

**DCCD 2020****Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding****INDIVIDUAL STYLE OF LANGUAGE LEARNERS' LISTENING  
ABILITY IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERCULTURAL  
COMMUNICATION**

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The article highlights the problem, the relevance of which is due to the objective difficulties of training listening comprehension of texts in a foreign language. For a participant in intercultural communication, one of the most significant difficulties is understanding of foreign language speech, which is characterized by objective difficulties caused by the fast pace of speech, individual characteristics of the speaker and other parameters of the communication process. The purpose of the article is to describe the teaching technology for overcoming the difficulties of listening based on student's individually personal profile, manifested in an individual style of language learners' listening ability. The authors describe the parameters of this ability, in the structure of which there is a mechanism for compensating for the shortcomings of language proficiency, overcoming the difficulties of listening comprehension. This mechanism is determined by the characteristics of the individual style of listening ability, which includes peculiar techniques and methods with the help of which the language learner copes with the difficulties of listening, relying on his compensatory abilities and experience. The results of the study prove the status of an individual listening comprehension style of foreign texts as a compensatory mechanism specific to each individual. The article contains the results of diagnosing students' listening comprehension style, manifested in listening comprehension situations - productive and non-productive. The article shows the influence of individual characteristics on the effectiveness of understanding speech in situations of intercultural communication.

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**Keywords:** Individual style of listening comprehension, difficulties of listening comprehension.

## 1. Introduction

Currently, more and more critical opinions are being expressed regarding the effectiveness of classical (traditional) models for organizing the educational process (Biesta, 2010; Bryk, 2015; Evelein & Korthagen, 2015; Evers & Kneyber, 2015; Penalva, 2019). The proposed transformations are based on a new methodology - a focus on the personal orientation of education. In the context of the revision of the value-semantic dominants of the learning process and the turn towards individualization of educational trajectories of students, numerous active and interactive technologies of the “smart learning environment” have appeared, in the framework of which various linguistic educational practices operate: tutor support (Girmens, 2003), the formation of project teams, the use of simulation games, cases, discussions, the creation of educational content by the students themselves, the practice of “immersion”, training such as “gamework”.

Modern teaching technologies are built with consideration of learner’s individual characteristics and the need to develop learners’ ability to independently cope with the difficulties of the educational environment. In order to overcome them it is necessary to mobilize all the body’s reserves, activate and update those qualities, the learner’s potential, which can fill the gaps in knowledge and methods of activities (Abel et al., 2015; Tareva, 2001). Researchers are unanimous – the student needs to use compensatory strategies of activity. At the same time, compensation is understood as the activation of physical, mental and personal components that compensate for a real or imaginary drawback in order to achieve the desired result.

The special importance of the compensatory ability of a person is manifested in the process of *intercultural communication*, namely in interaction with a foreign cultural partner through communication by means of a foreign language being an instrument for such interaction. Intercultural communication is accompanied by many difficulties for participants whose worldviews (perceptions of the surrounding reality) do not coincide (Ziegler, 2013). The greatest difficulties are met while listening to a foreign cultural communication partner: his speech, in addition to complex content difficulties, is characterized by a considerable number of formal features that impede a full and adequate understanding of the speaker’s intent. It is no coincidence that listening is considered as one of the most difficult activities of a foreign language learning (Bang & Hiver, 2016; Hidri, 2014; Tareva, 2018).

For relevant activity related to the perception and understanding of a foreign cultural communication partner, the actualization of all individual listening potential is necessary: motivation, attention, memory, guesswork, forecasting, etc. Therefore, he must have such a language learners' listening ability that can compensate lack of knowledge and fill in the gaps that impede the understanding of a foreign language speech. To solve this problem, following the recommendation common to all students, is an impossible task. It is necessary to use those compensation mechanisms (compensation / replacement) for gaps in perception and understanding of foreign language speech, which are specific for individual characteristics of the student, the style of his educational activity.

## 2. Problem Statement

The main problem of the research is the question of studying the nature of the compensation mechanism of foreign language learners, which ensures that a person overcomes the difficulties of

listening to the speech of a partner in intercultural communication. Studying the individual style of listening comprehension from the perspective of intercultural dialogue is an urgent problem that can improve the process of preparing students for participation in the “dialogue of cultures”.

