

PUPILS' PROBLEMS OF LISTENING COMPREHENSION AT ENGLISH LESSONS. ПРОБЛЕМИ АУДІЮВАННЯ НА УРОКАХ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ В ШКОЛІ

У ході дослідження було встановлено, що учні часто стикаються з різними проблемами при вивченні англійської мови. Але аудіювання є найголовнішою з них. У статті з'ясовано проблеми з якими стикаються учні при аудіюванні й подано деякі поради щодо їх подолання. Проаналізовано основні труднощі при прослуховуванні текстів і діалогів носіями мови під час занять з англійської мови в школах. Запропоновано деякі рекомендації щодо подолання труднощів при прослуховуванні іншомовних текстів.

Ключові слова: аудіювання, англійська мова, учні, урок, знання мови, розуміння.

The statement of the problem. The present-day rapid development of science and technology, as well as the continuous growth of cultural, economic and political relations between nations causes the problems in overcoming language barriers. Nowadays Ukraine is joining the European Union so it means co-operation between member states. Among many languages in the EU English is one of the official and working languages. So the urgent problem today is English language learning in Ukraine.

New curricula in Ukrainian schools provide English language learning from the second class. But pupils often face with different problems: pronunciation, grammar, orthography and vocabulary usage. As it was found out, the most widespread problem is listening. Listening comprehension in English is more difficult and more important for learners to master. They can look up unknown vocabulary in dictionaries and use reference books when reading and writing a text in English, which is impossible while listening in English.

The teaching of listening has attracted a greater level of interest in recent years than it did in the past. University entrance exams, school leaving and other examinations now often include a listening component, acknowledging that listening skills are a core component of second language proficiency.

The analysis of the research. The problem of listening comprehension was captured the attention of different scholars such as N. Bok, P. Litvinov, A. Dragunkin, V. Safonova and others.

The aim of the article is to find out the reasons why listening is difficult and to give some ideas on how to tackle them.

The methods of the research. We have analysed the problems of listening comprehension during English lessons at schools.

The exposition of the main material. There have been a number of attempts to define the listening skill in the literature. For instance, Lundsteensuggests that listening is the skill "by which spoken language is

converted to meaning in the mind". Anderson and Lynch suggest that successful listening is "understanding is not something that happens because of what a speaker says: the listener has a crucial part in the process, by activating various types of knowledge, and by applying what he knows to what he hears and trying to understand what the speaker means" [3, 3].

Listening comprehension is anything but a passive activity. It is a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger sociocultural context of the utterance. Coordinating all of this involves a great deal of mental activity on the part of the listener. Listening is a hard work, and deserves more analysis and support.

During my teaching experience, I have found out that it is very difficult for my pupils to understand English through listening. In language learning, when we talk about five basic skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating, we always put "listening" at the beginning of them. That is because listening is the most important skill of the five and also the basic way of receiving language input. As we know we can speak sensibly only if we understand what is said. In fact, people cannot talk if they cannot hear other people's talk. That simply means there is not enough language input and there is no output. No deaf person can speak clearly because he cannot hear clearly. So listening skills are one of the basics of learning languages and acquiring them is very important in language learning. Moreover, with the development of high technology, we more and more rely on our ears to get information. There is no doubt that the speed of getting information is faster through listening than reading. Thus, it is crucial to improve the level of listening comprehension of my pupils.

Usually in the class the pupils feel at a loss when listening to some new text. Over 70 % of them could not understand the meaning of the material after I play the tape for the first time. Expecting them to understand the material I often give them some instructions and play the tape again, at least three times. Still at least 30% of students might not understand it. And then I sometimes have to stop the tape to explain the difficult or unfamiliar words and occasionally explain material sentence by sentence through the whole text. So, this is a serious problem because some pupils cannot understand the whole text after listening to it three times in class.

Let us discuss the reasons of pupils' problems of listening comprehension from my experience. They vary just as much. And there are some of them.

While listening a new text or dialogue, we are faced with the fact that we do not know most of the words and therefore may lose meaning of the heard. So, doing vocabulary pre-teaching before each listening as a short term solution and working on the skill of guessing vocabulary from the context can help, but please make sure that you practice this with words that can actually be guessed from

context and that you work on that with reading texts for a while to build up to the much more difficult skill of guessing vocabulary and listening at the same time.

Most of pupils try to understand everything that was said, but cannot distinguish the main idea statement. One of the methods of tackling this problem is to show them how to identify the important words that they need to listen out for. In English this is shown in an easy-to-spot way by which words in the sentence are stressed (spoken louder and longer). Another is to give them one very easy task that you know they can do even if they don't get 90% of what is being said to build up their confidence, such as identifying the name of a famous person or spotting something that is mentioned many times.

Apart from just being too busy thinking about other things and missing a word, common reasons why students might not recognize a word include not distinguishing between different sounds in English or conversely trying to listen for differences that do not exist, e.g. not knowing words like "there", "their" and "they're" are homophones. Other reasons are problems with word stress, sentence stress, and sound changes when words are spoken together in natural speech such as weak forms. What all this leads down to is that sometimes pronunciation work is the most important part of listening comprehension skills building. How to learn new English words, and don't forget familiar? The word must acquire sense to you. And all of the word: not only the translation, but also sound. Try comparing new words with known. Use the words in sentences that know as much as possible.

It's the most difficult part. Accents that are particular to England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales are each different and sometimes you are faced with another problem while listening. Possibilities for making a particular listening with a tricky accent easier include rerecording it with some other teachers before class, reading all or part of the typescript out in your (hopefully more familiar and therefore easier) accent, and giving them a listening task where the written questions help out like gap fills. In order to build up their ability to deal with different accents in the longer term, the best way is just to get them listening to a lot of English, e.g. TV without dubbing or BBC World Service Radio.

