

DEVELOPING LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN TEACHING BUSINESS ENGLISH

Antonova N.V.

Krasnoyarsk state agrarian university, Krasnoyarsk, Russia

В статье рассматриваются вопросы развития навыков аудирования в процессе преподавания делового иностранного языка студентам КрасГАУ. Автор уделяет большое внимание аудированию, рассматривая его и как навык и как вид деятельности.

Joining Russia to the Bologna Declaration made it necessary for Russian universities to give special attention to the internationalization of education and entry to the global market. Russian universities have to take into consideration the main ideas of the process, such as:

- development of the higher education of two levels – Bachelor and Master degrees;
- introduction of the system of credit units while evaluating knowledge of students;
- introduction of the Diploma Supplement;
- solution of the problem of higher education system quality;
- developing the student mobility.

Russia joined the Bologna process in 2003 and Krasnoyarsk state agrarian university was among the first ones that started the activity directed to the perfection of its work in the educational sphere. Implementation of the Bologna Declaration statements was not as easy for the university as it may seem. First of all because of the geographical location of the University – it is located in the center of Siberia, Russia, more than 4000 kilometers far from Moscow, on the territory with severe frosts, long distances between cities and villages. In addition to it Krasnoyarsk has been for a long time the city closed for foreign specialists and tourists. The popularity of foreign languages was very low and the idea to continue education abroad or to start working for a foreign company seemed strange for young people and their parents, who were choosing the university for their children to study at.

The Rector of the University and the teaching staff understood that long before joining Russia to the Bologna process and in 1998 they organized the International faculty among the first ones in Russia, elaborated special Curriculum where special attention was given to learning foreign languages. The Curriculum was approved by the Intercollege in Cyprus (now it is the University of Nicosia) and in several years our first students went to continue education in that college and get double degrees. It was a real breakthrough for our University and the popularity of the University in general and the International faculty in particular started to grow. People in Krasnoyarsk understood that studies at the University put away barriers among nations, gave the opportunity to continue education abroad and find a good place to work not only in Russia, but also in any English speaking country. But that success showed the necessity to perfect our methods of teaching and learning English, to give

special attentions to the modern technologies in teaching Business English as it was clear that without them it would be impossible to train specialists able to establish long – term contacts in the world of growing integration and international links development, to use competitive advantages of the Russian companies and to occupy the niche on the world market.

As the International faculty at that time trained future managers in Business Administration we provided them with special skills in Business English. Business English as we understood it after attending several seminar of the British professors and book-writers (among them Nick Brieger, Mike Scholey, Richard Harrison and others) was not a special language but language used in special contexts or situations. It had four main elements:

- language itself (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, functions);
- content (marketing, management, banking, finance, etc.);
- communication skills (presenting, telephoning, negotiating, interviewing, business correspondence, socializing);
- cultural awareness (social behavior, business behavior).

While working on Business English in complex we found out that the most difficult skill for our students appeared to be listening comprehension skills.

Listening comprehension is considered to be both the activity and the skill. It is active thinking process as it is directed to the perception, recognition and understanding new role messages. All that supposed to combine creatively the skills and use them actively in the constantly changing situations [V.F.Satinova]. It means that listening as the activity is based on the skill, and as any skill it is based on the acquired habit.

The basic groups of the listening comprehension skills are as follows:

- skills of the subconscious recognition of the speech grammatical forms at the morphological and the synthetical levels and their correlation with the definite meaning (these are grammatical skills of listening);
- skills of direct understanding of words and word combinations (lexical skills of listening);
- skills of subconscious perception and mental distinction of the sound aspect of speech: sounds, sound combinations and intonation [E.I.Passov].

Listening comprehension is the ability to understand orally new messages every time.

There are some difficulties while teaching the listening comprehension, they are connected with:

- perception of the language forms, actives forms are perceived easier than passive, it is difficult to understand homophones (the words that sound similarly but have different meaning);
- difficulties connected with understanding the content (facts understanding-what happened, where, with whom), logics of narration – links between facts-why, what for), difficulties connected with interest of the material – students understand the material that is interesting for them easier than something that is of no interest or alien to them. Things that are unknown or alien – are understood with greater difficulty. We need to find optimal variant, giving the material “at the edge of

difficulty” and activating anticipation of contents. The most difficult part of listening comprehension is the understanding of the motive of activity. From that statement we understand the necessity of giving the students the purpose of listening. It can alleviate the listening comprehension in the process of listening.

-difficulties connected with speech perception, such as pace of speech, intonation, and the so-called “mechanical speech” – different types of recordings as we can’t see the person who can change the tempo, intonation, express the same idea in different way.