### **3. Research Questions**

The authors posed a number of important questions:

- What factors make it difficult for a person to perceive foreign language speech in the conditions of dialogue of cultures?
- What is the nature of a person's special ability to compensate for the difficulties of listening reception?
- What are the parameters of individual styles of students' listening comprehension?
- What strategies are needed to update the mechanism for compensating for the shortcomings of linguistic knowledge and overcome the difficulties of listening during intercultural communication?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

To prove the role and status of the compensation mechanism (as a part of language learners' listening ability) in the conditions of intercultural communication and to diagnose types of students' individual style of listening comprehension in order to determine the necessary mechanism for compensating shortcomings that impede the understanding of foreign language speech.

### **5. Research Methods**

The authors used the methods (a) of the theoretical level of studying the problem: analysis of literature on the problem of intercultural communication, on teaching students to participate in intercultural dialogue, theoretical modeling of the components of a person's compensatory ability, manifested in the process of foreign language speech comprehension; and (b) the empirical level of research: diagnosing an individual style of listening comprehension as a component of language learners' listening ability.

### **6. Findings**

The study of intercultural communication processes is an urgently needed and actively developing area of modern science. Preparing for the dialogue of cultures has become one of the most important areas of training for students learning foreign languages, since “not only the progression and personal success of an individual as a member of society, but also the progress of the individual's personal interaction, depends on the quality communication of the individual with the surrounding society” (Tareva, 2018, p. 72). As a result, the requirements for high-quality training of students include their mastery of certain abilities that are important for the communication process: flexibility, pragmatism, dynamism, the ability to get out of difficult situations, the ability to keep the process of intercultural

communication uninterrupted, the ability to overcome the shortage of means and methods of interaction with a communication actor.

The development of these qualities and skills is provided by a compensatory ability, ensuring the willingness of an individual to compensate for the lack of his knowledge, speech and social experience of communication in a foreign language using verbal and non-verbal means. Of particular importance is the compensatory ability in the course of oral communication in the comprehension of foreign language speech. The difficulties of listening comprehension have long and very fruitfully been studied in Russian and foreign science (Berdichevsky et al., 2019; Ching-Shyang Chang & Read, 2007; Dudushkina, 2014; Hamada, 2015; Tafaghodtari & Vandergrift, 2008). Among these difficulties that are significant for the effectiveness of intercultural communication, the following should be listed:

- difficulties associated with the content of speech, the nature of the language material, with the way of presentation, with the conditions of perception;
- nonspecific difficulties (the peculiarity of semantic operations, linguistic difficulties), specific difficulties (the uniqueness of reception, lack of visual support, individual characteristics of the speaker, etc.);
- lack or loss of control over the pace of speech, the impossibility of re-playing, the listener's limited vocabulary, understanding the "superficial" meaning of the word due to ignorance or misunderstanding of the context, inability to capture the speaker's transitions from one thought to another, lack of concentration of the listener's attention;
- presence of segments of an incomplete type of pronunciation, individual characteristics of speaking of the "author" of the text, pace of speech, the presence of noise interference.

Overcoming these difficulties is an extremely difficult task. It is important for the listener to use all potential resources to eliminate the difficult moments of perception of foreign language speech. Moreover, the effectiveness of overcoming difficulties directly depends on a person's individual and peculiar methods and techniques. Their combination and at the same time a wide demand for the practice of listening to foreign languages makes up an individual style that is a part of the language learners' listening ability and is a key element in its structure.

The main function of the individual style of listening comprehension is the application by a person of individually determined strategies for overcoming the difficulties of listening and compensating for the lack of knowledge. These strategies are due to an individually peculiar set of hearing impairments that characterize a person and which are caused by his physiological (weak hearing, for example), psychological (slowness or, on the contrary, excessive agitation as a character trait), linguistic (his repertoire of linguistic means of foreign language communication) features. Since the individual style of listening comprehension operates in a mode of compensating for the lacking or inhibiting productive self-realization of individual physiological and mental properties, it can be considered as a compensation mechanism specific to each recipient.

The individual style of listening comprehension is aimed to rescue a person from a difficult situation of intercultural communication when the speech of a foreign partner is either partially or completely not understood. In this case, such listening strategies are switched on that make up a unique

“code” of the individual listening style. The formal-dynamic parameters of the individual style of listening comprehension include:

- development of all types of speech hearing (phonetic, phonemic and intonation);
- formation of the perceptual base of the language;
- functioning of the articulation apparatus;
- productivity of auditory memory;
- development of involuntary and voluntary types of memorization;
- activity / inactivity, well captured by external signs, initiative, cues, gestures, emotional reactions;
- reactivity / inertness (speed and brightness of reactions);
- the amount of time for comprehension and processing of the auditory signal.

