

UDC: 378.147

THE IMPORTANCE OF LISTENING IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT TECHNICAL UNIVERSITIES

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This paper examines the role of listening in learning foreign languages. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the main stages in teaching it and possible problems appeared in this process. Some basic and fundamental skills in listening learning are determined here. The paper stresses the importance of communicative approach in teaching a foreign language. Special attention is given to the control that is the crucial component of teaching listening and comprehension. It is emphasized that control should be different at every stage of teaching in groups with different levels of training. The paper shows the importance in a correct choosing of the text to be listened to. Also, the system of exercises for forming foreign communicative competence in listening is discussed. The value of special language laboratories for the effective listening training is discussed here. The paper proves their meaning not only for practical lessons, but also during the independent work of students as language laboratory equipment creates the same favorable conditions for all students, reducing distractions. This paper examines the advantages of using special language laboratories and describes the peculiarities of work and monitoring in groups of students with different levels of training. The specifics of working in not language high schools are also given in this paper.

Keywords: listening, foreign language, communicative approach teaching, a language lab, speech activity, linguistic training.

Introduction. Language is one of the most important means of communication. Nowadays, great changes, taking place in modern world, public relations and communications, demand the increase of students' communicative competence in high school, improving their linguistic training. Actually, the formation of students' communicative competence – the ability to communicate in a foreign language with native speakers of a language – is the main focus of foreign language teaching.

Listening is considered to be a fundamental skill in mastering a foreign language by many practitioners in the field of foreign language teaching. They also believe that it is the basis for the correct pronunciation and speaking teaching. Recognizing the priority of listening among the four types of communicative activities, scientists are trying to find the best methods of teaching. Thus, the problems of listening in teaching foreign languages were studied by J.S. Noblitt, Morley, G.V. Kolshansky, N.V. Eluhina, I.A. Winter, A.S. Lurie.

The aim of this paper is to study and give the analysis of some problematic and cognitive aspects in listening teaching as well as to show the ways of overcoming the problems appeared in this process.

The importance of listening. There are two forms of a language as a means of communication: oral (listening and speaking) and written (reading and writing). We would like to focus on listening, as an integral part in foreign language training, the underestimation of which may have a negative impact on the students' language training. Listening, as an action, being a part of oral communication activities is used in any oral communication, submitted to different production, public or personal needs. The mastery of this kind of activity gives the possibility of learning every language efficiently using the foreign language speech at the level which is needed at the present stage of social development.

Learning to communicate in a foreign language is an important task to be solved in practical and extracurricular classes. In our opinion, it is the communicative approach training that provides better assimilation of any foreign language, as it is known that natural functions of a language can be implemented only through communication. Listening, as an integral part of the communicative learning process, faces a great number of challenges. According to the studied literature the latest research demonstrates that a lot should be done in this direction.

Problematic and cognitive aspects in listening teaching. Special attention should be paid to the selection of the material to be listened to. Speaking about the choice of the material it is

necessary to take into account its informative and cognitive sense, actuality, accessibility, novelty, students' interest in it and also the connection with their specialty.

We consider that one of the possibilities of students' successful learning is the appropriate choice of the text because of different levels of students' listening skills.

Thus, the system of controlling must be different as well, depending on the level of a group.

Let's focus on the work with a group of backward students. It would be more helpful for such students to be controlled immediately after the first listening in the form of a short conversation in the mode T (teacher) – S 1 (student), S 2, S 3 etc. This work is supposed introduction, explanation and training of some unknown or new words. As the experience shows, due to this work, students can overcome some fear and gain confidence to continue learning.

The work with a group of advanced level is characterized by its own peculiarities. There is an opinion that such a group is easier to work with. However, our observations have shown that this opinion is disputable as the work with strong students demands more creative and innovative approaches in teaching. The tasks suggested for controlling must be advanced as well. A teacher not only asks questions concerning the content of the text but also questions that show the students' attitude to it. The text, to be listened to, can be used as a basis for a monologue or dialogue speech.

According to the works of G.V. Kolshansky, the mastery of a foreign language may be considered as a gradual process the ultimate goal of which is to have the ability of participating in foreign language communication [4].

Listening is rather difficult for students. This may be explained by the necessity of distinguishing speech sounds, words, phrases and sentences very quickly. It can be easily and quickly done in the own language, but not everybody is able to do the same speaking a foreign language.

