

LISTENING SKILLS ACQUISITION IN ESP COURSE Набуття навичок аудіювання є однією з найважливіших складових необхідних для успішного вивчення англійської для спеціальних цілей. Дана стаття являє собою аналіз методів різних викладачів англійської для спеціальних цілей, досвіду дослідників, а також розуміння труднощів, які впливають на розуміння усного мовлення студентами технічних спеціальностей. Запропоновано різноманіття ефективних інструментів та видів діяльності, спрямованих на розвиток навичок аудіювання при вивченні англійської для спеціальних цілей студентами технічних спеціальностей. Ключові слова: навичка сприйняття, контекст, опанування мови, інтонація, зв'язна мова, прослуховування з метою розуміння загального змісту, розшифрування, засоби унаочнення, обробка (інформації) за принципом "від загального до конкретного" або "від конкретного до загального", побудова моделі. Listening skills acquisition is one of the most important constituents necessary for successful learning of English for specific purposes. This article is the study of different ESP tutors and researchers experience and understanding of the obstacles that affect listening comprehension and language practice in ESP classrooms with engineering students in particular. There have been suggested a variety of effective techniques and activities to develop listening skills in ESP course for engineers.

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Key words: receptive skill, context, language acquisition, intonation, connected speech, listening for gist, deciphering meaning, visual support, top-down processing, bottom-up processing, modeling.

The concept of English for special purpose arose in response to the need for improved communication between the developed and the developing countries of the world. As ESP course has always been based on learners needs focusing on special subjects, the students should acquire the variety of skills they will be able to apply in their professional environment. Out of this focus on specific need it is preferable to analyze what specific skills the learners need to attain in any given situation. Listening is one of the four language skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. Playing the critical role not only in communication, but also in the acquisition of language, listening is a challenge that demands attention. The importance of listening in English learning process has never been under-estimated. Specific studies and suggestions on the way students assess, process and treat the clusters of information data were given by the number of researches about listening process and the factors that affect listening. There is a variety of sources including Brown & Yule [1], Dunkel [2], Farrell & Mallard [3], Kavaliauskiene G. [4], Miller [6], Richards [7], Rivers [8], Vandergrift [9]. For the students who study Engineering course it is important to develop the ability in English listening comprehension first of all due to the great variety of specific technical terms they need to learn to be able to recognize in reading, apply in writing and then, through modeled listening situations, use in speaking process. The objective of this article is to study and suggest the most effective listening techniques and activities useful for listening skills acquisition for engineering students. According to the objective we have defined the following tasks to analyze: – defining different characteristics of spoken language in comparison to

written language and factors that affect listening process; – identifying the aspects of listening and finding the students' difficulties in a variety of while- and post-listening activities for engineering students; – analyzing and suggesting useful listening strategies and activities that are important for English acquisition in technical classroom. There is no doubt that listening is important in communication. However, listening skills have not received sufficient attention, as the priority has been given to teaching reading, writing and speaking. According to L. Miller [6; 16], more than forty percent of our daily communication is spent on listening, thirty-five percent on speaking, about sixteen percent on reading, and only nine percent on writing. Listening skills play a significant role in language acquisition. One of the key differences between successful and less successful learners lies in their ability to use listening as means of acquisition. Successful learners may find it manageable to listen to naturally spoken language even though they do not understand it [9; 52]. Given the importance of listening in English acquisition and learning, more attention should be given to the learning and teaching of listening comprehension skills in Ukraine in comparison to other skills such as reading and writing. A lot of learners, especially technical students, find that listening is one of the most difficult skills of English. Listening involves not only correctly interpreting incoming speech but also responding appropriately to the speaker, especially in face-to-face conversations where listeners must be able to contribute verbally [3; 75]. As listening is a receptive skill, it involves responding to language, rather than producing it. Besides, there are some factors that affect listening process. Listening is a demanding process, not only because of the complexity of the process itself, but also due to factors that characterize the listener, the speaker, the content of the message, and any visual support that accompanies the message [1; 37]. Teaching practice shows that interest in a topic increases the listener's comprehension. A listener who is an active participant in a conversation generally has more background knowledge to facilitate understanding of the topic than a listener who is, in effect, eavesdropping in a conversation between two people whose communication has been recorded on

