Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab website. This resource will help to improve listening skills both in practical classes and as part of students' independent work. The material is arranged in accordance with the didactic principles "from the particular to the whole", "from the simple to the complex", from the segmental to the super-segmental level. It should be noted the complex nature of the resource, on which the formation of basic language and speech strategies is carried out in a complex, but the dominant place is given to exercises and tasks aimed at the formation of listening skills (Gilbert, 1995).

Thus, the formation of the student's communicative competence largely depends on the formation of the student's verbal ability to understand speech by ear, since this skill serves as the basis for mastering a foreign language and is the key to effective intercultural communication.

It turned out that listening should be approached as a complex cognitive task that requires breadth and depth of impact, which neither I nor my students were given. Through research, I also realized that my teacher and I were not the only ones who were mistaken in learning this skill. It seems that throughout the history of English Language Learning (ELT), most students were not properly directed and faced the same problems (Hamouda, 2013).

Listening as a significant type of human speech activity is still one of the little-developed problems of the methodology and does not find full implementation in the content of teaching foreign languages. The lack of a systematic approach to teaching this type of speech activity is due to an insufficient objective assessment of its significance in educational activities and the incompleteness of the practical elaboration of the problem of teaching listening. Unfortunately, listening is not considered as a learning goal, so the ability to listen is formed in students mostly superficially and haphazardly. The lack of a serious approach to teaching this type of speech activity is due to insufficient objective assessment of its significance in

educational activities and the incompleteness of the theoretical elaboration of the problem. Meanwhile, listening (speech perception, speech comprehension) provides a huge opportunity to realize the educational, educational and developmental goals of the educational process. This is not only an important and in-demand speech skill, but also a way of acquiring knowledge in all subjects of the school cycle (especially when learning foreign languages), a channel of socialization, a means of forming the spiritual world of a person, introducing him to the values of culture (Hasan,2000). Playing audio materials and interviewing for understanding and completing tasks is a common way of testing. And so the practice of listening focuses on testing, but not learning the listening skill. Testing a skill without an initial explanation is unacceptable when teaching skills such as speaking, reading, etc., and therefore a special technique should be implemented in teaching listening skills. Brown also notes that it is necessary to focus not on words or sounds, but on creating a scheme and guessing meanings, in order to achieve great results (Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011). In addition, it should be noted that many listening texts are ineffective from the point of view of students, since these texts lack the natural specificity of the language and use a standard accent. Consequently, students do not feel ready for the difficulties that may arise during communication in real life. It is obvious that students need a more focused approach in the process of learning a skill, such learning methods as a cognitive approach, identifying existing knowledge, monitoring acquired knowledge and planning prove their effectiveness in the current educational system. Lack of phonetic knowledge, inability to recognize sounds and boundaries between syllables are considered the main obstacles to successful understanding of oral speech. Students should go a long way through exercises and auditions for confident interviewing. Such a concept as extensive listening has become widely used in the learning process, which was previously practiced only in the process of teaching reading (Macháčková, 2009).

It is assumed that students get more opportunities for perception and analysis of the text with extensive (extensive) listening, since they listen for a specific purpose, to understand the general meaning (Mc Bride, 2009).

Extensive listening assumes that there is a lot of text, but it is relatively simple, as a rule, a level or two lower than the general level of students. This type of reading includes educational books for reading (ENG graded readers), podcasts, chapters from audiobooks, etc. Watching educational films, as well as non-educational videos and programs adapted for educational purposes, lasting more than 3 minutes for levels A1-A2, and more than 6 minutes for levels B1-B2 also belong to this type. When listening to this type, there is usually no time limit, the only limiter will be the speed at which the speaker speaks. The extensive type of listening is best suited for repeating and consolidating what has been passed, activating (at the level of understanding in context) not only vocabulary, but also grammar of their own and previous levels, as well as passive pronunciation correction if students have difficulties with listening comprehension (Mc Bride ,2011).

Intensive reading or listening suggests that there is little text, but it either corresponds to the general level of students, or increased complexity. The intensive type of listening is best suited for vocabulary replenishment - this requires short thematic audio texts combined according to one or more features of vocabulary. Thematic very short educational podcasts are an example of intensive listening; for the study of new grammatical structures - in this case, podcasts are artificially saturated with examples containing the studied turn; for active pronunciation correction - in this case, the problematic sound or other phonetic phenomenon is accentuated and repeated many times in the listened passage. Dictation is a special case of intensive listening of this type.

Often, students have reading, translation skills, know grammar and vocabulary, but cannot understand their interlocutor, which leads to a violation of communication (Abdelhafez, 2006).

First of all, you need to understand that listening is a skill that needs to be developed in students, and not just evaluated.