Did you know that you create a mental block by yourself? This could be not just a case of a student having struggled with badly graded listening texts in school, exams or self-study materials, but even of a whole national myth that people from their country find listening to English difficult. Only what you need is to set your own priorities. You have to be sure that you know and understand the material of the lesson and how to do the assignment. The easiest solution is just to use much easier texts, perhaps using them mainly as a prompt to discussion or grammar presentations to stop them feeling patronized. You can disguise other easy listening comprehension tasks as pronunciation work on linked speech etc. in the same way.

Being able to cope with background noise is another skill. Unfortunately, it is difficult to hear the information you need because of the noise but it can be done. For a start, you also need to cut down on noise inside and outside the classroom. As well as making sure the tape doesn't have lots of hiss or worse (e.g. by recording tape to tape at normal speed not double speed, by using the original or by adjusting the bass and treble) and choosing a recording with no street noise, etc. Suggest students taking notes. Boost their confidence by letting them do the same listening on headphones and showing them how much easier it is. Finally, when they start to get used to it, give them an additional challenge by using a recording with background noise such as a cocktail party conversation. Eventually you get used to it and will not notice extraneous sounds.

For those who are only the beginners in learning foreign language it's a very big problem. Voices that are clearly distinct to a native speaker can be completely confusing for a non-native speaker. That is a special ability that you need to improve. You can avoid these problems by using texts with one woman and one man, or you can practice them with tasks where the students only have to count how many times the speaker changes. Suggest your pupils listening and watching different films, TV programs, videos, music in English. They'll be able to distinguish different voices and even more they'll love it.

Young people nowadays just can't cope without multimedia! Although having students who are not used to listening to the radio in their own language can't help, most students find not having body language and other cues to help a particular difficulty in a foreign language. Setting the scene with some photos of the people speaking can help, especially tasks where they put the pictures in order as they listen, and using video instead makes a nice change and is a good way of making skills such as guessing vocabulary from context easier and more natural. You should learn to imagine words that you are hearing in your mind. When you learn new words correlate them with pictures. And when you again hear this word it would be easier for you to know what the word is.

Nowadays we have a lot of opportunities to improve our language. Some important conclusions were made concerning the effectiveness of the improving students' listening comprehension. The main of them is the Internet. So, we want to suggest some useful websites:

1. <http://elf-english.ru/2009/01/anglijskij-na-slux-chast-vtoraya-sajty/>
2. <http://lenglish.com/tests/listening>
3. <http://englishsecrets.ru/audirovanie/this-is-my-family.html>
4. <http://www.learnathome.ru/lessons>
5. lingualeo.com

The conclusions and the perspectives of further investigations. Listening is the basic language skill in language learning. However, pupils always think it is difficult to listen well. To foster the pupils' listening comprehension skills and prepare them as active listeners in language learning is a big challenge.

Scholars and researchers have done a lot of research to help them to acquire the skills. However, we cannot rely on some methodologies completely. We might see that apart from the methodologies, we also need to know that we face individual student differences: their learning styles, their backgrounds, and their cultures in teaching. In different classrooms, teachers have to adopt different teaching methods to be with their own pupils. Action research offers an opportunity for classroom teachers to do the research by themselves, improve their teaching, and make adjustments when necessary.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Кобченко И. Г. Проблемы аудирования на уроках английского языка в школе.

В ходе исследования было установлено, что ученики часто сталкиваются с различными проблемами при изучении английского языка. Но аудирование является самой главной из них. В статье выяснены проблемы, с которыми сталкиваются учащиеся при аудировании и даны некоторые советы по их преодолению. Проанализированы основные трудности при прослушивании текстов и диалогов носителями языка во время занятий английским языком в школах. Предложены некоторые рекомендации по преодолению трудностей при прослушивании иностранных текстов.

Ключевые слова: аудирование, английский язык, учащиеся, урок, знание языка, понимание.

SUMMARY

Kobchenko I. Problems of Listening Comprehension at English Lessons at School.

The urgent problem today is English language learning across Ukraine because nowadays Ukraine is joining the European Union so it means the co-operation between member states. Among the many languages in the EU English is one of the official and working languages. During our research it has been stated that the pupils often are faced with different problems while learning English. But listening comprehension in English is more difficult and more important for learners to master. They can look up unknown vocabulary in dictionaries and use reference books when reading and writing a text in English, which is impossible when listening in English. In addition, the teaching of listening has attracted a greater level of interest in recent years than it did in the past. University entrance exams, school leaving and other examination now often include a listening component, acknowledging that listening skills are a core component of second language proficiency. There have been a number of attempts to define the listening skill in the literature. In this article we offer some definitions of listening of some foreign researchers.

The goal of the article is to find out the reasons why listening is difficult and to give some ideas on how to tackle them. We have analyzed the problems of listening comprehension during English lessons at schools. The reasons why some pupils find listening

in English language difficult vary just as much. There are some of them: they just don't know the most important words; they are trying to understand every word; they don't recognize the words that they know; they have problems with different accents; they have a mental block; they are distracted by background noise; they can't tell the difference between the different voices; they can't cope with not having images. It was proved that listening plays a crucial role in the communication process, in general and in language learning in particular.

Nowadays we have a lot of opportunities to improve our language. Some important conclusions were made concerning the effectiveness of the improving of students' listening comprehension. The main of them is the Internet. So, in this article we suggest some useful websites for English learners.

Key words: *listening comprehension, English language, pupils, lesson, language proficiency, understanding.*