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THE STRATEGY OF L2 SELECTIVE LISTENING IN ELT CLASSROOM

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Abstract

The necessity of oral scientific discourse listening comprehension development is due to the lectures available in a classroom and online. The examination, performed to inspect students' abilities to record the content of the popular scientific lecture, demonstrated the complications the students face. The training activities and experiments were made to provide the support for the students in listening comprehension and adequate note-taking. The approach is based on the division of listening into three parts: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening. The first stage is connected with teaching the students to make hypotheses about the oral discourse content, raising awareness of its terminology. The second stage deals with creation the ability to separate the scientifically relevant information from the irrelevant one. The relevant information is responsible for the presentation of the scientific material while the irrelevant one establishes the lecturer's contact with the audience. The second stage is also connected with teaching to recognize the text's prosody and intonation. The third stage deals with the analysis of the listeners' ability to note-take the information which is scientifically valid. Three sets of listening perception training followed by the experiments were performed. To monitor the soundness of approach, the tests of the students' proficiency in taking down the content, preceded by training, were carried out.

Keywords: Cognitive linguistics; L2 listening strategy; terminology; relevant information; prosody and intonation; note-taking.

1.   Introduction

L2 listening has been considered the most difficult skill to learn out of the four language competencies (Boitsova, Bogach, & Vylegzhanina, 2016). At present, its importance is acknowledged, and L2 listening has been integrated in a communicative competence framework (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006). The last decades have seen a deep insight into L2 listening methods. Teaching and learning strategies have become actively involved in formerly supposed passive process of L2 listening (Goh, 2005); strategy-based listening has been actively addressed and studied (Mendelsohn, 2006).

Numerous related research endeavouring to understand the causative role of L2 listening (Dunkel, 1991) disclosed different constituents of L2 listening expertise. The types of knowledge which positively affect learners to increase their self-confidence and self-motivation have been explicitly defined (Rost & Ross, 1991). The other extensive study covered strategy-based teaching methods and frameworks (Carrier, 2003; Chamot, 2005; Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006). A layer of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies together with cognitive correlates of listening have been examined from the learners' and teachers' perspectives (Robinson & Ellis, 2007).

Chen (2009) studies the effects of listening course which includes a strategy training component. Miller (2009) presents an extensive insight into perceptions, concerns, and preferred lecturer's strategies which the students, who took part in the experiments, supposed to aid in their comprehension of the lecture content. Miller breaks the positive factors he has found as language and teaching related methods and infers a set of helpful features for listening of the lectures in English.

To summarize, the four key areas, in which the research has provided insights into the teaching of L2 listening, are (Rost, 2006): a) accessibility of input, including degrees of relevance, difficulty and authenticity; b) top-down processing, involving listeners' background knowledge and mental representations (concept-driven) (Robinson & Ellis, 2007; Rost & Wilson, 2013; Wilson, 2008); c) bottom-up processing, that starts with words decoding from acoustic signal through phonetic and phonological levels to its meaning in the context (data-driven) (Robinson & Ellis, 2007; Rost & Wilson, 2013; Wilson, 2008); d) listener's status and its change towards more active through elaboration techniques, namely, interest invoking, lack of knowledge detection, pre-questions and pre-trainings, etc. (Imhof, 2001).

In academic context, L2 listening is even more challenging due to its intrinsic non-collaborative and non-interactive setting. L2 lecture listening requires specific cognitive steps involved in comprehension to be mobilized and put together (Chamot, 1995). In particular, it implies that students' skill for L2 speech understanding acts in line with their metacognitive strategies and mental education mechanism (Imhof, 2000).

2.   Problem Statement

L2 listening implies several mental actions to be performed simultaneously: immediate lecturer's speech decoding (including deciphering the L2 phonology and vocabulary) (Bloomfield et al., 2010); instant informative payload extraction and fixation; placement of new knowledge within mental semantic schemata. Therefore, to make all these actions feasible, there is a need to define some helpful

phonological and contextual cues to navigate in the lecturer's speech flow (Jing, Chunsheng, & Guofa, 2019; Segalowitz, 2007). L2 listening strategy is supposed to help students to keep to the lecturer's connected speech and control their attention without loosing focus when switching to note-taking (Imhof, 2001; Rost, 2006).

