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## THE CONVERSATIONAL CLASSROOM: CULTIVATING INTERACTIVE LISTENING FOR REAL LIFE COMMUNICATION

*The article addresses the pressing issue of developing students' listening competence within the framework of foreign language acquisition at faculties of foreign languages, with a particular focus on integrating the development of spontaneous, unprepared speech. In light of current approaches to foreign language teaching, the importance of combining auditory comprehension skills with the ability to produce immediate spoken responses in real-time communication is emphasized. This integrated approach requires learners not only to comprehend spoken language effectively but also to participate actively in communicative interaction by producing spontaneous utterances.*

*The paper presents a theoretical analysis of scholarly and methodological literature on the formation of listening competence as a component of foreign language communicative proficiency. The author delineates different types of listening (passive, active, interactive) and highlights the specific characteristics of listening activities depending on the presence or absence of feedback. Particular attention is given to listening with immediate feedback, which is recognized as an effective method for enhancing both listening and speaking skills, as it closely mirrors real-life communicative contexts. In contrast, listening without feedback is discussed as a supportive tool for acquiring vocabulary and grammatical structures, and for broadening overall linguistic exposure.*

*The study also examines the typical difficulties students encounter during the listening process. Among the most common challenges identified are insufficient phonetic competence, limited vocabulary, difficulty in processing various accents and speech rates, psychological barriers (e.g., fear of making mistakes or misunderstanding the task), and a low level of automaticity in listening skills. To address these issues, the author proposes a set of methodological recommendations for classroom implementation, emphasizing the pedagogical value of listening tasks with immediate feedback. Such tasks promote cognitive engagement, develop students' analytical skills, activate linguistic resources, and foster readiness for impromptu speech production.*

*To translate the theoretical framework into practice, the author has developed a series of communicative situations and tasks designed to cultivate interactive listening skills. These tasks incorporate constructive, collaborative, and transformational orientations of listening, enabling the simulation of authentic communicative contexts and encouraging students' active participation. The effectiveness of these exercises was confirmed through classroom implementation with students of foreign language faculties, demonstrating their positive impact on the development of both listening and spontaneous speaking skills.*

*In conclusion, the article substantiates that the step-by-step development of listening with immediate feedback, combined with the enhancement of spontaneous speaking abilities, significantly contributes to improving students' overall communicative competence. This, in turn, ensures their preparedness for authentic foreign language interaction and aligns with the goals of contemporary educational paradigms. The findings and proposed materials may be of practical value to language instructors, curriculum developers, and those involved in the design of listening comprehension activities for language students.*

**Key words:** *reciprocal listening, non-reciprocal listening, interactive listening, passive listening, active listening, constructive, collaborative, transformative orientations of listening, communicative behavior.*

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## НАВЧАЛЬНО-ПІЗНАВАЛЬНА ДІЯЛЬНІСТЬ НА ЗАНЯТТІ ЯК ПРОСТІР ДІАЛОГУ: РОЗВИТОК НАВИЧОК ІНТЕРАКТИВНОГО СЛУХАННЯ ДЛЯ СПІЛКУВАННЯ В РЕАЛЬНОМУ ЖИТТІ

Статтю присвячено актуальній проблемі формування аудитивної компетентності студентів факультету іноземних мов у поєднанні з розвитком навичок спонтанного, невідготовленого мовлення. У контексті сучасних підходів до викладання іноземних мов наголошується на важливості інтеграції навичок сприймання усного мовлення на слух з умінями адекватно реагувати, формулюючи власні висловлювання в режимі реального часу. Такий підхід вимагає від студентів не лише здатності до якісного розуміння іноземного повідомлення, а й готовності до активної комунікативної взаємодії, що забезпечується розвитком спонтанного мовлення.

У статті здійснено теоретичний аналіз науково-методичних джерел, які висвітлюють сутність аудіювання як складової ініціативної комунікативної компетентності. Автором окреслено типи аудіювання (пасивне, активне, інтерактивне) та особливості організації слухання залежно від наявності чи відсутності зворотного зв'язку. Зокрема, акцент зроблено на слуханні з негайною зворотною реакцією як ефективному методі розвитку аудитивної та мовленнєвої компетентностей, що відповідає реаліям автентичного іноземного спілкування. Водночас розглянуто й роль слухання без зворотного зв'язку, що виконує допоміжну функцію в засвоєнні лексичних та граматичних одиниць, а також сприяє загальному розширенню мовного запасу.

