LISTENING-REACTING ABILITY AS ONE OF VITAL ACTIVITIES FOR TRAINING SPONTANEOUS COMMUNICATION SKILLS

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Abstract

The necessity of teaching appropriate foreign language reading, listening, writing and speaking skills to students of non-linguistic high school is vital nowadays for specialists in all professional fields. One of these skills is listening which is defined as the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. Listening requires understanding a speaker's accent or pronunciation, his grammar and his vocabulary, and grasping his meaning. All these four things done simultaneously at one and the same time are usually peculiar to an able listener. Taking into account the great importance of listening skills in English for different language speakers, the purpose of the article is to contribute to scientific theoretical and practical experience of considering the ways of teaching listening to make students capable to react to interlocutors’ speaking in a proper way. The research under consideration has been based on the combination of the communicative method, the context approach supported by the “word lace making” method. The “word lace making” technique helps students enlarge original phrases consisting of two or three words into longer ones. In the end the phrase is turned into a very long utterance, the technique enables making texts as well. The research confirms that according to the methods mentioned the process of understanding and reacting to the interlocutor’s speech can be best realized when language learners are taught to listen effectively and critically. Being one of the fundamental language skills, listening, while being taught for developing communicating skills, should serve to language learners in gaining information, understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation. Comprehending-reacting process within these topics should be organized on the base of real-life communication, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language based on the just learned educational material. The results show that comfortable atmosphere created by the teacher, competent use of the techniques mentioned in the work contribute to realization of the purpose of the research.

Keywords: language, listening, communicating skills, student, “word lace making” technique, teach, the communicative method, the context approach.

1 INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate in the language being learned mainly depends on the way one is able to comprehend the information of interlocutors. Such ability is required in everyday communicating process in one’s native language as well. So, the necessity of any speech comprehending skills is vital for all people. The aim of the paper is to show the importance and possibility to develop comprehending skills of higher school students of any utterance produced by the people around them and properly reacting to this utterance. Development of these skills is required especially for a perfect acquisition of the second language. To realize this aim it is important to provide the language learners with motivating speech activities and techniques. For language learners important is to acquire grammar and vocabulary to understand the language system and to develop their speech abilities by using it to communicate successfully inside and outside the classroom. The combination of the communicative method, the context approach supported by the “word lace making” method are the most appropriate ways of listening and reacting skills training. The “word lace making” method involves the learners into extending original phrases consisting of two or three words. As a result the phrase should turn into a very long sentence. The same technique enables making texts as well [Makayev Kh.F., Makayeva G.Z., Yakhin M.A., 2017: 4795-4799]. The grammatical, aural, English-only, translation and immersive approaches are of great contribution to realization of the paper’s aim as well. The question under consideration has been studied by such researchers as Harmer, J. (2007); Lynch, T. (1997); Makayev Kh.F. (2017); Abbott, G. & P. Wingard. (1985), Austin S. (1970), Galskova N.D., Gez N.I. (2004), Kolesnikova I.L., Leontyev A.A. (1988), Passov Ye.I. (1977) and...
many others. Language training process is accompanied by all four speech activities: speaking, listening, writing and reading. They are to be paid great attention to during the whole language teaching period as the ultimate aim of the whole teaching process is to make students be able to communicate both in professional and social situations. The paper considers listening and reacting skills as they are essential in producing any kind of speech. Being a receptive skill, listening requires the ability to receive and process the information. Speaking (reacting) is a productive skill and it requires the production of a speech [Harmer, 2007: 246]. Lindsay C. and Knight P. state that people listen to a wide variety of things: what someone says during a conversation, a conference; face to face or on the telephone; announcements giving information (at an airport or railway station; the weather forecast on the radio; a play on the radio; music; someone else’s conversation); a lecture; professional advice (at the doctor’s, in the bank); instructions on how to use a photocopier or other machinery; directions; a taped dialogue in class [Lindsay, C. and Knight, P., 2006: 45]. Listening-reacting activity deals with both psychological and social phenomena as it takes place on a cognitive level in language learners’ heads and develops interactively between learners and the environment surrounding them. Listening is a six-staged process consisting of Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and Responding [Nunan, D., 2001: 23]. Each of these stages is to occur in sequence and rapid succession. Hearing is the perception of sound, not necessarily involving great attention. In this connection Morley (1972: 7) marked the importance and complexity of listening with understanding in a nonnative language. Listening may occur in two ways. Students may listen to understand the general meaning, but without paying attention to details, specific structures. On the other hand, listening may be defined as a linguistic process in which one tries to make sense of acoustic signals by using knowledge of language. By the second way students have to pay attention to what is being said trying to hear specific details, to focus on individual words and phrases, and to achieve understanding by stringing these detailed elements together to build up a whole. The research conducted gained positive results due to use of proper teaching-training techniques. In the first instance teachers should provide students with the opportunity to listen on the base of different accents, useful and different topics, as well as situations that students can use in their real world which mainly can be divided into professional and social life fields. During teaching-learning process important is providing students with such listening-reacting stages as pre-listening, listening, and post-listening patterns. The work on the patterns should be based on students’ ability and interest, the content and nature of the listening text, the time and the material available.