3. Research Questions

The L2 Selective listening strategy is designed according to Dijk and Kintsch (1983), who state, that "… discourse processing, just like other complex information processing, is a strategic process in which a mental representation is constructed of the discourse in memory, using both external and internal information with the goal of interpreting the discourse". The strategic approach demands the way to achieve the results. Consequently, this study poses the following research questions:

RQ1: To figure out the informational components of education within L2 Selective Listening strategy.

RQ2: To estimate the features of the oral scientific discourse to choose an appropriate training content.

RQ3: To work out the activities within the L2 Selective Listening strategy addressing lexical, stylistic and prosodic cues of the lecturer's speech.

RQ4: To determine the level of the students' ability to grasp the required content of the oral scientific discourse after training listening comprehension

4. Purpose of the Study

International teaching staff, online lectures and MOOC have become a conventional attribute of the university life. In this setting, the students are challenged to apprehend the professional content delivered in a foreign language. This study deals with the development of the of teaching strategy concerning the students of engineering specialties to parse the lecturer's speech and select the material for note-taking during the scientific lecture listening.

The purpose of the study is the development of the three -part listening model for the students of engineering specialties aimed at comprehension of the popular scientific discourse. The pre-listening stage should help the students to get ready in perceiving the information they are going to hear. The specificity of this stage lies in activating the background knowledge of the lecture by looking for the terminology which might be used by the speaker. The while-listening stage is connected with teaching the students to distinguish between the scientifically relevant information and the scientifically irrelevant one. The object of the post-listening stage is checking the information the students managed to note-take while listening.

5. Research Methods

The proposed learning strategy relies upon the cognitive theory assumption about the second language acquisition (SLA) as conscious and reasoned thinking in L2. In order to gain better understanding of the ways and methods how to increase the acquisition of the lecture content via L2

listening strategy, we examined the students' ability to write down the L2 lecture without any pre-training (pre-test activity). The pre-test activity was carried out with a test group of students (Group 1). The second group of students (Group 2) was subjected to listening perception training, followed by the experiments, consisting of discovering the students' skills of note-taking the scientific content of the lecture.

The mechanisms, that trigger the mental processes, needed for sustained development and adequate understanding, are relevance, difficulty and authenticity of incoming content (Rost, 2006). The popular scientific discourse, presented by Bishop (2015), was chosen for training activities and the experiments due to: a) small quantity of scientific terminology; b) accentuation of the relevant information with special speech means; c) various techniques to enhance the listener's attention.

The first activity developed the ability to comprehend the scientific constituent of the popular scientific lecture and trained the students' proficiency to distinguish the scientific terminology (Activity 1); the purpose of the second activity was to teach to separate the relevant information from the irrelevant one (Activity 2); the third activity was to develop the capacity to recognize the prosody and intonation indicators of the language means marked by conveying the relevant information (Activity 3).

1.1. Pre-Test Activity

Thirty-six second - year students of the computer specialty took part in the pre-test activity. The students were asked to write down the summary of the lecture either in English or in their native language (Russian). Four students wrote the summary in Russian. The other chose English. Four students wrote down the summary, using 2 or 3 sentences; while the rest of the group used separate words to write down the content, using 3 or 4 cryptographic terms at an average (Table 1). None of the students produced a connected text.

The other words used were written down at random. All the students confined themselves to a comparatively general information about the discourse content: "details of cryptography"; "cheap method"; "one-time pad"; "something about discrete math"; "when we mix colors"; "there is a problem connected with cipher". Summing up, the unsatisfactory results were received.

