

# Listening as a Method of Learning a Foreign Language at the Non-Language Faculty of the University

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Learning a foreign language is becoming an increasingly important with Russia's integration into the world community. In this regard, increased requirements for the educational process and the development of new innovative teaching methods meet the requirements of the time. One of the important aspects of learning a foreign language is listening as a kind of verbal activity. The study showed the importance of the problem of improving the mechanisms for listening in non-language faculties of the university. The article describes the relevant aspects of the difficulties of the process of listening, the essence and the main characteristics of this type of educational process and the criteria for high-quality listening in a non-language high school. The study describes a system of training of listening within the most effective exercises; learning of listening as speech culture; methodology of teaching a foreign language, which is subject to the general requirements of higher education, where listening becomes a part of developing the system of education. The results of the experimental work show the effectiveness of formation of the basic skills of listening as a speech and language in general, the successful development of students of non- language specialties of high school.

*Keywords:* foreign language, non-language high school, language training, language development, language personality, foreign language communication, speech activity, listening, speech culture, the culture of hearing, oral communication, speech exercises

## INTRODUCTION

### Relevance of the subject

The socio-political and economic changes in the life of Russian society have led to changes in education. In this connection, the status of the foreign language as high school discipline has also changed. Foreign language has become an important tool for the development of intellectual abilities of young people, their educational potential. In this case the purpose of learning a foreign language in high school becomes today, first of all, the mastery of the student's ability to carry out direct contact with carriers of the studied language in the most common situations of everyday communication. However, communication is not just speaking in a foreign

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language, but also the perception of speech interlocutor at the hearing. In this regard, speaking and listening can be called the main types of verbal activity in dealing with foreign language speakers (Shakirova & Valeeva, 2016).

On this basis, we believe that the problem of training to audition at various stages of foreign language teaching is relevant, and this aspect requires its own detailed study. It should be noted that listening as a method of learning a foreign language at the non-language faculty of the university began to be explored in a methodical literature recently. However, in the practical aspect in teaching a foreign language listening is present as a goal and as a learning tool, where the goal of training to audition is determined by the overall objectives of the course and learning stage (Valeev et al, 2015).

Thus, in the initial phase tasks include, for example, the formation of the basic skills of listening. However, the main task of listening is to teach the student adequate understanding of speech. Being in the educational process as a learning tool, listening in addition to its basic role (i.e. a proper communication role) performs a lot of support, pedagogical functions. So listening provides a certain control of the learning process; stimulates speech activity of students; is used to familiarize them with the new language, speech and regional studies material acts as a means of formation of skills in all kinds of speech activity; helps to maintain the achieved speech mastery level and (that is very important) increases the effectiveness of feedback and self-control. Based on the urgency of the problem of using listening as a method of learning a foreign language, it is possible to note the need to consider the following features of listening: it realizes oral direct communication; it promotes listening comprehension, which is an important part of mental activity; for its role in the communication process it is a reactive kind of speech activity; it enhances attention, recognition and comparison of linguistic resources, summarizing heard information, reasoning, and hence, reproduction other people's opinions and an adequate response to it (Valeeva et al., 2016a).

The most important criteria for the quality of language education today are: a) the relevance of language training that is in demand in the labor market; b) education, as such, should not only conform to the requirements of today's economy, but always to go ahead; c) quality training to a foreign language, which means not only the volume and the level of knowledge but the ability to speak a foreign language and the ability to use language competence in practice; d) recognition of the need for foreign language skills that meet international quality standards of education; e) the availability of innovative educational programs that would follow international not only national quality standards in education. In this regard, the importance of the study of this problem is that the objectives of foreign language teaching can be selective (e.g., mastery of skills and abilities of speech or reading scientific literature) and complex (the ability to perceive speech on hearing, speaking, reading, writing in a foreign language). Thus, in the process of learning a foreign language teacher should pay attention to the formation of students' technological skills to facilitate language acquisition. And in order, for example, make the process of listening more productive, it is necessary, as practice shows, the mastery of specific learning content, i.e. what the student must master in the language classroom. At the same time, we believe that the basis of the content of language education should be the speech skills (Valeeva et al., 2016b). Hence, methods of teaching listening should include the training of this type of speech activity as a means of mastering other kinds of speech activity. Therefore, we should apply special and non-special speech exercises to achieve the desired results in teaching listening as well as different language exercises (as preliminary ones). All this allows us to fully appreciate the benefits of training to audition to non-language high school freshmen. Since the listening process itself involves memorization of texts by ear (it develops memory), the use of set phrases (it develops attention), the

ability to listen and understand to hear (it brings attention to the interlocutor) so the listening can be attributed to developing training. The importance of the study of the problem is that listening is a very difficult kind of speech activity, so it should occupy an appropriate place in the educational process of the university. Moreover, the mastery of listening allows one to implement educational and developmental goals. Accordingly, the methods of teaching a foreign language, submitting to the general requirements of higher education, include listening in developing the educational system as a necessary part of the language training of students.