Особливу увагу приділено аналізу труднощів, які виникають у студентів у процесі аудіювання. Серед основних перешкод виокремлено: недостатній рівень фонетичної компетентності, обмежений словниковий запас, складність сприйняття різних акцентів і темпів мовлення, психологічні бар'єри (наприклад, страх зробити помилку чи незрозуміння завдання), а також низький рівень автоматизації навичок аудіювання. У зв'язку з цим автором запропоновано низку методичних рекомендацій щодо організації аудіювання в навчальному процесі, які спрямовані на подолання зазначених труднощів. Одним із ключових методів визнано слухання з негайною зворотною реакцією, яке стимулює мисленнєву діяльність студентів, розвиває навички аналізу почутого, активізує мовленнєві засоби та формує готовність до невідготовленого висловлювання.

З метою практичної реалізації теоретичних положень розроблено комплекс комунікативних ситуацій та завдань, спрямованих на формування вмінь інтерактивного аудіювання. У завданнях враховано конструктивну, колаборативну та трансформаційну орієнтацію слухання, що дозволяє моделювати автентичні комунікативні контексти та залучати студентів до активної співпраці. Запропоновані вправи апробовано в аудиторній роботі зі студентами факультету іноземних мов, результати чого засвідчили ефективність застосування таких завдань у формуванні навичок слухання та спонтанного мовлення.

У підсумку доведено, що поетапне формування навичок слухання з негайною зворотною реакцією в поєднанні з розвитком умінь невідготовленого іноземного висловлювання сприяє підвищенню загального рівня комунікативної компетентності студентів, забезпечує їхню готовність до участі в іноземній взаємодії та відповідає вимогам сучасної освітньої парадигми. Результати дослідження можуть бути використані в методичній підготовці викладачів, розробці навчально-методичних матеріалів і плануванні занять з аудіювання для студентів мовних спеціальностей.

**Ключові слова:** слухання з негайною зворотною реакцією, слухання без зворотного зв'язку, інтерактивне слухання, пасивне аудіювання, активне аудіювання, конструктивна, колаборативна, трансформаційна орієнтація аудіювання, комунікативна поведінка.

**Problem statement.** In today's globalized, fast-paced world and rapidly developing society, mastering foreign languages has become one of the top priorities. The main goal of learning a foreign language is developing foreign language communicative

competence, which involves the use of a foreign language as a means of communication in educational, job-related, or everyday activities. Because of the increase in the volume of information, which has significantly affected people's lives, there is a need for

rapid perception of oral foreign language speech and understanding of what is heard. Oral foreign language communication occurs in the process of foreign language speech activity, which, in turn, involves the involvement of listening and foreign language speaking skills.

Learning and understanding a foreign language is impossible without listening, since this type of activity is an important part of foreign language communication. Through listening, the foreign language learner becomes a participant in foreign language communication, receiving a message in a foreign language and perceiving it by ear.

**Research review.** The issues of teaching listening and developing listening skills have been the subject matter of different studies and research. Methodologists J. Richards (1983), M. Rost (1990), S. Krashen (1982), G. Buck (2001), J. Wilson (2008) have internationally contributed a lot to our knowledge of listening in the process of language acquisition. The research is still going on internationally concerning developing listening skills in the EFL classroom and listening strategies and techniques the teacher and the learners use in the process of foreign language acquisition.

For instance, N. Walker considers listening as the most difficult skill to teach (Walker, 2014: 167–175).

D. Nunan (1997) describes listening as ‘the Cinderella skill’, overshadowed by its big sister, speaking. According to the scholar, of the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) that are generally recognized as the keys to ‘knowing’ a language, listening is probably the least understood, the least researched, and, historically, the least valued (Wilson, 2008: 17).