Table 01. Group1. Experiment 1. Pre-Test Note-Taking

Number of participants	Average number of terms (out of 10)	Number of sentences	Connected text
36	3	2-3	0

1.2. Activity 1

Regarding the content of the scientific lecture, which the students are going to listen, it is reasonable to suggest, that the information about the content of the lecture might be received by them from different sources and can vary considerably. It is important to refresh the students' ontology of the lecture subject and prepare their semantic field to acquire the new information.

The first stage of students' training deals with directing them to anticipate the future content of the lecture. The title of the lecture has to stimulate the students to look for the ways of an adequate perception

of its scientific content. The students are encouraged to compile a list of the terms, that might occur in the forthcoming lecture, find their definitions and analyze the concepts these terms express. Uniting the hypotheses about the oral text development with mental forecasting of its scientific terminology can be used as a means of narrowing the range of possible variants of the content.

The first stage is connected with understanding the existence of the following linguistic categories: the term, the definition and the concept. The term is included into the lexical system of the language due to its belonging to a definite terminological system of a particular science, profession, activity. Within the terminological system the terms have a systematic character; possess a definition; reveal a tendency to univocity and lack the expressiveness. The emergence of a term is connected to the development of a special concept sufficient enough to be assigned to a certain scientific definition. There is a cognitive connection between the term as a word, its definition and its concept concerning the scientific field. The activities of the following article are limited by training the students to look for a relationship between a term and its definition.

The terms, used by the lecturer, are connected with cryptography. The list of 10 terms, based on their usage by the lecturer, has been compiled by the authors of the article: cryptography; one-time pad; to scramble; to unscramble; to encrypt; to decrypt; one-way function; key; random number; discrete logarithm.

1.3. Practice

- The students are offered the following activities:
  - to compose a short text about their vision of the lecture content, based on its title, to check their ability to predict the scientific content;
  - to form the list of the terms connected with the field of cryptography that might be used by the lecturer;
  - to read the definitions and find the corresponding terms in the list below, e. g.: an algorithm for performing encryption or decryption - "cipher";
  - to guess which sentence contains a term (the term is connected with a special branch of a science), e. g.: 1. There is a *key* underneath the diagram that explains the symbols. 2. The *key* is a piece of information that determines the functional output of a cryptographic algorithm;
  - to listen to the lecture and write down the terms, connected with cryptography, or the sentences where the terms are used.

1.4. Experiment

The experiment investigating the students' abilities to notice the terms as the representation of the scientific content of the lecture has been performed (Table 2).

Table 02. Group 2. Activity 1

Number of participants	Average number of terms (out of 10)	Number of sentences	Connected text
35	7	4-5	0

1.5. Activity 2

The second (while-listening) part is training the attention-directing mechanism. The students are explained different degrees of information salience and how to discriminate between the relevant and irrelevant information. They are explicitly informed about what communicative goals a lecturer can arrange using relevant/irrelevant dichotomy. The lecturer's efforts to establish the contact with the audience and draw attention to the information he presents, coexists with the lecture's scientific component.

The students should be trained to set apart the scientific information, presented by the lecturer, and the speech patterns, aimed to establish the contact with the audience. In other words, they must distinguish the communication aspects from the information ones of the utterance. A set of tasks on lexical, grammatical and prosodic cues of the lecturer's speech is offered alongside with the instructions on attention control and switching.

A personal manner of the discourse presentation manifests itself in the "confidential intimacy" and emotional evaluations of scientific phenomena (Nazarenko, 2013; Razinkina, 2015). The "confidential intimacy" is achieved by creating the atmosphere of lively conversation and is succeeded by the usage of:

a) personal pronouns I, we, you, expressing the lecturer's attention to the listeners: *I want the person at the back of the hole…; You are going to an on-line shop; We need some way of getting the information securely*;

b) possessive pronouns, accentuating "common ground" with the listeners: *So, imagine, this is our message*;

c) rhetorical questions to involve the listeners in the discussion: *Is it a cheap and secure method of agreeing the keys?*

d) incentive sentences, inviting the listener to perform mental activity: *Let's unlock the cipher*;

e) turning to a conversational level for the purpose to make the narrative accessible to the listener: *"nobody can steal the information"; "that would obviously be stupid"; "you would buy a parent pajama on the E-bay"*;

f) conversational style, aimed to be oriented to the listeners' abilities: "*to undo the function*"; "*to get the key*";

g) hyperbolical narrative: *I want to send out (the message) to somebody at the back of the hall* (instead of sending it to distant areas);

h) description of discrete logarithm function as an example of mixing colors.