The analysis of the studied literature gives the reason to believe that the process of listening teaching is divided into three stages [1].

The first stage as most of the methodologists believe is the most important and difficult for every person in all age as well as for students, especially at technical universities. Perhaps this is due to the fact that students need some practice in listening and comprehension in a foreign language. We can speak here about various difficulties in phonetics, vocabulary and grammar. It is obvious that the difference between the phonetic system of the English language and a native language is rather great and often results in misunderstanding of some vowels and consonants such as the following: θ -s, n- η , w-v, etc; æ -e, ɔ - ɔ ː, ʌ -o, etc. The next problem for students may be connected with the distinguishing such words as live-leave, worked-walked, fill-feel etc.

Difficulties in grammar are more connected with the analytical structure of the English language and some special constructions of the foreign language (gerundial, infinitive, participial).

Everything mentioned above is of great importance and necessity to be studied in the process of students' listening teaching as they often have a negative impact on the interest in studying a language. Therefore, the most important task the teacher faces at this stage is the enhancement of teaching process. This enables us to achieve such a level of language skills that would allow using it as a means of communication and promote the interest to foreign languages.

Teaching listening and comprehension has its own characteristics at the initial stage. It should be also emphasized that the basis for the development of all kinds of language skills is formed at this stage. The initial stage is of particular importance for the further learning, since the shortcomings and drawbacks in listening and comprehension at this stage will be able to impact listening skills in future. Thus, we realize that there is a close relation between the initial stage and the following ones.

To identify what skills are fundamental and basic a lot of investigations were carried out. According to them, students have the same problems and difficulties in listening and comprehension.

Students should be able to divide a whole message into meaningful units; determine the logical connections between them; determine the point of the text to be listened to; identify which parts are special and which are less important; perceive speech in the natural speed.

Thus, the first stage is devoted to the formation of perceptual skills of listening; the second one is considered to be a stage for the development of verbal activity. Finally, the third stage is the top of tremendous work in teaching listening and comprehension, as it is the stage at which verbal (partly natural) communication is implemented. These three stages cannot be considered separately as they are interconnected vertically and horizontally (across). In spite of this interconnection the crucial stage remains the initial one.

Considering these stages we admit the existence of well defined system in teaching listening skills and comprehension. As far as verbal communication takes place at the third stage we might call only it to be communicative but we believe that all three stages are inseparable and constitute a single harmonious system. At different stages the level of communication is changed starting from educational (instructional) to natural (normal), but it is only the third stage that is characterized communication as an objective of education.

Numerous experiments and studies prove that the formation of listening skills is successive from simple to complex. In other words, the process of gaining skills is hierarchical, i.e. every previous (preceding) skill is the base for the formation of a new one.

We shouldn't forget about the control – the crucial component of teaching listening and comprehension. Depending on the stage the aim of testing can be different. At the beginning individual listening skills and the level of a certain type of speech activity are tested.

Particular attention is given to the functions of communication as communication cannot be reduced only to the transfer of information. Students should remember that it is necessary not only to understand the text to be listened to fully and accurately, but also to respond to the communicative intention (agree or disagree, to act in accordance with the recommendations of the author etc.).

Besides everything mentioned above, one more important task the teacher faces is to define how to react to the text to be listened to. In this case the teacher uses texts of a certain kind. When choosing the text for listening some factors must be taken into consideration: what type of text it is (description, narration, monologue or dialogue); what communicative purposes it has (to ask or to order to do something, to inform or to request info from somebody; to agree or to refuse to do something etc.)

A series of examples aimed at the development of communicative skills can be used and two of them are proposed below:

1) Listen to the text and determine whether the speaker wants to say something or ask for something. Confirm your choice using the text.

2) Listen to the text and determine what the author wants to advice, or perhaps he pursues another goal. Submit your opinion using the text [2].

The next point we'd like to discuss because of its importance is conditions of teaching listening comprehension such as the speed of speech, the quantity of text presentation, the volume of the text and playing time. Among these conditions the speed of speech is one of the crucial factors. Taking into account the point of view of scientists and our own experience it should be noted that the learnt text must be presented with the slower speed. Also pauses can help students in better understanding of the text content [5].