Meanwhile, listening appears as one of the central skills in learning a foreign language. According to the researcher Burley-Allen, more than 40% of our daily communication is spent on listening, while 35% is devoted to speaking, 16% is devoted to reading, and 9% is taken up by writing (Rost, 1991: 167).

The methodology of the Natural Approach, designed by S. Krashen, places listening at the centre of foreign language learning, with the teacher speaking to the students, but not necessitating an oral response from them at the initial stage. Listening is at the forefront of the scholar’s ‘input hypothesis’, according to which languages are acquired when people hear and understand spoken messages and learn the features of a new language (sounds, intonation, rhythm) through listening (Krashen, 1982: 18).

A primary responsibility of EFL teachers has consistently been the instruction of listening. There is a strong emphasis on the purpose of listening, whether it is for skimming, scanning, or extensive and inten-

sive comprehension. However, the equally important question of *how* to listen often receives less focus. Our view is that prioritizing active listening skills, as opposed to merely passive reception, is essential in the EFL classroom. This shift is crucial for nurturing truly dynamic and interactive communication in a foreign language.

**The purpose of the article.** Our research aims to highlight the nuances of reciprocal/active versus non-reciprocal/passive listening and reflect practical experience in implementing effective methods to develop reciprocal listening skills among students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. Specifically, we will analyze the theoretical foundations and methodological aspects of reciprocal listening, outlining its key characteristics and identifying the main challenges in cultivating these skills in the EFL classroom. Concurrently, we intend to share practical insights into strategies and techniques for developing EFL students’ reciprocal listening competence and their practical foreign language communication skills.

**Outline of the Main Material.** Developing listening skills is one of the most important tasks of the EFL teacher at all levels of teaching. While using all kinds of listening materials like records and tapes, podcasts, and learning videos the teacher mostly checks the comprehension of what the students hear, making listening nonreciprocal because the listener is in the situation where he/she has no opportunity to contribute to a dialogue, for example while watching a video or listening to the radio podcast. Mostly, they need to show how they comprehend audio materials in the EFL lesson.

This type of learning activity can be called Listening for Learning. In these situations, the listener’s lack of control over the input is a crucial issue. The listener has no influence over factors such as the speed at which the speaker talks, the vocabulary and grammar used, and no recourse to asking for repetition of a word if the speaker’s pronunciation renders it incomprehensible.

The most basic form of Listening for Learning in the EFL classroom is Discriminative Listening. According to John A. Kline, its goal is “to distinguish between sounds and understand nuances in the auditory message. This type of listening assumes the listener needs to identify specific elements of sound beyond just the words themselves, such as sounds, tone of voice, pitch, or accent. It is about recognizing subtle differences in auditory signals to interpret meaning. The EFL teacher’s role is to select authentic listening materials and create the learning environment for developing students’ discriminative listening skills” (Kline, 1996: 18).

In Listening for Learning, the EFL teacher also resorts to Informative Listening, the primary goal of which is to understand and retain information. It is about learning and comprehension. This type of listening assumes that the speaker is conveying facts, instructions, or knowledge that the listener needs to acquire. It requires the listener to focus on the content, interpret it accurately, and often involves strategies like note taking, summarizing, and distinguishing key ideas from supporting details.

The matter is that even post-listening discussion does not make the above-mentioned types of listening reciprocal. From our perspective, resorting to these types of Listening for Learning in the EFL classroom does not sufficiently develop learners' skills of spontaneous reaction to the discourse heard, hence, it does not make the learning process communicative.

M. Rost, for instance, notes "the stance listeners take during the above-mentioned listening process in language learning contexts is Receptive Orientation. It implies that the listener's primary role is to receive, in a passive way, the message from the speaker. The listener acts as a decoder, aiming to extract the meaning that is "there" in the spoken text. Focus is on accuracy of comprehension, understanding explicit information, and often involves tasks like answering multiple-choice questions, filling in blanks, or identifying specific details. The role of a teacher is to present clear audio, ensure appropriate vocabulary and grammar, and provide opportunities for learners to demonstrate their understanding of what they heard" (Rost, 1991: 45).