### **Problem statement**

The problem of improving the mechanisms for listening in non-language faculties of the university is associated with the following provisions: 1) selecting a text for teaching listening the teacher should take into account the content (subject line, accessibility, the impact of bringing up, etc.); linguistic form (its availability, familiar linguistic phenomena being studied at the moment); its communicative function (reporting anything, convincing anything, encouraging anything, and so on); 2) a clear distinction between the segmentation of the speech circuit (for interpretation of a message that seems to be an inexperienced auditor as a continuous stream; ability to isolate in the text separate lexical and grammatical units: phrases, syntagms, word combinations, words and understanding of the meaning of each of them); 3) to help the process of comprehension (gives effect to equivalent replacement by converting verbal information into shaped); 4) to include the internal mechanism of pronunciation (a student converts sound images in the articulation in order to master the pronunciation skills in external speech); 5) To improve the mechanism of memory (to hold in mind the perceived words and phrases during the time that you want the listener to reflect on a phrase or a complete track of phrases); 6) to develop the mechanism of probabilistic forecasting (to work a skill at the top of the words, phrases or sentences to predict their end). Thus, listening should occupy an important place at any stage of high school training. It allows students to learn to listen attentively to sounding speech; the ability to anticipate the semantic content of the utterance and thus educate the hearing culture not only in foreign but also in their native language. The educational value of the formation of the ability to understand foreign speech by ear, providing at the same time and educational influence on the young man, lies in the fact that it has a positive effect on the development of his memory, and, above all, auditory memory, which is important not only for the study of a foreign language but also other subjects.

the process of direct (dialogical) communication and listening comprehension of texts in a coherent mediated communication. In recent years the problems of audition held various pedagogical researches, for example, by such authors as E. V. Blokhina (1998), B. L. Slednikova (1993); as part of training to understanding of foreign speech at the hearing there are works of authors M. L. Vaysburd (1985), N. I. Gez (1981); the problem of lingua-communicative aspects of verbal communication are examined in the works of G. V. Kolshansky (1985); basics of oral speech speaking another language learning are studied by A. P. Starkov (1988), I. I. Khaleeva (1989); researchers V. A. Artemov (1969), I. A. Zimnyaya (1991) examined the psychology of learning a foreign language; in studies of N. D. Galskova (2004), N. I. Gez et al. (1982) and I. L. Kolesnikova & O. A. Dolgina (2008) there are analyzed the methods of teaching foreign languages; N. V. Eluhina (1989) and J. M. Kolker (2000) substantiated the possibility of listening training in line with the communicative-oriented techniques; there are important studies on the general methods of teaching foreign language of authors M. V. Lyakhovitskii (1991), A. A. Mirolyubov & A. V. Parahina (1980); works on the organization of independent work in a foreign

language of A. V. Konyshva (2005), O. L. Fedorova (1987); the work on the kinds of listening is presented by L. Y. Kulish (1984). In these studies listening is presented as a basis for communication, which begins with the mastery of oral communication. Most authors believe that the possession of listening allows a person to understand what he is told and to respond adequately to the above; it helps to explain his response to the opponent, and that is the basis of spoken language.

## **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of the study is as follows: if in the process of training to audition at all levels of higher education to apply practical means of training to audition offered by us, they will contribute to: Improving the mental activity of students and developing the skills of logical thinking on issues related to real life, expanding the scope of foreign language communication; The development of the individual characteristics of young people, their independence, improving primary and secondary language personality; More effective solution of problems of education, development and education of the student's personality.

## **METHODS**

### **The tasks of the research**

The general study plan is specified by the following objectives: 1) To investigate the problem of improving the mechanisms for listening in non-language faculties of high school; 2) To identify the factors of training to audition as a separate, independent kind of speech activity; 3) To identify the criteria for high-quality listening in a non-language high school; 4) To identify the main difficulties listening process; 5) To offer methodological training exercises and listening techniques within the framework of the most effective exercises.