-difficulties connected with perception of the communication forms (monologues and dialogues and impossibility to reverse the speech).

So, we need to teach the students how to:

-subconsciously differentiate word forms, word combinations, grammar construction while listening;

-anticipate synthetic modals while listening;

-to develop the volume of the auditory memory;

-to understand different combination of the learnt material;

-to understand the recorded speech;

-catch the main idea from the first listening;

-to understand the pace of the natural speech;

-to understand the main ideas and contents even if it has some unknown material;

-to understand different types of texts.

To achieve these aims we use different types of methods, but audio-lingual method is one of them (Diane Larsen-Freeman). The main position of this method is plunge into the English speaking atmosphere: the teacher gives all the instructions at the lesson before the listening in English, no words are pronounced in the student native language. Sometimes the teacher illustrates the material by gestures, pictures or actions. We use in this way for example “Jazz chants” by Carolyn Graham, published by Oxford University Press for developing skills of speech etiquette understanding (greetings, getting acquainted, saying good-bye, giving and receiving compliments, inviting, refusing, accepting invitations, etc.). For the first listening the task is just to understand the subject of conversation, for the second – all the contents. Then the students repeat the dialogue line by line after the teacher, imitating her pronunciation and melody. When everything goes well, they do it themselves several times. It is to give positive reinforcement at that stage that helps the students to develop correct habits. If they stumble, the teacher helps them by drilling the lines again. The encouragement is very important here as it stimulates the students to work harder. Then the teacher initiates a chain drill in which each student greets another. The teacher also conducts transformation and question and answer drills. New vocabulary is introduced through the lines of the dialogues. Students are given no grammar rules. Grammar is taught through examples and drills. Only in the case of difficult for understanding material we use contrastive analysis using target language and native language. The home task as a rule is given as the creative work on the basis of the given material.

Training managers ready to work for international companies requires special work on special business topics in all the fields – contents in particular. To develop skills of understanding special professional conversations we use the books and audio- visual materials elaborated and recorded by the native speakers:

-David Cotton, David Falvey, Simon Kelt. Market Leader. Pre-intermediate Business English.

-Christine Johnson, Jack Lorengan. Starting Business English.

Long period of using these materials proved their high efficiency in developing listening comprehension skills as they give the materials from the elementary level to the intermediate level, touching upon all the important topics connected with the company activity and everyday life of the company (personnel management, finance management, production management, etc.) That is of great importance in the students' future work and studies.

One of the very effective techniques for developing listening comprehension skills in the University is inviting native speakers to give lectures and to conduct seminars. Again we do not use students' native language, the people who are invited to do that don't speak Russian, no teachers are invited to help the students.

For the first and second year students we invite Master degree students from different countries to create the atmosphere of mutual interest, for the third and fourth year students- professors and doctors from England, Germany, Japan and other countries to develop in the students the professional sphere interests.

The professors who are giving lectures choose the best students to study at their University for one or two semesters in the framework of the students exchange programs as is the case with Maribor University of Slovenia, North-Eastern agricultural university of China and some others.

As higher education in Russia is given in the native language, we work actively on the development of speaking and listening skills using the opportunities of sending our students for their on-the job training and studies to the USA, Finland, Great Britain, Malta, Ireland, China, Thailand where they can perfect their knowledge of English.. The students who have a good command of English have the chance to defend their diplomas in English and get special certificate proving their achievements in English, such as defending diplomas in English, publishing their papers in English, participating in the international conferences in English.

So, due to all these activities the students from Siberia, Russia can successfully integrate into the international educational and production space, serve the development of international economy and bring innovations of the world economy back to Russia.

References

1. David Cotton, David Falvey, Simon Kelt. Market Leader. Pre-intermediate Business English. Pearson Education Limited, 2002.
2. Diana Larsen-Freeman. Techniques and Principles in Language teaching. Oxford University Press, 2004, pages 35-45.
3. Christine Johnson, Jack Lorengan. Starting Business English. BBC English.1993.

4. Материалы международной научно-практической конференции «Методология обучения иностранным языкам в вузах»/Новосибирский Университет, Новосибирск, 1999, 214 с.
5. Настольная книга преподавателя иностранного языка: Справочное пособие/Е.А.Маслыко, П.К.Бабинская, А.Ф.Будько, С.И.Петрова. -5-е издание стереотип-. Мн.:Выш. шк.,1999.-522 с.
4. <http://revolution.allbest.ru>
5. Пассов Е.И. Основы коммуникативной методики обучения иноязычному общению - М.: Рус. яз.,1989.-276 с.
6. Царьков В.Б. Речевые упражнения на немецком языке. М.,1980.