It is very important to find the appropriate material and adapt it according to the level of students' knowledge. Adapting is a complex process that cannot be considered as only reducing the text. It includes changes, explanations and additions to the text as well as to help students to understand it easier and quickly.

The next interesting point is how many times the same material should be presented. It is natural for communication to listen to information only once. According to methodologists' opinion students must be taught to listen to the text only one time. However, they are not able to catch all the information, that's why the material must be presented one more time [5].

The volume of the text can be considered in connection with the term playing time. This playing time a teacher can vary depending on the aim of the task and place of performance. For example, in class conditions it is desirable to suggest the students the text with playing time up

to 2-3 minutes, at home students can listen to the text that is longer and playing time is till 10 minutes.

Now it is necessary to pay attention to the text requirements for technical students. Among them the most important are:

- conformity of the level of mastering a foreign language;
- conformity of individual and psychological characteristics of students;
- authenticity of the text;
- technical or professional content of the texts;
- conformity of the topic of the lesson;
- interesting information;
- logic organization of the text;
- variety of types of texts (monologue, dialogue);
- relevant lexical and grammatical material of the text;
- educational and learning.

A teacher constantly faces a great number of challenges relevant to listening to any type of texts. It should be noted that among these challenges the most crucial will be the following: methods and techniques to be used for teaching; multimedia and IT technologies that are very popular and widespread used now.

The system of exercises for forming foreign communicative competence in listening.

The creation of exercises can help to solve the problem of forming foreign communicative competence in listening. There are two sub-systems: exercises for the formation of speech sub-skills in listening and exercises for the development of speech skills in listening.

Let us consider the first sub-system of exercises consisting of the following groups:

1. Exercises for the formation of auditory sub-skills of listening (phonemic and intonation hearing). For example:

Match the words and practice reading paying attention to the stress in the words.

Ex: `impact – im`pact

`survey – sur`vey

2. Exercises for the formation of lexical sub-skills of listening. For example:

Listen to the phrases in English and put a tick near the phrases that belong to the group of terms of your professional field of knowledge.

Ex: reaction, solution, acid, equation.

3. Exercises for the formation of grammatical sub-skills of listening. For example:

Listen to some sentences and say what the difference is.

Ex: There is much acid in the tube.

There are much acid in the tube.

As we can see from examples these exercises aimed at phonetics, vocabulary and grammar. Teachers pay attention to them whenever it is necessary to improve students' knowledge and sub-skills in mentioned above speech activities.

The second sub-system of exercises includes such groups as:

1. Exercises that prepare students for listening texts. For example:

Look at the title of the text that you are going to listen and predict what this text is about.

Then listen to the text and define the information that you haven't mentioned.

Ex: Acid rains.

2. Exercises for developing listening skills. For instance:

Listen to the text and define if the statements are true or false.

Also the teachers can suggest students to answer the questions; complete the sentences; choose the correct variant etc. This group of exercises is rather effective way to work in groups or pairs. Students can also discuss the text to be listened to or film to be watched.

So, these exercises can assist students to master the skills in listening comprehension.

The meaning of language laboratories. A lot of universities have special language laboratories equipped with appropriate facilities for teaching students. These labs can be used both at practical lessons and for independent work to develop not only listening skills but also speaking

ones. When working in language laboratories, students are able not only to be taught but also to be controlled. Besides, they have possibilities for their self-testing as well.

A language laboratory enables students to work on the same task individually, in pairs, in groups. They can listen to and speak to each other using earphones.

Another positive feature of a language laboratory is the possibility to use a set of audiovisual material in learning a foreign language.

However, the most important and valuable feature of a language laboratory is the possibility to monitor each student's work activity.

A language laboratory assists students to be involved in a teaching process for the whole classes and enables them to work hard and successfully providing with facilities in using one or more programs simultaneously:

- 1) to create suitable conditions for listening;
- 2) to work independently and to develop the ability to self-control;
- 3) to control and correct the mistakes of students individually [3].

The use of language laboratory makes a great contribution to the effective implementation of the training objectives, students' development of skills and abilities to study.

It is well known that teachers face a number of problems in the process of teaching a foreign language, namely: the lack of practical classes, language laboratories; the shortage of audio and video materials on specialties. The mentioned problems must be solved by a teacher only. He/she must choose materials in particular texts and develop a series of various tasks and exercises, to record texts for listening to and each audio and video material to work at practical lessons and extracurricular work.