### **Theoretical and empirical methods**

To test the hypothesis there were applied different methods that complement each other: Theoretical methods - analysis of psychological and pedagogical literature on the study of listening; studying and generalization of pedagogical experience in the field of teaching foreign languages; analysis and synthesis of educational programs; Empirical methods - observation of ascertaining the nature of the formation of pedagogical experiment, survey, testing, examination of the results of educational activity of students, statistical processing of the experimental data; interpretation and evaluation of the results of experimental work.

### **The trial infrastructure) and stages of the research**

The basis of the study was the Institute of Language of Kazan (Volga region) Federal University. The study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase (2010-2011) the state of the problem was studied in the literature and teaching practice; there was developed original research positions. Empirical material was collected; the problem of listening as a method of learning a foreign language was studied; the possibility of productive learning a foreign language through listening comprehension exercises was identified; a method of formation of linguistic competence of students by audition was developed. In the second phase (2012-2013) there was a study on best practices of high schools, individual teachers; the hypothesis of the study was formulated; methodological training exercises and listening techniques within the framework of the most effective exercises were

developed; the criteria for high-quality listening in a non-language high school were highlighted; the factors of training to audition as a separate, independent kind of speech activity were identified. Study of the problem of improving listening mechanisms at the university non-language faculties was conducted by interviewing students and teachers by the method of expert assessments, management analysis and validation of student work; a quantitative and qualitative analysis of pedagogical phenomena by means of mathematical statistics methods was conducted. In the third phase (2014-2015) there was carried out experimental verification of pedagogical technology of listening as a method of learning a foreign language, as well as the effectiveness of its implementation; registration of research results was conducted; methods of teaching listening, including the training of this type of speech activity as a means of mastering other kinds of speech activity were developed. The results of experimental studies showed the effectiveness of the formation of the basic skills of listening as speech activity and successful language development in general of students of high school non-language specialties.

## **RESULTS**

### **The listening process difficulties**

When we speak of listening mechanisms it is necessary to bear in mind the difficulties of this process, among which there are generally the following three groups: the first group: auditive difficulties caused by linguistic characteristics of oral speech (phonemic difficulty: divergence of graphic and acoustic image of the word in its incomplete pronunciation); rhythmic intonation features; the difficulty of lexical nature related to polysemy, the use of articles, etc.; d) the difficulty of perception of expressive and stylistically colored speech generated by, for example, idioms; the second group: the difficulty of understanding the semantic aspect of information due to the understanding of the objective content of the information; understanding the logic of the presentation; comprehension of the general idea of the message, understanding the motives of the speaker, as well as the formation of their attitude towards what he heard; the third group: communication difficulties associated with communication conditions due to the presentation of one-shot information (there is no way to analyze every word); the pace of the speaker (the need to perceive speech in the imposed speed mode); deviation from the usual speech, regulatory style; cases mismatch of various linguistic components in different language cultures; the lack of visual supports and the feedback from the source of information. In connection with this, the teacher should bear in mind all the above mentioned problems which complicate the work of psycho-physiological mechanisms of listening, because in a real listening communication mechanisms operate almost simultaneously.

### **Listening education (system of exercises)**

Listening, i.e. understanding of speech requires possession of linguistic means. Work on listening comprehension includes: 1) linguistic units, their assimilation in the form of skills; 2) the ability to understand speech, using these skills. Audition process begins with perception. It may be right, wrong, accurate estimate. The correct perception is based on a thorough work on the formation of hearing and pronunciation skills. Perception should be fast, it must be equal to the rate of speech of the speaker. Perception is accompanied by a process of recognition of words and phrases. At the same time there is a process of understanding. Understanding is possible when there is no word translation, but consolidation of words into meaningful units (the sentence).

The maturity level of listening (completeness, accuracy, depth of understanding of oral speech) depends on how well the development of students' listening and mechanisms of formation of his ability to overcome the many difficulties accompanying the oral reception. Accordingly, in the exercise system for training to audition we can distinguish two groups. The first group includes exercises aimed at testing of the individual constituent elements of activity. These exercises develop listening mechanisms, phonetic and intonation hearing; they generate skills of recognition and differentiation of linguistic units at different levels, i.e. form the phonetic, lexical and grammatical listening skills. These exercises are called preparatory ones, they are the first level, leading to the formation of auditive abilities. They are also called oral-language, orally-training exercises. They propose to work on all languages spoken by units.

The second group - this is the voice exercises, which are controlled by speech activity, since provide listening practice on the basis of complex auditive overcome difficulties. The exercises for listening training should be considered working closely listening to speaking and listening to reading as two types of receptive activity. And here the following types of preparations and speech exercises can be offered: exercises for the development of phonemic hearing and the internal mechanism of pronunciation; intonation exercises to develop hearing and speech segmentation mechanism chain; exercises to develop memory mechanism; exercises on the development of language guesstimate and probabilistic forecasting mechanism; exercises to develop a mechanism equivalent substitutions; exercises on the material of the text. It is important to remember that the understanding of the text - is a complex activity.