an audiotape. Further, the ability to use negotiation skills, such as asking for clarification, repetition, or definition of points not understood, enable a listener to make sense of the incoming information. Colloquial language and reduced forms make comprehension more difficult. Content that is familiar is easier to comprehend than content with unfamiliar vocabulary or for which the listener has insufficient background knowledge. Visual support, such as video, pictures, diagrams, gestures, facial expressions and body language, can increase comprehension if the learner is able to interpret it correctly. To help students understand spoken language we need to use the context the language is spoken in and their knowledge of the world. With engineering students it is important to be aware of professional environment, for example, the place of the conversation (laboratory, workshop, designer office, etc.), the people taking part in the conversation, the subject of the conversation, etc. The practice shows that when students know more about the atmosphere of their future profession they can understand more. In connection with this we need to mention two types of cognitive processing that occur in listening work and affect students' listening comprehension: top-down processing and bottom-up processing. Top-down processing means that the learners use the information they already know about the topic.

This might include discussing the steps in the technological process; reviewing vocabulary such as switch on, off, etc.; generating a list of questions that the learners would like to be answered in the training. Bottom-up processing means deriving the meaning of the message based on the incoming language data, from sounds to words, grammatical relationships, meaning. Stress, rhythm and intonation also play a role in bottom-up processing. Learners need to be aware that both of these processes affect their listening comprehension, and they need to be given opportunities to practice employing each of them. During listening learners need to be able to understand different kinds of spoken text types such as conversations, stories, announcements, instructions, lectures and advertisements. They contain different ways of organizing language and different language features, and some consist just of one voice while others consist of more. In the English course for technical purposes different types of spoken text are used. Learners also need to understand different speeds of speech. Some people speak more slowly and with more pauses. Others speak fast and with few pauses. This makes them more difficult to understand. There are several reasons why spoken text might be difficult to follow. Learners often perceive a text spoken at normal or even at a slow speed as being very or even too fast. According to research by Farrell and Mallard [3;79], the reason is that speech rate is correlated with comprehension success. Learners' ability to understand the second language speech is caused just as much by difficulties of the language as by memory limits. All comprehension depends on the storing and processing of information by the mind. Although once labeled a passive skill, listening is very much an active process of selecting and interpreting information from auditory and visual clues [7; 229]. Most of what is known about the listening process stems from research on native language development. There are several basic processes at work in listening. The listener is not usually conscious of performing the following steps: determining the reason for listening; taking the raw speech and depositing an image of it in short-term memory; attempting to organize the information by identifying the type of speech event (conversation, lecture, radio ad) and the function of the message (persuade, inform, request); predicting information expected to be included in the message; assigning a meaning to the message; checking that the message has been understood; determining the information to be held in long-term memory; deleting the original form of the message that had been received into short-term memory [2; 91]. Each of these steps influences the techniques and activities a teacher might choose to incorporate into instruction in order to assist learners in learning to listen as well as listening to learn. Teaching listening skills is one of the most difficult tasks for any English language teacher, especially when it is ESP. Successful listening skills are acquired over time and with lots of practice [8; 215]. Learning listening skills is frustrating for students because there are no rules as in grammar teaching. One of the problems for students is mental block. While listening students suddenly decide they do not understand. At this point students just tune out. Some students

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convince themselves they are unable to understand spoken English well and create problems for themselves [8; 223]. In order to help students to improve listening skills, a scientific approach is essential. One aspect of this approach is to convince learners that not understanding is all right. Another aspect is to satisfy the students' wish to listen to English passages as often as possible. The third aspect