The following sources of information can be used in the lessons:

1. teacher's speech + pictorial visibility
2. teacher's speech + film
3. teacher's speech
4. teacher's speech + movie
5. movie + unfamiliar voice
6. television
7. movie + unfamiliar voice
8. tape recording (teacher's speech)
9. tape recording (unknown voice)
10. radio (Gary Buck, 2001)

Listening consists of three stages and each has its own goal. There are so many types of exercises that we need to apply at each stage. The most necessary skills that we need to help develop are an understanding of the basic essence and specific information. They help students focus on the information needed to complete listening tasks (Ton, 2007).

### **Discussion**

Let's consider the stages of listening.

**Pre-listening Stage** – The preliminary stage. In order to help students with the audio fragment they are about to hear, it is important to set them up on the right topic, help them with vocabulary, and make predictions about the upcoming listening. This is the essence of the first stage.

The teacher needs to listen to the fragment himself in advance, check the textbook for the presence of a picture associated with the text. If it is not there, pick up something interesting (Rost, 2002).

In the classroom, the teacher needs to draw the students' attention to the picture from the textbook. Ask them questions about the picture that will help them try to predict what the audio fragment is about. For the same purposes, you can use the name of the audio, or the description of the audio fragment in the textbook. It is necessary to study the vocabulary from the audio, unknown to the students, but not to give a translation of all the keywords. Work out grammatical material that may cause difficulty in the listening process. Create exercises to fill in the gaps or other tasks based on the text you have listened to.

At this stage, it is necessary to interest children in the topic of listening, to help with unfamiliar vocabulary important for understanding the fragment. This type of work involves a lot of speaking on the part of the student, which makes the process more communicative (Harmer, 2007).

### **While-listening Stage – Listening Stage**

This is a direct work with an audio recording. There should be at least two auditions of an audio fragment with different purposes.

The main types of listening tasks

**Listening for gist** (listening to the essence) – usually this is a task for the first listening. It assumes students' understanding of audio in general. As a rule, in this type of assignment, we ask students to hear specific information necessary to understand the general meaning. Students don't have to understand every word. The purpose of

the task is to check the predictions of the students at the expense of the content of the audio fragment, as well as to clarify some common points.

Listening for specific information (scanning) – usually this is a task for the second listening, sometimes it happens for the first. The purpose of this type of assignment is to teach students to hear actual very specific information in audio (date, name, flight number, place name, quantity of something, etc.). This type of assignment helps students learn how to choose the main audio, focus on the actual information (Lems, 2010).

Listening for details is usually the last stage of working with listening. Students listen to the audio in more detail, choosing specific information from the text. The difference from the previous type of listening is that in this case we listen to understand the details at the level of sentences, and in the previous case – at the level of understanding words, numbers, etc. Usually these are T/F tasks, answers to a list of questions.

When working directly with an audio recording, it is important to give students the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the task in advance, to sort out all the questions before listening.

#### Post-Listening Stage – After listening

This is the last stage of working with listening. It consists in bringing into speech and discussing all issues related to the audio fragment. As a rule, this is a speaking task – discussing the topic of listening, expressing opinions. At this stage, you can work with the script, analyze more vocabulary, and also use parts of the script to present new grammatical material.

This stage is very important in order to give students a chance to consolidate what they have learned through listening in speech. As a rule, this is a training in speech of new vocabulary and grammar from an audio fragment.

In order to help students, it is necessary to create a quiet and peaceful atmosphere in the classroom.

Let's consider the use of video materials in English lessons as one of the most effective methods of teaching listening (McCaughey, 2015).

The use of video materials is an exceptional learning tool, as it provides many advantages used in combination with an active learning strategy. Using television or video in the classroom allows you to get information while listening. I.e., students can simultaneously hear and see what is happening. Nonverbal behavior of spoken text is now available to students (compared to radio). Therefore, it is possible to develop listening skills in a richer language context.

#### **Conclusion**

Scientific research conducted in this area has shown that the existing methods of testing listening skills are not effective and are aimed at evaluating completed tasks and identifying errors, but do not demonstrate in any way how to listen correctly and what to focus more on. Only when teachers and students realize the need for a new approach in the listening process and begin to implement them in broad practice, students will analyze their actions, work on their mistakes and approach tasks in a new way, and only then the listening skill will not seem difficult and communication in a foreign language will bring more pleasure.

So, listening is the only type of speech activity in which nothing depends on the person performing it. The listener, unlike the reader, the writer or the speaker, is powerless to change anything in the activity performed, to facilitate it, to reduce difficulties, to adapt the conditions for the receipt of information to their capabilities. In addition to real or educational communication, the whole process of learning a

foreign language and the development of speech skills is carried out mainly through listening. That's why listening should be developed better than other skills.

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