2 METHOD

The research is based on the scientific works in the listening-reacting field of such scientists as Austin S., Fox J.W., Yagang, F., Galskova N.D., Gez N.I., Kolesnikova I.I., Dolgina O.A., Leontyev A.A., Passov Ye.I. The main method of the research is the “word lace making” method which contributes to enabling them to make utterances in accordance with their original language level and making the individuals get to work in a positive and supportive working environment. The listening-reacting process was realized by setting a purpose, motivating students by proper pre-listening, listening, and post-listening activities. The process includes Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and Responding stages. The stages mentioned take place in sequence and rapid succession which is required by the listening comprehension focus that is the main goal of the language teaching profession nowadays. Realization of the research’s aim depends on the use of different teaching ways such as discussion of controversial issues, communication motivating professional items important from the point of view of students that could encourage them to ask questions, paraphrase ideas, express support, check for clarification and so on. The task of the teacher is to provide language learners with real-life communication, authentic activities and meaningful tasks (Makayev, Yakhin & Makayeva, 2017) to promote their spontaneous communication skills.

3 RESULTS

The main aim of listening-reacting process is to get and share information with interlocutors in both verbal and nonverbal way. The research showed that the methods offered in the paper enable language learners to comprehend the listening material and to react to it in a proper way by involving into the teaching process different pre-listening, listening, and post-listening activities mixed with Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and Responding stages. Usually people listen and speak to get or to share some information with each other. This necessity should be counted as the main encouraging thing for motivating language learners to try to understand and give
the information to their interlocutors. Important is to learn language learners’ motives, interests as well as their original language knowledge level. This certainly will enable to comprehend and react properly to any kind of teaching material within the scope that the language learners have in their knowledge. Practising this ability should be realized step by step considering language learners’ knowledge level, adding not so much unknown material to the one supposed to be learned. The research proved that especially at the beginning of the teaching listening-reacting process it is necessary to use face-to-face communication technique as by this method a person can judge how the other party is reacting, can get immediate feedback, and can answer questions as well. The speaker in his/her turn can see whether the interlocutor understands the message or not that also can help them change the messaging material if necessary. The listener can also ask for either repeating or paraphrasing the messaging material that, in its turn, also contributed to involving the interlocutors into conversation. Use of all the methods, approaches and techniques mentioned in the paper allowed to gain positive results only. All the language learners involved in the research showed different growth rate of their speaking-reacting skills. Organizing pre-listening, listening, and post-listening activities in a proper way helped language learners understand each others’ way of pronunciation, their grammar, vocabulary which together gives out meaningful information to be got by them. During the first stage language learners receive the purpose of the listening act. After that the listening process happens which is followed by reacting act that is directly speaking. The process of listening is effective when both participants of conversation are able to identify and comprehend each others’ utterances.

The study recommends that students:

- should be taught to listen and react effectively on the base of pre-listening, listening, and post-listening activities. While listening they should try to “get inside the head” of the speaker so that he or she would become able to understand the communication’s target from the speaker’s point of view;
- should be encouraged to ask questions or to do any other actions trying to make their interlocutors’ speech intentions more exact, trying to make their speech partners’ words clearer; they should never give up if anything is not understandable; they should be taught to trust language’s abilities;
- should be provided with various motivating, interesting activities in a lesson to get their listening, comprehending and reacting abilities developed throughout the whole six-staged process, consisting of Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and Responding during all the three pre-listening, listening, and post-listening stages.

4 DISCUSSIONS

According to the aim of the research such teaching listening-reacting stages as pre-listening, listening, and post-listening ones should be taken into account. At all these stages following hearing, attending, understanding, remembering, evaluating and responding abilities should be encouraged.