is to provide listening practice for short periods of time, from 5 to 10 minutes. The fourth aspect of this approach is to teach students important listening strategies, which are individual, not the same to each person. For example, taking notes, pay attention, not to stop listening or get distracted, or bored if not understanding [4;57]. Engineering students should be able to use a great deal of technical vocabulary within the frame of language structures generally used in such contexts as describing types of technical problem, the causes of fault, component shapes and features, positions of assembled components, technical functions and applications, design phases and procedures, explaining and discussing some quality issues, technical functions and technical advantages, etc. To acquire the skills listed above students should: a) be aware of their professional environment, know very well how it works in real job situations; b) be able to apply language models in working situations practicing them in classroom discussions while doing listening tasks. The variety of tasks can be suggested to satisfy the learners' needs. How students listen depends on their reason for listening. Teachers might include in the tasks listening for gist, specific information, detailed information, attitude (listening to see what attitude a speaker is expressing), or do extensive listening. Developing listening sub- skills is also of great importance for successful listening. Useful listening sub-skills incorporate predicting, guessing unknown words or phrases, identifying and retaining points, retaining relevant points, recognizing discourse markers, cohesive devices, understanding different intonation patterns, uses of stress, understanding inferred information. When selecting listening techniques and activities several factors should be considered. First, listening should be relevant. Because learners listen with a purpose and listen to things that interest them, accounting for the goals and experiences of the learners will keep motivation and attention high. Another very important factor is authenticity of listening texts. They should contain all the features of spoken language. The language should reflect real discourse, including hesitations, rephrasing, and a variety of accents. Level of difficulty can be controlled by the selection of the task. Use of authentic material, such as workplace training videos, audio records of actual workplace exchanges, and TV and radio broadcasts, increases transferability to listening outside of the ESL classroom context to work and to community. Teachers can develop learners' listening skills by focusing regularly on particular aspects of listening, e.g. problem sounds, features of connected speech, sub-skills and, if necessary, on any new language. Predicting, asking for clarification, and using non-verbal cues are examples of strategies that increase chances for successful listening. For example, using video can help learners develop cognitive strategies. As they view a segment with the sound off, learners can be asked to make predictions about what is happening by answering questions about setting, action, and interaction; viewing the segment again with the sound on allows them to confirm or modify their hypothesis. The activities in a listening lesson follow three stages: 1. Introductory activities: an introduction to the topic of the text and activities focusing on the language of the text. These activities should establish the purpose of the listening activity and activate learners' knowledge about the topic by encouraging the learners to think about and discuss what they already know about the content of the listening text. This activity can also provide the background needed for them to understand the text, and it can focus attention on what to listen for. 2. Main activities: a series of comprehension activities developing different listening sub- skills. The tasks should involve the listener in getting information and immediately doing something with it.

3. Post-activities: activities which ask learners to talk about how a topic in the text relates to their own life or give their opinions on parts of the text. These activities also require learners to use some of the language they have met in the text. They should help the listener to evaluate success in carrying out the task and to integrate listening with the other language skills. The teacher should encourage practice outside of the classroom whenever possible. Lund [5; 108] has categorized listening activities according to nine responses that can be observed as comprehension checks: 1) doing (the listener responds physically); 2) choosing (the listener selects from alternatives such as pictures, objects, texts or actions); 3) transferring (the listener transforms the message such as drawing a route on map, or filling in a chart); 4) answering (the listener answers questions about the text); 5) condensing (the listener takes notes or makes an outline); 6) extending (the listener goes beyond the text by solving a problem or continuing the story); 7) duplicating (the listener simply repeats or translates the message); 8) modeling (the listener performs a similar task); 9) conversing (the listener is an active participant in a face-to-face conversation). As it can be seen from above teachers have a very good choice among the activities that proved to be effective to improve students listening skills and that can be included into the development of English course for professional purposes. In conclusion, it needs to be pointed out that very often it is the ESP course that introduces students into their profession as it is usually taught for the 1st and 2nd year students who do not know much about their future profession yet. "Diving" into professional environment would be one of the most desirable techniques that could be applied in language teaching process. One of the elements of such "diving" technique is listening that has to be taught like any other language skills. Assisting learners in the development of listening comprehension is a challenge. It is a challenge that demands both the teacher's and the learner's attention because of the critical role that listening plays, not only in communication, but also in the acquisition of language. In this study the listening process and factors that affect listening have been analyzed that enable teachers to select or create listening texts and activities that meet the needs of engineering classes in particular. Teachers must weave these listening activities into the curriculum to create a balance that mirrors the real job situations integration of listening with speaking, reading and writing. Students' difficulties in acquiring listening skills were also found as the following: speech rate, distraction, inconsistency between the word they hear and the word they read, new words, the inability to catch certain information in listening materials, background information. To overcome the obstacles mentioned in the article different top-down and bottom-up listening strategies and techniques were suggested in the article, as well as the use of various listening sub-skills. There is also a number of activities that can be chosen for any course for professional purposes. As the main purpose of listening for students is not just understanding what they hear, but provoking them for further speaking activities. Based on students problems in listening and prior researches it is obvious that further study and more researches on listening problems are not only necessary but carry theoretical and pedagogical significance.

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