The emotional control of the audience's attention is achieved by:

a) qualitative adjectives to create a positive evaluation of the topic: "*nice little* (padlock)"; "*ingenious* (solutions)"; "*extraordinary* (result)";

b) speech metaphors based on association of similarity: "*padlock symbol*"- "*a nice warm glow of security*";

c) repetition of the same sentence with the conjunctions strengthening the emotional connotation: *It's obviously impossible- It's so obviously impossible…*;

d) complex sentences, pronounced without a pause, for the maintenance of the listeners' attention: *Well, a few years ago, a few decades ago, actually, some brilliant computer scientist discovered an ingenious solution, a way which I can communicate with a person at the back of the hole…*;

The scientific information of the lecture is presented as a folded text, made by the authors of the article: *The idea of cryptography. We are confident that nobody can steal the information. The idea is of a secret cipher. You can scramble up information of one end, send it in encrypted form and unscramble it at the other. A simple example of cryptography is called one-time pad. What I need is to create the key. And the key is another number generated at random. We take our message, we scramble it, we make a cipher. Because the key is random, the cipher is random too. If we send the cipher to somebody, he can unlock it with the same key. But the problem is not solved. It is impossible to agree the key with the other computer.*

The solution is in mathematics. This mathematics is called discrete logarithm. It is an example of one-way function. To compute this function is easy, but to undo this function is very hard. It's just the same as mixing colors. This is precise representation of math process. I can generate my random number. They can generate their random number. We can exchange keys. You will hear all communication. At the end of it I would have a secret that I share with somebody, even I haven't met them before.

The folded text is formed by the sentences pronounced by the lecturer. The text consists of the sentences containing the terms related to cryptography. There are two paragraphs in the suggested variant. They express the contrast application of cryptography. The first one deals with the example of the key creation. It reveals the idea, that despite the ability of making the key, this method does not give the possibility of the key exchange. The second paragraph tells about the key exchange solution as the result of the mathematical formula' application. There are no sentences connected with "confidential intimacy" or expressiveness. These are mainly simple sentences expressing the predication. The terms are presented in the sentences as key words.

1.6. Practice

The students were offered:

to mark off the sentences, containing the scientific information in the extract, taken from the lecture, presented to them in a written form (They are told that the word "information" has the meaning of the facts reported or discovered);

to indicate, which sentences contain the rational and which ones the emotional connotation (The students are informed that a rational connotation characterizes the information as new, actual, expedient; the emotional one expresses approval, disapproval, likes, dislikes, etc.);

to indicate, which sentences are used for communication with the audience and in what way it is achieved: a) personal pronouns; b) incentive sentences; c) metaphors; d) qualitative adjectives; e) conversational style; f) personal assessment of the author.

For example:

1)The idea is really magical.

2) So, let's imagine you are going to make on-line purchase

3) It's hard because your computer has to agree the key with Amazon.

4) Dr. Evil has no idea what the secret number is.

1.7. Experiment

The students were to listen to the lecture and write down its scientific content.

Table 03. Group 2. Activity 2

Number of participants	Average number of terms (out of 10)	Number of sentences	Connected text
35	9	8-10	2

1.8. Activity 3

The purpose of the third activity deals with training the students to comprehend the prosody and intonation as an additional informative means of scientific presentation. The lecturer's speech contains a lot of examples of emotional attitude to the narrative, expressed by suprasegmental features:

a) sentences with the emphatic intonation used to focus the listeners' attention: I don't want anybody on the way to be able to\ understand that;

b) sentences expressing the "intonational subordination (a part of the sentence after the falling intonation is said with a lower pitch): It means that your computer and Amazon's computer set up a secure \ link so that confidential information can go across that link without anybody stealing it;

c) very quick tempo of the speech.