Thus, working at the Faculty of Biotechnology and Biotechnics at the National Technical University of Ukraine "KPI", we, the teachers of the English language, are constantly developing the bank of materials for each specialty to help students not only to master a foreign language, but also their specialty. We use the materials on topics: "Infectious diseases", "Oncogenic viruses", "Bacteriophage" for specialty "Biotechnology" and "Air pollution", "Greenhouse effect", "Ecological problems" for bio-ecology.

Conclusions. From the research that has been carried out, it is possible to conclude that listening teaching is one of the important parts in the whole system of foreign language teaching that is closely connected with speaking, reading and writing. Its role shouldn't be underestimated in the learning process as the use of audio materials makes language learning more effective and rich in content, stimulates students to more thorough study of a foreign language.

The theoretical part of the given paper contains practical analysis of main problems arising in the course of listening teaching while the practical part, represented by the system of exercises, is aimed at overcoming difficulties related to foreign language learning.

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І. Г. Чеботарьова, Л. М. Щербань. Значення аудіювання в навчанні іноземних мов в технічних ВНЗ.

У даній статті розглядається роль аудіювання у вивченні іноземних мов. Особливу увагу приділено аналізу основних етапів та проблемам, які виникають у студентів в процесі навчання. Також в роботі визначено ті навички, які необхідно набути студентам немовних спеціальностей у навчанні аудіювання. В статті підкреслено важливість комунікативної спрямованості у навчанні іноземної мови. Зокрема, особливу увагу приділено контролю, який є ключовим компонентом у навчанні аудіювання та розуміння прослуханого тексту. Також підкреслено необхідність застосовувати різні види контролю на кожному етапі навчання та враховувати рівень мовної підготовки студентів. Вибір текстів, а саме їх інформативність, зв'язок з дисциплінами, що вивчають студенти, виділено як один з важливих критеріїв у навчанні аудіювання. Наведено систему вправ та їх розподіл (фонетика, лексика, граматики), спрямованих на формування навичок в аудіюванні студентів немовних спеціальностей. Значення спеціальних лінгафонних кабінетів (класів) для ефективного навчання іноземної мови представлено в роботі. Наголошено на важливості використання лінгафонних кабінетів (класів) не тільки для практичних занять, а й під час самостійної роботи студентів, оскільки лінгафонне обладнання створює сприятливі умови для всіх студентів та сприяє ефективній роботі кожного студента. Переваги використання спеціальних лінгафонних кабінетів (класів), особливості роботи та моніторингу в групах студентів з різним рівнем мовної підготовки досить детально описано в даній роботі. В цій статті також наведено особливості специфіки роботи в немовних вузах.

Ключові слова: аудіювання, іноземна мова, комунікативно-орієнтоване навчання, лінгафонний кабінет, мовленнєва діяльність, мовна підготовка.

И. Г. Чеботарева, Л. М. Щербань. Значение аудирования в преподавании иностранных языков в технических вузах.

В данной статье рассматривается роль аудирования в изучении иностранных языков. Особое внимание уделено анализу основных этапов в его обучении и возможных проблем, возникающих в ходе этого процесса. В работе определены основные и фундаментальные навыки в обучении аудированию. В этой статье подчеркивается важность коммуникативной направленности в обучении иностранному языку. Особое внимание уделено контролю, который является ключевым компонентом обучения аудированию. Подчеркивается, что контроль должен быть разным на каждом этапе обучения в группах с различным уровнем языковой подготовки. В работе показана важность правильного выбора текста для прослушивания. Система упражнений, необходимых для развития навыков компетентности аудирования студентов неязыковых вузов представлена в данной работе. Обсуждается значение специальных лингафонных кабинетов для эффективного обучения аудированию. В статье обосновывается их значимость, как для практических занятий, так и для самостоятельной работы студентов. Авторы рассматривают преимущества использования специальных языковых кабинетов и описывают особенности работы и мониторинга в группах студентов с различным уровнем подготовки.

Ключевые слова: аудирование, иностранный язык, коммуникативно-ориентированное обучение, языковая лаборатория, речевая деятельность, языковая подготовка.