



Electronic educational resources in developing listening skills in elementary learners

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Abstract.

The article presents the results of the research into using electronic educational resources (EER) when forming English listening skills in Elementary learners. The research is relevant as there is the need to match the educational process and the development of technologies used in improving listening skills in a foreign language at A1 and A2 levels of learning a foreign language. In the research, we used methods of analyzing and synthesizing psychological, pedagogical and methodological literature on the subject, empirical methods (observation), the method of sampling authentic audio and video materials, the analysis of EER, the method of classifying the obtained results. The analysis conducted in the research showed that audio and video materials being a part of EER in English language lessons is an effective and creative way that influences learners' development and education. This method of organizing the learning process makes it possible to solve the tasks of the lesson efficiently, to implement educational, communicative, cognitive activities in an interesting and entertaining form. Including EER in the lesson of a foreign language gives the teacher and pupils the opportunity to learn a foreign culture and helps to form other components of communicative competence. EER enables the teacher to organize learning activities on various topics, at all levels of learning and with students of all ages.

Key words: electronic educational resources, ICT, listening skills, ESL, interactive technologies, communicative competence.



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Introduction.

In recent years, the problem of using advanced information and communication technologies in learning a foreign language has become urgent. The modern lesson should be progressive, interesting, informative and creative, which can be achieved by using the teacher's creative abilities, the ability to use modern teaching aids of instruction and the ability to apply innovative technologies in learning process. To improve the process of forming listening skills in Elementary-level learners there are all the prerequisites: the technique in modern times is developing at a high pace, and the teachers are increasingly able to use various types of teaching aids. The complex of methods and technologies used by the teacher will help to promote interest among learners and motivate them to learn a foreign language. The relevance of the research lies in the fact that there is the need to match the learning process and the development of technologies used in training.

The use of electronic educational resources (EER) in English language lessons can help the teacher to provide students with comfortable conditions for listening to foreign speech, motivate them to listen to or watch the material, supplying audio recording with extra aids, visualization, calling of associations, etc [1]. Today scholars highlight the idea that such EER as computer games can influence learning process in a positive way: students "learn the skills of scientific reasoning by engaging in interactive dialogs with avatars" [2]. EER in the English lesson gives the teacher and students the opportunity to learn a foreign culture and helps to form other components of communicative competence [3].

The issue of studying English as a foreign language is being actively studied from different perspectives. Some scholars suppose that the problem of developing listening skills in learners has not been paid due attention and regard each skill separately as well as interrelations between them [4; 5]. Others highlight the importance of using authentic resources when developing learners' listening skills: Elementary-level learners should listen to some authentic material such as short announcements, telephone messages, every-day conversations, etc. At the same time, questions compiled by the teacher should not require a detailed understanding of the text, but relate to the general understanding of the statement or the definition of the place of the statement [6].

The purpose of this research is to study the methods of developing listening skills with the help of EER at the Elementary level of learning English and apply the methods in practice to enhance learners' abilities.

Methods. The following methods were used in the research: analysis of theoretical literature on the research issue to study the previous experience; synthesis of theoretical and empirical material to give



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the overview of the theme under study; analysis of pedagogical documentation and teaching experience; analysis of existing online electronic educational resources used in developing listening skills in English.

The analysis enabled us to discover which factors make the usage of EER in the classroom more efficient and enhance learners' abilities.

Results. At the first stage of the research, we summarized the previous experience of methodologists on the problem of developing learners' listening skills in English. As one of the main factors, they emphasize the material represented in EER and the authenticity of it. In theoretical and methodological literature, we can observe an exchange of views about whether it is worthwhile for a teacher to choose authentic texts for classroom listening. Thus, for example, if the teacher lets Elementary-level students listen to a record with a political speech at a meeting, they will not understand a word. However, if the teacher plays a realistic (albeit not authentic) record of a telephone conversation, students will be able to learn more about the language they are learning and, as a result, gain confidence in their abilities [7].

The teacher's strategy should include the idea that students need to be introduced to the authentic language. However, it does not mean that learners should listen only to records made in everyday life situations. However, it is important to realize the fact that it is impossible to expect students to understand and master the language that they have never heard in a situation of natural communication.