Given that interaction is central to foreign language communication, we strongly believe that reciprocal listening – or listening in real-life situations – deserves significantly more attention in the EFL classroom. Reciprocal listening, by its very nature, involves interaction between two or more people. This necessitates a conversation, which is precisely the goal of using a foreign language for real-life communication. Therefore, developing these reciprocal listening skills has to be prioritized.

The purpose of our survey was to identify the level of reciprocal listening skills of students of EFL in order to single out shortcomings in foreign language training with the aim of improving the situation. Among the participants were 34 listeners of the Course of Language Acquisition at the Faculty of Foreign Languages in Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University.

The students were asked to evaluate their own foreign language listening skills in tandem with spoken interaction skills. Participant self-evaluation revealed key communication challenges. In particular, an analysis of participant self-evaluation sheets iden-

tified several common communication difficulties. The primary issues revolved around Inference and Deduction, Identifying Speaker's Purpose/Attitude, Responding to and Asking Questions, Clarification and Repair Strategies, Turn-taking, Repetition or Rephrasing, Asking for clarification, Expression of attitude, and Negotiation of Meaning.

Specifically, the data revealed the following: 34% of participants struggled with understanding implied meanings, attitudes, or unstated relationships. 23% participants had difficulty discerning the speaker's intent and underlying feelings. 22% students reported problems with providing relevant and timely responses. 42% listeners of the course's listeners found it challenging to ask for clarification or rephrase their message when misunderstood, while 49% were unsure about appropriate turn-taking, including when to speak, when to listen, and how to take the floor. 52% participants lacked confidence in initiating, maintaining, and concluding conversations, and 46% of them struggled with asking for repetition or rephrasing when something was unclear. 63% of the participants had trouble collaborating with their interlocutor to ensure mutual understanding. Finally, a significant 88% were unable to convey emotions, opinions, agreement, or disagreement in a culturally sensitive manner.

The results mentioned above indicate that the respondents lack practical skills in using a foreign language in spoken interaction based on listening and speaking skills.

Addressing the problems we see in building meaningful interaction as the main goal of communication in a foreign language in the EFL classroom. One of the most efficient strategies to empower students in a foreign language should be the implementation of interactive approaches. In other words, the practical aim of every EFL lesson should be purposeful interaction between speakers and listeners in meaningful communication.

As far as communication refers to the perception, interpretation, and response of people to signals produced by other people, it occurs when interlocutors send verbal and nonverbal messages – words, gestures, facial expressions, and so forth to one another. The listener observes, interprets, and responds to the messages of the speaker. This implies that interlocutors pay attention to each other and exchange ideas with their partner. It encourages the development of the students' communicative skills and critical thinking. It helps students learn to lead the discussion or persuade their partner.

The task of the EFL teacher is to create authentic conversational situations, most commonly used to get



learners talking to each other. It gives learners exposure to a range of language items and language functions and provides more opportunities for the use of the new items compared to the opportunities in teacher-led classes. In its turn, it allows learners to develop fluency in the use of language features that they have already learned.

According to J. Wilson, a good point is “to develop Relationship Listening. The main objective is to build and maintain relationships and to understand the speaker’s emotions, feelings, and underlying messages. It involves reflective listening (paraphrasing what you hear to confirm understanding) and acknowledging emotions, and often requires full attention, showing support and empathy. This is what presents challenges for a lot of the EFL learners, and the task of the EFL teacher is to help them improve their listening and speaking abilities” (Wilson, 2008)

We also stand in complete agreement with D. Nunan’s argument that “interaction skills must be the focus of the communicative approach to all aspects of teaching foreign languages. Helping students meet specific communication needs must be through the implementation of syllabi based on such topics as accepting/rejecting invitations, requesting information, and expressing needs or emotions of various kinds (Nunan, 1997: 5).

The solution to the problem we see in building students’ awareness of the fact that listening is not passive. Indeed, it is extremely active, with cognitive activity happening in the mind. Active listeners guess, predict, infer, criticize, and, above all, interpret what they have heard.