These parameters form the basis of the types of individual style of listening comprehension:

- *productive*, which involves the full functioning of the physiological mechanisms of listening and visual perception; high productivity of the psychophysiological mechanisms of listening comprehension; effectiveness, well perceived by external signs, initiative, cues, gestures, emotional reactions; high reactivity (speed and brightness of reactions);
- *unproductive*, which involves external inactivity; inertia, slowness in actions for choosing language means; insufficient level of auditory memory; arbitrary type of memorization; the use of a large amount of time spent on comparing and processing the audio signal.

For the productive type of the individual style of listening reception, the listener realizes a set of compensation strategies and skills (Table 1).

**Table 01.** Compensation strategies, skills specific to the productive type of individual style of listening comprehension

Compensation strategies	Compensation skills		
Strategy for maintaining the auditory apparatus	conduct autogenic training	maintain hygiene and strengthen immunity	minimize harmful effects
Kinesthetic strategy	assess the situation, correlate data with inherent characteristics	take the pose necessary for effective listening	adjust location if necessary
Strategy for using supports	use audio visual and visual supports	use verbal and non-verbal supports	combine different supports
Functional and Formal Evasion Strategies	omit unperceived units of sounding speech	abstract from complex parts of speech; not to Interact	not to concentrate on unfamiliar material
Strategies for independent and autonomous activity	regular listening to podcasts	to read aloud	internal speech
Strategies for overcoming psychological barriers	relax	cheer up and praise oneself	set yourself up for effective listening
Strategy for prolongation of the contact	ask again, clarify the information	verbally and nonverbally inform the producer of the failed or incomplete comprehension	
Strategy for asking for help	pose the question	apologize for ignorance	

Strategy of approximation	use generic names	use words-substitutes	
Strategy of anticipation	anticipate the elements of phonetic sequence		
Strategy of transfer	use associations	apply knowledge of word-formation	apply analogies
Strategy of guess	perceive unknown words or parts of words in different combinations		

The set and combination of these strategies and skills that compensate for the difficulties of listening to foreign language speech is purely individual for each student, defining his unique individual style of listening comprehension. The actualization of these strategies and skills is determined by a number of parameters:

- *linguistic*: the repertoire of compensation strategies and skills is determined by the number and depth of the student's linguistic tools (lexical, grammatical, phonetic, phonological) (Fung & Macaro, 2019); the more this set is and the stronger the skills of operating with linguistic units, the more productive the style of listening comprehension is, the more quickly linguistic strategies and skills of compensating for incomprehensible and bridging gaps in the comprehension of sounding speech work;
- *psychophysiological*: the auditory apparatus has a specificity for each person, determined by the degree of development of speech, phonetic and phonemic hearing; the more developed is the auditory apparatus, the faster is the comprehension and understanding of speech;
- *psychological*: students deliberately experience fear, insecurity in their abilities from the uncertainty of the situation of communicating with a foreign language communicant; as a result, a psychological barrier arises or worsens, which is able to block the understanding of the speech linguistically completely understandable to the student, uttered at a normal pace without pronounced deviations from the pronunciation norm.

The determination of dominant features and the selection of strategies and skills that ensure the quality of understanding foreign language speech is an important didactic problem that requires the attention of the teacher in terms of constructing individual learning paths.

## 7. Conclusion

The experience of numerous researchers of the process of intercultural communication confirms the opinion about the special role of compensation strategies and skills in the process of intercultural communication: they help maintain the process of intercultural communication, and actively and successfully interact with representatives of another culture. These strategies and skills are especially important when listening to foreign languages. The results obtained during the study allow us to formulate the following conclusions:

- the effectiveness of listening reception during intercultural communication is ensured by the actualization by its participants of compensation ability;
- the basis of a person's ability to perceive foreign language speech is the individual style of listening reception, dependent on the characteristics of the person and applied in the face of difficulties that impede the understanding of the interlocutor's speech;

- the individual style of listening reception consists of a unique set of compensatory strategies and skills for each student;
- development of an individual style of listening comprehension should be done purposefully. This requires the design of a special educational technology.

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