We took the information given above into account when selecting and analyzing EER with audio and video material to conduct the analysis on their efficiency in the group with Elementary-level English learners. We made a list of ERR to analyze them according to their functionality, thematic diversity, levels of language skills, convenience in usage, etc.:

- *English Listening Lesson Library Online.* This EER was created by a native speaker, a teacher of English as a foreign language. The EER is convenient to use as all audio and video lessons are divided into 6 levels according to foreign language skills (from Beginner to Advanced level). Video and audio recordings are accompanied by scripts, online tasks of various types, and exercises and vocabulary materials that the teacher can download to their PC and print out to distribute among students. Audio and video materials are classified into various subjects, within which not only new vocabulary is introduced, but grammar constructions as well. Before listening, the author offers to study a glossary in which students can find not only definition for new words, but also listen to their



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pronunciation voiced by the native speaker, which enables students to recognize this vocabulary in the context of all audio texts [8].

- *Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab*. This EER contains only audio materials, which are divided into three main groups, according to the level, subject and objectives of the students:
 - educational audio recordings on general (casual) subjects. Audio recordings are organized in three levels of difficulty: easy, medium, difficult. Each task for the audio file is accompanied by pre-listening exercises, in which students are asked questions on the subject of the recording. The following are multiple-choice tasks, which require students to click the test button, after which students get the percentage of correctly performed tasks and have the opportunity to see the correct answers. Additional tasks activate the key vocabulary used in the audio recording. The author provides exercises aimed at discussing what was heard, gives links to additional video resources on the topic. If students have some difficulties with comprehension while listening to the recording, then there is a link to the script of the audio text;
 - basic educational audio texts for beginners and intermediate students. Tasks include three stages of working with the audio texts: pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening;
 - educational audio recordings of increasing complexity for preparation for international exams. This part contains three levels of difficulty: medium, difficult, very difficult, and three stages of tasks: pre-listening, while-listening, post-listening. The link with explanations for the correct answers is provided [9].
- *PodcastsInEnglish.com*. This resource provides more than 400 audio recordings and video clips (podcasts) on three levels of complexity: level 1 is intended for students of elementary and pre-intermediate levels, level 2 is for intermediate students, level 3 is for learners of upper-intermediate level and higher. However, assignments, scripts for audio recordings and video clips are not for free – users should pay for them, but the opportunity to sample free lessons is provided: one lesson for each level. Teachers can play audio recordings or video clips online, or download them to their PC and create tasks themselves [10].

The EER mentioned and analyzed above were analyzed to identify the main factors that make the usage of EER efficient in learning process. We were using the EER in English classes during the academic term (4 month) of English language courses, attended by 30 learners aged 18-30 years old. We assessed the efficiency of EER out of 5 according to the following criteria: relevance of the material to Elementary-level learners' language skills, diversity of topics, tasks for all stages of



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working with the audio/video recordings, presence of extra tasks/links. The results are presented in the table 1:

Table 1

EER	relevance of the material to Elementary-level learners' language skills	diversity of topics	tasks for all stages of working with the audio/video recordings	duration of the audio text/video clip	level of learners' motivation when performing the task	<i>total result (out of 5)</i>
English Listening Lesson Library Online	5	5	4	4	4	4.4
Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab.	4	5	5	5	4	4.6
PodcastsInEnglish.com	5	5	3	4	4	4.2

Discussion. The results of the analysis demonstrate different levels of efficiency of the EER under analysis in teaching English to Elementary-level students. All the EER showed the highest score on the diversity of topics, which is a crucial factor when making learners interested in performing the tasks and discussing the topic. The main means of attracting students to listening to English speakers (after the teacher's speech) is audio texts, which can include a wide range of topics – advertising, television news, poetry, drama, songs, public speeches, telephone conversations, and various types of communication. When listening, students not only receive information about grammatical phenomena and vocabulary of the foreign language, but also enhance their knowledge of pronunciation, rhythm, intonation and accentuation of utterances.

