

Tyurina S. Yu.

Ivanovo State Power University, Ivanovo

Dokuchaeva N. V.

Karaganda Technical University, Karaganda

Ivanova S. A.

Karaganda Technical University, Karaganda

DEVELOPMENT OF SOFT SKILLS OF STUDENTS IN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY: TEACHING LISTENING

Soft skills are a set of social and communication skills, personality traits and attitudes, social and emotional intelligence that enable a person to achieve his/her goals. Listening is considered to be a key communicative skill to communicate effectively, thus this paper deals with the issues of development of listening skills of the students at nonlinguistic universities [1].

The process of listening includes such complex processes as analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, generalization, and concretization. It is necessary to identify the problems in teaching listening to find the proper ways to solve them. Thus, it will enhance the process of learning a foreign language and development of listening skills.

The experience shows that listeners may face such difficulties in the process of listening as linguistic (ex. phonetic, grammatical, or lexical ones) and speech ones (ex. lack of intercultural, sociocultural, or sociolinguistic competencies).

Listening difficulties may occur in case the recording is of poor quality, or too long. Students with A level face difficulties to perceive the audio text longer than five minutes to do all the after listening exercises successfully. Thus, audio material of short duration provides better understanding and reduces the so-called “fatigue”.

Accent of the speaker may significantly influence on understanding of the message. On the one hand, peculiarities of pronunciation of both native and nonnative speakers may cause some difficulty, but on the other hand it helps to get ready for real life communicative situations when a smooth and clear speech is extremely unlikely.

Also, an obstacle to understand the foreign language speech is limited vocabulary of the students and lack of knowledge of grammar constructions of the language being studied. No doubts, that audio message has a variety of unfamiliar, polysemantic or terminological lexical units and grammar structures, which can prevent understanding of the idea of the issue.

Thus, if students are familiar with the vocabulary, it increases their interest and motivation to do the tasks, which in general has a positive effect on the development of listening comprehension skills.

Prosody, intonation, semantic stress and pauses also complicates the process perception of the message.

It should be noted that intercultural, sociolinguistic, and sociocultural competencies play a key role in the process of perception and understanding the message.

Undoubtedly, the student is to have enough background knowledge about the country, its people, customs and traditions, modern culture, and history.

Thus, teaching listening skills is very important for students. A pilot experiment has been carried out with the students at technical higher school. Special tasks to enhance listening skills have been introduced during English language classes [2].

Some examples of the tasks are presented below.

1. Listen to the conversations. Fill in the missing words. Practice in pairs, then role-play the conversations, using the words.

1.Fruit juice – orange or grapefruit; Some wine – white or red

- Would you like a drink?
- ..., please.
- Still or sparkling?
- ..., please. And no ice.
- 2. Two of these; a little of that; a few of those; some of this
- Can I help you?
- Please. Some of ... thank you and some of ... too.
- Anything else?
- Yes. One of ... and some of Thanks.

II. You are a passenger in a London taxi. Listen to the driver's speech.

Pay attention to the accent. Complete the statements.

1. Don't forget your _____.
2. It's the ____ now. They say you _____ wear them.
4. Going to have tea with the _____, are you?
5. Get out of the _____.

III. Listen to the conversation. Tick (V) the forms of address that people use in the dialogues. Which of these are formal?

The police officer uses:

- ☐ sir / madam
- ☐ title + first name + surname
- ☐ title + surname
- ☐ surname only
- ☐ first name only
- ☐ friendly form of first name.

The driver uses:

- ☐ sir / madam
- ☐ job title only
- ☐ job title + surname.

IV. What are the topics for the “small talk”? Give example of questions you can ask. Remember, personal questions are embarrassing in different cultures. Listen to the conversation “Meeting at the Airport”. Then choose the correct answer.

1. Ms. Nile knows / doesn't know Mr. Gost.
2. Mr. Gost is / isn't English.
3. The take-off was late / on time / early.
4. The arrival was late / on time / early.
5. The plane was full / empty.
6. This is / isn't Mr. Gost first visit to England.

In conclusion, it is worth saying that there seems to be no perfect method of teaching listening. Each student needs his/her own approach and tools. However, the results of the experiment have showed that introduction of the set of special tasks to develop listening skills has had a positive impact on learning listening.

Mastering listening skills of the students as a part of soft skills is not to be ignored. Students at the higher technical school are to strive to meet all the requirements of the modern society.

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