Texts for listening (in content, design and language) must be correlative with the texts to be read. For listening texts should contain a simple material. In the text there should not be things hard for understanding (new words need to specify in advance). In the text there should be meaningful 3-5 parts. With the text we have to work consistently with every sentence: in a sentence to highlight the main part, and then combine with secondary parts.

### **Criteria for quality listening**

In the study there was an attempt to set the initial level of listening as a kind of verbal activity and create recommendations for its formation. For this there was studied what specific skills constitute the baseline listening. To resolve this issue there was carried out the experimental section to verify the initial level of listening, i.e. this level when the student already had the ability to understand normal speech by hearing a message (a text with the new content). This is achieved, as a rule, by mastering a set of basic skills. For this purpose listening skills were allocated and on this basis there was compiled initial list, which included about 30 listening comprehension skills.

Then this list was reduced by the introduction of the following selection criteria: 1) skills that were common to all the listening speech styles (from the list of excluded special skills necessary for understanding, for example, a scientific speech); 2) the ability to understand speech in a slow natural pace, which means an elementary version of skills (for example, when from the option to understand speech in a slow, average and fast pace slow pace is selected); account of linguistic experience and linguistic stock (for example, understanding the narration in the movies); the ability to predict the meaning of the received message (it is taken from the skills, the presence of which cannot be ascertained by analyzing learners voice messages), etc.

Based on these criteria, it was set a specific list of skills that can be the starting level of listening comprehension. To these skills we include the following: 1) the

ability to make it in the natural rate; 2) the ability to divide the text into meaningful chunks to determine the facts of the message; 3) the ability to establish logical connections between elements of the text; 4) the ability to separate the primary from the secondary, and to keep in mind the basic parts, to determine the semantic center of the phrase; 5) the ability to determine the subject of the message; 6) the ability to highlight the main idea of the presented information; 7) the ability to perceive the message to the end with no gaps; 8) the ability to take and hold the message in memory, the presented once; 9) the ability to organize feedback based on the understanding of information.

### **The procedure and results of the experiment**

The experimental section was performed at the 1st and 3rd courses of non-language faculties of high school; and at the 1st year there were students who just started learning English. Option of the 1st and 3rd courses was determined by the need to establish whether the detected initial level listening skills common to all the students or it depended on the conditions of learning environment. Cut results confirmed the hypothesis. The study showed that the initial level of listening comprehension was provided a set of specific skills, and the absence of any of them had a negative impact on the reception and understanding of verbal communication. Cut results confirmed the presence of the subjects who reached the initial level of knowledge of listening, all hypothetically isolated skills. Accordingly, the initial level of listening requires the presence of trained eight skills.

The study showed the influence of individual skills on the process of receiving the message and its result, i.e., on the understanding of the text differently. There are skills that determine the communication, i.e. in their absence, communication does not take place, and there are skills that provide only a certain influence on the communication, i.e. a message can be understood better or worse depending on the formation of. Naturally, first of all there must be formed those skills that can define the luck of communication act. These include the following skills: separating major from minor and hold the main in memory, i.e., allocating meaningful parts and determining the semantic center of the phrase; determining the theme of the facts and messages; taking a message to the end without gaps, taking it in a natural slow pace, taking and holding the message which was presented once.

Analysis of the results allowed us to cut and install easy and hard formed skills, as well as to compare the data of the students of the 1st and 3rd courses. Elementary formed skills are the following: to understand the subject of the message (realized 100% of 3rd year students and 70% of 1st year students); to establish logical connections between elements of the text (3rd year students - 80%, 1st year students - 60%); to highlight the main idea (3rd year students - 60%, 1st year students - 45%). Difficult formed were the following skills: to determine facts (did not pass all the facts 75% of 1st year students and 45% of 3rd year students); to take a message to the end with no spaces (did not take the message to the end 40% of the students of 3rd year and 70% of students of 1st year). Similar results were obtained with respect to the ability to perceive a message in a natural pace and for a single presentation. Of course, to the formation of complex skills we must pay the most attention because of their aborted leads to poor understanding or complete misunderstanding of the text.