Improvement of listening skills requires active participation from learners. Long audio recording or video clips on the subject that is not relevant or entertaining for students do not foster motivation. In this case, listeners may lose their attention and, consequently, fail to understand the entire text. The duration of audio recording or video clips depends on the type of the text. The recommended duration of audio texts for Elementary-level students that check general understanding of the text is approximately 2 minutes. Comfortable duration of audio texts that check understanding of the required / specific information is about 1.5 minutes.



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All the EER correspond to Elementary-level learners' language skills as the video clips and audio files are of educational character: grammar and vocabulary used in the video clips were specially selected for educational needs of students of different levels. To introduce the theme of the recording the teacher can resort to the method of "anticipation", when learners are supposed to discuss the topic of the video clip or audio recording before watching/listening to it. They brainstorm the ideas that could be mentioned in the task, which facilitates understanding of the message. The following method concerns the number of listens that can be adapted to the needs of students and the learning process. It is believed that a single-time listen is advisable when the teacher checks general understanding of the content of the text. Repeated presentation of the recording/video clip is possible when the teacher gives a new task, and it is associated with search for specific details in the recording.

The following criterion important in assessing the efficiency of EER is the availability of tasks for all stages of working with the audio/video recordings. Several EER analyzed do not provide the tasks, but we cannot consider it as a disadvantage as it gives the teacher a possibility to create tasks according to the aims and needs of educational process in a specific group of students. When developing assignments to audio and video materials, the teacher should consider the main types of exercises that are effective at the initial stage of developing listening skills. These types of exercises include the following: "Multiple Choice", "True/False Statements", "Paraphrase", "Fill in the blanks with a suitable word", "Answer the Questions", etc. The teacher should also remember that the different stages of listening require different tasks. An example for the first stage may be the "brainstorming" method mentioned above. This task can be referred to the pre-listening stage. In the second stage, it is recommended to give learners such tasks that they perform when listening to the text ("while-listening tasks"). For example, while listening to the text, students fill in a table requiring specific information. The table can already be partially filled with names, profession and appearance of the speakers. Students are asked to fill in the boxes with missing information. The third stage presupposes the control of listening comprehension ("post-listening task"). An interesting task for this stage can be a certain number of sentences (6-8), which contain errors in the content of the audio text, and there are gaps that the students should fill in. The class is encouraged to correct the errors and add the necessary information. The fourth stage is a creative task (usually, homework), which is a logical conclusion of the entire listening process in the lesson ("follow-up").

The criterion of learners' level of motivation includes their interest in performing the tasks of all the stages mentioned above. One of the issues of motivating English learners to enhance their listening skills is choosing relevant and interesting audio and video material, which could not only correspond



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to their interests and needs, but contribute to their knowledge of the world. When choosing an electronic educational resource, the teacher should take into account the difficulty of the audio or video material presented, as inadequate difficulty of the recording may distract learners' attention. As a result, learners may lose motivation and fail to complete the tasks.

An important role in motivating students to enhance their listening skills is the use of video films. Visual aids, including video clips, are of great importance to successful development of listening skills [13]. The teacher can use pictures, slides, maps, charts, tables and other forms of visualization. It is important to include audio recordings and video clips not only on different topics, but also of different types: monologue and dialogue, online excursion, presentation of a new phenomenon, an interactive educational game based on an audio recording or a video clip, test, etc. Properly selected EER in combination with correctly designed tasks guarantees an individual approach to control development and improvement of listening skills of Elementary-level students.

Conclusions. In the research, we studied the role of authentic audio recordings and video materials in developing listening skills in Elementary-level learners and revealed the main factors and training potential of EER that proved to be efficient in English lessons. In the conditions of modern education, the lessons with the use of EER are one of the most important results of the innovative work in the school. These technologies can be applied at any stage of the school lesson, in any subject area and for the development or improvement of various skills and abilities. However, we should not forget that overuse of such educational tools can lead to irrational distribution of time allocated for class work in general, to decrease the effectiveness of the whole lesson and loss of students' interest. Therefore, it is necessary to determine strict time frames that will make the lesson truly modern, cognitive and developing, while accomplishing the tasks set by the teacher.

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