The students' training deals with a few examples. The students are explained that a paragraph is a group of related sentences expressing one idea. The prosodic features of a paragraph are characterized by the first syntagma pronounced with the pitch raised. The lower pitch characterizes the end of the paragraph. These features are realized in the higher level of the voice range at the beginning and lower level at the end of the paragraph.

The falling tone, chosen by the speaker, can indicate that the intonation is used to present the new information, while the falling-rising tone indicates the information the speaker considers to be known by the listener (Brazil, 1980).

In the sentence: "*This thing is called _one-time /_pad*" the intonation is marked by falling-rising tone (Figure 1), and the speaker considers the information to be known by the listener. In a part of the sentence: *"... the idea of a secret |cypher*" there is a falling intonation (Figure 2), because the lecturer states this idea as new. The PRAAT Phonetics Software Package Program is used to test the tones of the chosen sentences to avoid the mistakes in the activities connected with the students' training and the experiment.
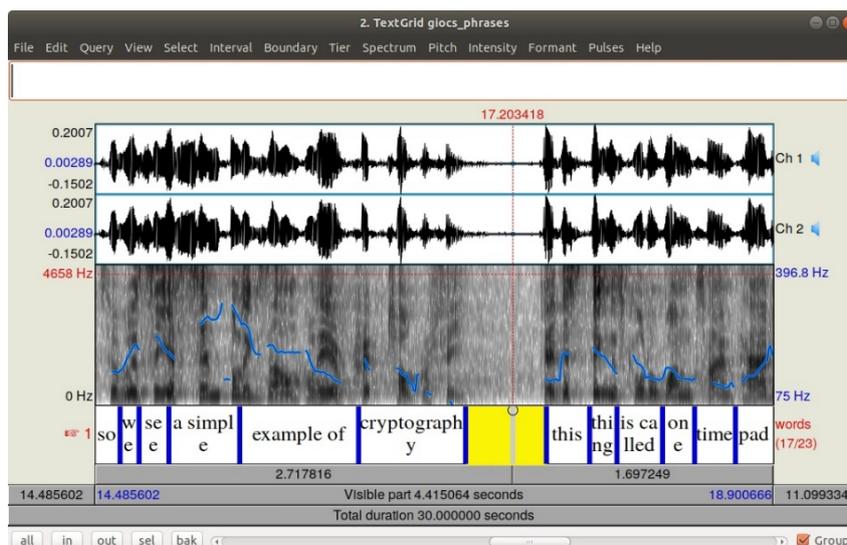
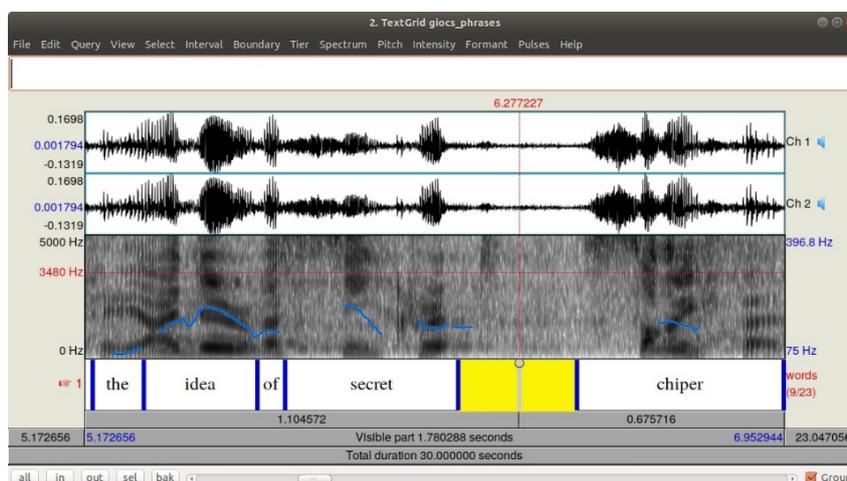**Figure 01.** Praat H-L and H% phrasal intonation patterns

Figure 02. Praat H-L and L% phrasal intonation patterns

1.9. Practice

The students are to divide the listening sequence into paragraphs and to write down the words, each paragraph begins with, e.g.: *paragraph 1: Here is the third idea…*

The students are asked to demonstrate the direction of the intonation of the words marked by the gaps:

This thing is called one-_time _pad.