According to M. Rost, the focus should be shifted to the collaborative orientation of the interlocutors. The scholar emphasizes that “listening is an interactive and social process. Meaning is seen as being jointly negotiated and co-constructed between the speaker and the listener, especially in conversational settings. Listeners actively participate in shaping the interaction, seeking clarification, and providing feedback to ensure shared understanding. Focus is on turn-taking, asking for repetition or clarification, paraphrasing to confirm understanding, responding appropriately, and managing the flow of conversation. It moves beyond individual comprehension to shared understanding in communication. The teacher’s role is creating opportunities for authentic interaction, encouraging learners to use communication strategies to resolve misunderstandings, and focusing on the dynamics of spoken discourse” (Rost, 1991).

A necessary factor in building proper interaction with speakers is mastering the standards of communicative behavior.

O. Tarnopolsky, N. Skliarenko define communicative behavior as “communicative etiquette behavior, which contains certain linguistic characteristics and reflects the culture of behavior of native speakers in accordance with the situation and conditions of intercultural communication. The standard of communicative behavior includes a verbal component (speech formulas, clichés, choice of vocabulary and grammatical structures, intonation and pronunciation characteristics, etc.); a non-verbal component (facial expressions, gestures, comfort zone between communicants); a social component (conditions, rules and norms of interaction of communicants)” (Tarnopolsky, 2003).

M. Pysanko astutely observes that mastering socio-domestic standards of communicative behavior occurs in the process of performing role-playing tasks, imitation, and didactic games: “At the bank”, “At the store”, “At the hotel”, “In transport”, “At the restaurant”, etc. Ritual and traditional standards of communicative behavior are mastered in the process of cross-cultural analysis and commenting on information blocks on the following topics: “Customs and traditions of English-speaking countries”, “Holidays in English-speaking countries”, etc. (Pysanko, 2007).

The process of communication in a foreign language consists of the fact that interaction occurs between the participants of communication, and the need to enter into contact arises. That is why foreign language teachers must equip students with all the means of a foreign language to form practical skills and abilities of Spoken Production and Spoken Interaction in the scope of topics defined for each stage of studying a foreign language. The student’s speaking skills should be developed at such a level that, using a certain set of basic structures and lexical units defined by the program, the student not only has to convey the information received, but also has the skills of interactive participation in communication.

In this light, we defined the goal of the Language Acquisition Course as creating conditions at the EFL lesson so that the students have a need to establish speech relations with communication partners. This need should be so high that it becomes the student’s motivation to express themselves in a foreign language.

Holding the opinion that the closer the exercises are to real communication, the more useful they are, during the classes of the Course of Language Acquisition for Students of EFL at Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, we created the conditions of training adequate to the conditions of real communication. A whole series of classes was devoted to developing students of EFL listening

alongside spoken interaction skills as important components of mastering a foreign language.

In our work, we based ourselves on the fact that developing the students' impromptu speaking skills and their abilities to react naturally in conversational situations in a foreign language, across a variety of topics, requires teaching students all kinds of conversational expressions, speech formulas, and clichés. The focus was on such topics as Agreement and Disagreement, Approval and Disapproval, Expressing Disappointment, Pleasure and Displeasure.

With this purpose, the communicative situations during the classes involved a clear task for the student, exerting a targeted speech influence on him/her as an interlocutor. The point was not to organize educational dialogues, but to establish a speech partnership during the EFL lesson.

Students were trained how to use colloquial chunks and silence fillers necessary to maintain the conversation, like expressing certainty, uncertainty, ignorance, surprise, regret, anger, reproach, reprimand, congratulations, wishes, compliments, asking permission, making complaints, etc.

Below are several communicative scenarios that necessitate generating foreign language discourse relevant to the communicative context.

### **Communicative situation 1. Expressing anger, indignation, reproach, reprimand**

<b>Conversational Formulas to use</b>	
<i>I absolutely hate/detest/loathe...</i>	<i>Isn't it awful/dreadful/terrible/shocking!</i>
<i>I can't stand.....</i>	<i>What a nuisance!</i>
<i>What annoys me most is when ...</i>	<i>What a shame!</i>
<i>What gets to me is...</i>	<i>For shame!</i>

**Speaker A:** *You loathe when someone spray-paints walls with crawling graffiti. Share this feeling with your friend.*

**Speaker B:** *Express your attitude to what Speaker A tells you. You also detest people dropping litter in the parks and recreation zones. Share this feeling with your friend.*