It may be noted that the level of formed individual skills of the students of the 3rd and the 1st course in different cases are different. So, those skills that were classified as simple, they were well developed by students of both groups (the 3rd and 1st courses). However, complex skills which showed a small percentage of formation caused enormous difficulties for the 1st year students. In general, the better formed abilities had the 3rd year students. There was identified the trend to the stock of the

same skills. Availability of formed easy and difficult skills were traced in one and the other groups of students. It gives the right to speak about justice established patterns for different levels of student groups and for different learning environments. The results of the pilot cut are allowed to express certain recommendations concerning the organization of training to audition for teaching a foreign language at an early stage of non-language high school.

## DISCUSSIONS

Thus, examining the process of listening, the specifics of learning and ways of teaching as one of the most difficult and the most important types of speech activity, ways to overcome the difficulties that students face at different stages of training, technique and basic exercises for teaching listening, we have found that listening is an independent kind of speech activity, which is more difficult than speaking, reading and writing. Listening contributes to the achievement of educational goals, providing students the opportunity to understand the statement in a foreign language. Hence, listening is a powerful tool for learning a foreign language; it gives the opportunity to acquire the sound side of the studied language, its phonemic structure and intonation (rhythm, accent, melody).

Thus, listening can be called specific language training base, as in the course of listening to information there is increasingly used wordless translation, when it is necessary to use a guess and using the thinking exercise prediction of what the other person says. Moreover, possession of audition as a kind of verbal activity ensures successful communication process; a student develops the ability to speak a foreign language and understand it; increases motivation to study a foreign language and use it as a means of communication. And it is very important to achieve the desire of students to learn to listen to it and understand audible, and give them to feel their capabilities, their advance. Since listening is the basis of communication, then it begins to master verbal communication. This means that ownership of listening allows the individual to understand what he is told, and to respond adequately to the above, it helps to explain his response to the opponent. That is what we call the basis of spoken language.

Thus, listening contributes to the achievement of educational goals, providing students the opportunity to understand the utterance; absorb the lexical structure of the language and its grammatical structure; exercise understanding affirmative, interrogative and negative sentences. At the same time listening facilitates the mastery of speaking, reading and writing, which is one of the main reasons for using listening as a secondary and sometimes primary means of learning these types of speech activity. Thus, it is obvious that listening as a kind of verbal activity plays an important role in teaching a foreign language to achieve practical, developmental, educational and training purposes, and serves as an effective tool for students mastering the language and communicative competence.

## CONCLUSIONS

As the modern didactics shows, in the technique listening can act as a target and as a teaching tool. In actual practice of high school these two functions are closely intertwined. Listening as a tutorial introduction provides students with a new language and speech material; it serves as a means of formation of skills and abilities in all other kinds of speech activity; it helps to maintain the achieved level of ownership of speech; generates auditive skills as a whole. In terms of learning objectives with the listening means students receive any information. It can be a text, a film and any information of cultural (or other kind) character. In this context, listening success can be determined by both objective and subjective factors.

Objective factors consist of features of the charge of the text and the context in which it perception occurs.

Subjective factors are determined by the peculiarities of the psyche and the listening level of its preparation. Therefore, the need for training to audition as a separate, independent kind of speech activity is due to the following factors: through hearing foreign speech samples received as standards are placed then in long-term memory; auditory speech mechanisms are in all kinds of speech activity, so it is important to develop the auditory analyzer; the student develops the auditory control, which is included in all types of speech activity, i.e., the student at the time of speaking, writing, reading controls himself through the ear; then auditory memory is developing, without which there cannot be a successful educational activity, especially when it comes to mastering a foreign language.

On this basis, during the study the following key learning objectives were identified: to form specific skills; to develop some speech skills; to teach communication skills; to develop the necessary abilities and mental functions (attention, memory, etc.); to remember speech material; to teach students to understand the meaning of a single utterance; to teach students to highlight important information in a stream; to develop auditory memory; to develop auditory response. At the same time we have come to the conclusion that listening, strictly speaking, is not an act of communication, because the real communication is always done under certain conditions (place, time); there come into contact specific persons who have a certain social status and social roles. And each of the communicants, realizing their communicative intent, pursues the real goal, which is not always reduced to a mere communication of information. So, having considered the difficulty of listening and mechanisms to overcome them, it becomes apparent that the quality of training for listening, taking into account its communication, is necessary to develop new teaching materials that meet the requirements of our time and reflect the latest scientific achievements in the field of teaching foreign language communication. It requires improving teaching materials by incorporating materials saturated cultural information: videos, prints, photographs, illustrations to the texts, maps and printed information, samples, introducing the everyday realities of the respective national culture (posters image, bus and theater tickets, currency, etc.), the cassettes with recordings of authentic texts of regional geographic content.

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