This is the idea of _cryptography.

Everything is just a stream of _ones and _zeroes.

The idea is of a secret _cipher.

1.10. *Experiment*

The students are to listen to the lecture and write down the scientific information paying attention to the prosodic markers (Table 4).

Table 04. Group 2. Activity 3

Number of participants	Average number of terms (out of 10)	Number of sentences	Connected text
35	9	10	7

1.11. Analysis

Post-listening stage is connected with the analysis of note-taking the content, which the students managed to listen. The cryptography terminology list, formed by the authors of the article, consists of 10 terms used by the lecturer. The connected text, compiled by the authors, reflects the idea of the contrast between the ways of the cryptography application. It consists of 22 sentences. The summary should help the students see what amount of information they succeeded to catch up for further recall. This task challenges the students to organize and synthesize the information, they managed to listen in a meaningful way. The following part of the research is connected with the observation of the students' abilities to comprehend the scientific constituent of the lecture. A gradual advance in the individual terms' comprehension shows the students' slight progress of the scientific constituent perception. The sentences, which were written down, indicate that the students are able to see the connection between the subject and the predicate, containing the scientific information. The students managed to note-take comparatively more adequate information than those who wrote only terms. The ability of the students to note-take the text, containing the sentences dealing with the science, demonstrates that they have grasped the main idea of the lecture: contrast ways of cryptography usage.

6. Findings

The experiments showed a slight ability of most of the students to adequately grasp the meaning of the lecture. The reason lies in the incorrect approach to teaching listening in higher educational establishments. Not a single text-book for those, who intend to progress in their future profession, possesses a strategic approach to listening, combining three stages: pre-listening, while listening, post-listening correctly. The students are not taught to pay attention to terminology as a tool for successful listening. The idea, that the term, being a means of mental signal for discourse comprehension, serves as a highlight to understand the language used by a speaker, hasn't found its active realization in the assignments. In distinguishing the relevant and irrelevant information, not only the lack of general scientific vocabulary knowledge is a considerable barrier. The students' attention should be drawn to recognize conversational formulas of the English language, used by the lecturer, otherwise, it is not clear to them, what information they can omit. Not knowing the prosody of the speech, because this phenomenon is not being taught by most of the text-books, also hinders listening comprehension.

7. Conclusion

The authors consider teaching listening as a strategic process with a focus on three different aspects of listening activity: firstly, the terms and definitions connected with the background knowledge and the subject area; secondly, lexical and stylistic cues to discriminate between the relevant and irrelevant information and, thirdly, prosodic and intonational indicators of the scientific payload. Each

stage is connected with a special skill development: predicting the content; differentiating between relevant and irrelevant information, including lexical, stylistic and prosodic cues and, finally, note-taking the content.

The proposed L2 selective listening strategy stimulates the students to make preparatory steps before listening to a scientific discourse. It refreshes the students' ontology of the lecture subject and prepares their semantic field (schemata) to acquire the new knowledge. The second (while-listening) component is training the attention-directing mechanism. The students are explained different degrees of information salience and explicitly informed about what communicative goals a lecturer may arrange using relevant/irrelevant dichotomy. The while-listening stage is also based on teaching the students to concentrate on prosody as a significant part of the relevant-irrelevant information perception. A set of activities on lexical, grammatical and prosodic cues of the lecturer's speech is offered alongside with the instructions on attention control and switching. The last (post-listening) activities encompass the lecture content reconstruction based on the students' notes. The article shows the way of teaching listening as a path from scientific terms' knowledge via the activity of concentrating on the discourse relevant information to its written curtailment possessing the scientific content.

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