### **Communicative situation 2. Giving News**

<b>Conversational Formulas to use</b>	
<i>I have to tell you something</i>	<i>I'm all ears...</i>
<i>You will never guess who/ whom...</i>	<i>Go on...</i>
<i>You will never guess what I heard.</i>	<i>Okay, tell me.</i>
<i>Well, I've heard that ... / about...</i>	<i>No, really?</i>
<i>Guess what!</i>	<i>Well, I never!</i>
<i>Well, I am not sure if it is true but ...</i>	<i>Are you joking!</i>

**Speaker A:** *You've heard that your friend is getting married to your classmate. Share the news with your friend.*

**Speaker B:** *Listen to the news. Express your attitude. You also heard that another classmate of yours has started a new business. He is the owner of the gym. Share the news with your friend.*

The implementation of the above-mentioned material in the process of studying contributed to ensuring such important elements of the methodological system of teaching EFL as the principle of personal communication, the inseparability of students' educational and cognitive activity and communication activity.

At the same time, developing reciprocal listening skills requires the use of repair strategies. Students have been trained to react to situations of confusion by backtracking and starting again. Listeners learned how to ask the speaker for clarification or to slow down, etc.

**Task 1.** *You don't know the translation for Ukrainian words 'друшляк', 'гойдалка', 'мансарда', 'окуляр для плавання'. Use the Strategy of Circumlocution (describing the target object when you cannot think of the word you need).*

**Task 2.** *You cannot think of the English word for Ukrainian 'садові ножиці', 'табуретка', 'бігун підтюпцем'. Use the Strategy of Approximation (using another word to express what you are trying to say as closely as possible).*

As a result, the students' listening orientations moved from a static, transmission-based view of listening (receptive/ nonreciprocal) to increasingly dynamic, active, and socially engaged (reciprocal), which made it effective in language acquisition.

Drawing on Marvin Shaw's definition of communication as mutual influence, our approach emphasized the Constructive Orientation of the listener. This perspective views listening as an active process where individuals build meaning by using their existing knowledge-schemata, background, and linguistic understanding-to interpret, infer, and construct a coherent understanding of the message.

The students were taught that the meaning is not just in the text but is also created by the listener. During the learning process, students practiced making inferences, predicting, integrating new information with prior knowledge, and resolving ambiguities as listeners constantly formed hypotheses about what they heard. Students were exposed to various listening materials designed to activate prior knowledge, provide context, and encourage them to go beyond explicit information to make connections and draw conclusions.

Simultaneously, developing listening skills in conjunction with spoken interaction also involves Critical Listening. This high-level cognitive engagement in the EFL classroom required listeners of the course

to evaluate, analyze, and judge messages for credibility, logic, and validity, making decisions or forming opinions on the truthfulness of what is being said. It entailed checking assumptions, biases, evaluating evidence, assessing argument strength, and considering speaker intent.

Ultimately, our goal was to foster a Transformative Orientation, where students not only understood but internalized, reflected on, and allowed the message to influence their own perspectives or actions. This advanced goal centered on critical thinking, personal reflection, empathy, and adapting one's views, involving a deeper engagement with the content. We pursued the goal to encourage critical analysis, facilitate reflective discussions, and provide opportunities for creative and personal responses to what was heard.

Conducting the survey of the participants of the course of Language Acquisition about their skills and abilities of listening and spoken interaction at the end of the course demonstrated a significant increase of

listening skills and spoken production skills. It proves the effectiveness of the applied system of strategies and techniques.

**Conclusions.** In summary, the consistent application of reciprocal listening yields profound benefits in building stronger relationships, resolving conflicts, enhancing learning, and improving foreign language communicative competence, transforming casual hearing into true comprehension, meaningful connection, and active communication.

The effectiveness of the conducted experimental study allows us to state that developing reciprocal listening skills is effective when implementing constructive, collaborative, and transformative orientations of listening. Therefore, the system of the above-mentioned methods can be recommended for implementation for EFL students with the purpose of developing their foreign language communicative competence in general and listening skills and spoken interaction skills in particular.

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