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Current trends in teaching listening

The success of professionally oriented communication greatly depends on students' listening skills. Their effective development and use is determined by a wide range of factors. One of them is the application of professionally oriented audio and video materials, namely their quality, quantity, systematic and cyclic use. In the majority of published ESP and EAP books the least represented activity is listening and the other four macro-activities do not have accompanying them audio and video support.

Currently, the role and place of listening in learning and teaching foreign languages has also undergone significant changes due to the development of new information technologies and the availability of a wide range of free authentic audio and video materials on the Internet. The accessibility of free online audio and video materials has opened up opportunities for the development of totally new teaching language sequences.

There are a lot of reasons to listen. Exposing students to listening to a variety of authentic materials we can help them enrich their vocabulary, improve grammar knowledge, pronunciation, listening, speaking and writing skills. Listening to professionally oriented materials will satisfy students' needs and help them expand their speciality knowledge. Furthermore, the use of authentic audio and video material in teaching languages provides the ideal opportunity for students with mixed-language abilities to listen to not only their teacher and classmates, but also native speakers of English and foreigners with different accents and speech fluency. The foregoing reasons for listening to authentic professionally oriented materials at all stages of the language teaching and learning will contribute significantly to the increase of students' interest and motivation, and consequently ESP and EAP learning and teaching will become more effective.

The novel methodology should involve 1) the implementation of blended learning, i.e. studying in the class and self-studying out of the class and 2) the development and application of totally new listening lesson sequences [2, p. 303].

According to Oxford Learner's dictionary [4] *'a sequence is a set of events, actions, numbers, etc. which have a particular order and which lead to a particular result'*. Under *a listening sequence* here we mean a set of tasks to one audio or video material arranged in a definite successive order with the aim to help students get both global and detail audio text understanding, and improve their language skills and knowledge. After performing such a sequence students should get deep and full understanding of the audiotext.

Every listening sequence should include intensive and extensive listening tasks on a topic. We share the view of Jeremy Harmer who proposed to blend and use for acquiring and improving listening skills extensive (outside the classroom) and intensive listening (in the classroom) [2, p. 303]. Mixing intensive and extensive listening gives students more autonomy and provides opportunities for self-study. ESP and EAP listening sequences developers have to choose and evaluate audiotexts in order to decide what materials, in which order and what tasks to them are suitable for performing in class (intensive listening) and which part of listening sequence is desirable to leave for homework. Due to extensive listening students who have lower language proficiency can listen or watch listening materials at home as many times as they need, doing additional exercises in order to improve their listening [1, p. 182; 3, pp. 18-24] skills.

We can also optimize the process of teaching listening through blending in listening sequences two types of text processing (top-down and bottom-up). In top-down processing the accent is on getting a general idea of the audiotext. In bottom-up processing students' attention can be focused on more detailed elements of the audiotext such as individual words, phrases or linking devices. The understanding in bottom-up processing is achieved by blending separate elements into a whole piece of information. In the process of listening sequences development it is reasonable to use both types of information processing. As Jeremy Harmer points out [2, p.270] there is

an interaction between two types of text processing. Without a full understanding of a wide range of details through bottom-up processing, it would be difficult to come to clear general audiotext understanding. And vice versa without global topic understanding, it would be impossible for students to comprehend the text even if they understand its details. We can start with listening tasks for some general text understanding and then proceed to the tasks which will help students perceive the text with considerably more details, e.g. they can be asked to listen for some specific information or language points.

Thus, the development of listening sequences should be based on a blended learning approach in order to provide opportunities for students' self-study both in class and after class. Their development and use, in turn, involves writing clear teachers' and students' guidance for intensive classroom and extensive home listening activities.

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