Pre-listening in the pre-listening stage, teachers should prepare the students to listen, being already familiar with the listening task. Useful is to take a listen to the listening track and to ponder the questions: What is the situation? How many people are speaking? What different accents do you hear? What is the topic? It is useful to give students a simple preview of the listening text providing them with a little information, but not too much one. The research revealed the necessity of getting students to think about what they hear by giving them just a tiny bit of information, such as the title, the topic, or a short sentence, and allow them to predict what they’re going to hear [Brown, S., 2006]. The stage serves for assisting with understanding and motivating language learners to want to listen. Before offering the activities the teacher should analyze the students’ abilities, the material to be learned, the time availability, the nature and the content of the material for listening. The tasks to be offered to students may include such activities as watching videos, looking through the new vocabulary, listing the ideas about what information is going to be listened to, answering the questions, listening to the beginning of the text and predicting what will happen next and so on. At this stage the teacher’s task is to make students get interested in the topic. The tasks offered should aim at generating language learners’ interest, building their confidence and facilitating their comprehension. The tasks of pre-listening stage should be similar to real life listening activities. For this the teacher’s task is to give students some idea on the context of the information they are going to listen to. As for motivating the students, teachers’ should provide them with personalization activities such as a pair-work discussion about the sports they play or watch, an outdoor activity they are mostly
busier with and so on. Other aims of pre-listening tasks are activating current knowledge of students, providing knowledge input to build their confidence. According to “word lace making” method, both listening and reacting activities should occur step by step, word by word or phrase by phrase technique to enable the language learners to overcome the difficulties in doing the tasks suggested in a proper way. For dealing with this stage activities successfully it is recommended to activate the vocabulary the language learners are going to need at the stage. This may be done by role playing, discussing close-topical issues which would include the necessary vocabulary. For students, large numbers of unknown words will often hinder listening, and certainly lower confidence. We should select some vocabulary for the students to study before listening, to match words to definitions, followed by a simple practice activity such as filling the gaps in sentences.

While-listening The stage is supposed to develop students’ skills of eliciting messages from spoken language. During the listening process they should do activities which depend on what skill or ability of theirs the teacher would like to practice. It is most preferably to require from language learners listening for gist putting such questions as What? Who? Why? Where? When? Good contribution will be made making the learners listen for main ideas, make inferences, and summarize. Assigning a task can help students focus and develop important strategies for language teaching [Richards, J.C., 2012]. So, depending on the teacher’s task, the learners should try to either accept most of what they hear or ignore and focus on what is relevant. Selecting the details requires writing down some specific information (dates, numbers, etc.) and spotting the difference (learners look at a picture and listen to its description and spot any differences). While listening to directions and tracing the route on the map, for example, learners can complete a diagram or draw something based on what they hear. The research showed that while listening important and useful is to practise students’ inferring skills as thinking skills in which people usually make deductions by going beyond what is actually stated. Here the teacher is to pause the recording from time to time and ask students what they think will come next and why. It can be quite a distracting activity though, but in real life conversations people are often get distracted too.

Post-listening activities are oriented to check the degree of comprehesion of the text. Summarizing is, as the research showed, the most profitable activity for this purpose. To add some fun to the process of summarizing the teacher can ask learners to create a group summary. It is necessary to arouse a discussion and make a transition to speaking activities, considering the “word lace making” method which intends to make learners go from the simplest utterances to more complex ones. Some post-listening activities are extension of the work done at the pre-listening and while-listening stages. They can be much longer because at this stage students have time to think, to discuss, to write. Post-listening activities may include paraphrasing, summarizing, solving the problem, role-playing and other ones. The teacher should ask learners to personalize the problem touched upon in the text (What would you do in this situation?), to dwell upon pros and cons, to agree or disagree with some statements related to the text, etc. [Wilson, J.J., 2008]. All the tasks of the stage should be done after the teacher have carried out pre-listening and while listening activities successfully only.

5 SUMMARY

Considering the results of the research on developing listening-reacting skills of foreign language learners, we can draw the following conclusions:

1 Use of the combination of the communicative method, the context approach supported by the “word lace making” method are the most appropriate ways of listening and reacting skills training;

2 Both verbal and non-verbal speech activities on the base of face-to-face interactions considering the interlocutors’ intentions, predicting what they are going to talk about should be taken into account;

3 Vital are Hearing, Attending, Understanding, Remembering, Evaluating and Responding stages which should occur in sequence and rapid succession based on such listening-reacting patterns as pre-listening, listening, and post-listening ones;

4 Effective listening requires that while listening students should try to “get inside the head” of the speaker so that he or she would become able to understand the communication’s target from the speaker's point of view.

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6 CONCLUSIONS

The research described showed the possibility of developing students’ listening-reacting skills from a hearing stage up to a responding one considering verbal and non-verbal speech activities on the base of face-to-face interactions. All the six stages of listening teaching process are good to conduct on the base of the communicative method, the context approach supported by the “word lace making” method following the norms of subject relations, supporting exchange of ideas and evaluations freely, providing constructive and well-wishing critics, observing the business ethics, demonstrating high level communication tolerance. Developing listening-reacting skills is possible due to predicting of people’s intentions, guessing unknown words or phrases as calmly as possible, using one’s own knowledge of the subject, identifying relevant points and rejecting irrelevant information. Important is the assignments’ becoming more and more complicated step by step, from the simplest utterances to more complex ones to enable the language learners’ spontaneous authentic speech abilities on the base of real-life communication principle, authentic activities, and meaningful tasks that promote oral language based on the just learned educational material, motivation and real life events, much attention being paid to details, specific structures and the general meaning. The teaching process is to encourage language learners in gaining information, understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation and sharing them with people surrounding. The results obtained show that comfortable atmosphere created by the teacher, competent use of the techniques mentioned contribute to realization of the purpose of the research.

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