

Teaching Foreign Languages in Specific Purposes

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Abstract: *It is impossible to master a language without mastering its sound structure and without observing its typical pronunciation norms. Pronunciation in the narrow sense of the word usually refers to the peculiarities of articulation of speech sounds in each specific language. Understanding pronunciation in the broad sense of the word also includes intonation and rhythm. Correct pronunciation means a set of orthoepic norms inherent in a particular variety of language. Establishing the pronunciation of a foreign language is a complex task that requires the teacher to know not only the phonetic system of the language being taught, but also the native language, since their comparison makes it possible to predict typical mistakes of foreign language learners and most effectively overcome difficulties that arise during the learning process.*

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1. Introduction

The formation of phonetic skills²⁴ is important, as it contributes to the success of speech communication. A foreign accent tires listeners; violation of phonetic correctness of speech often leads to misunderstanding of the information being communicated, sometimes vitally important. Mastering phonetic skills is an essential condition for the development of all types of speech activity - listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Gerald Kelly notes the following paradox: “Both students and teachers recognize the importance of correct pronunciation for successful communication, but this aspect is often ignored” (Kelly Gerald, 2004, p. 13). He believes that this is due to the fact that teachers do not have a sufficient theoretical basis in the field of phonetics, do not have the practical skills necessary to establish pronunciation, and do not have access to ideas on how to do this (Ibid.). The lack of time in class should probably also be noted.

2. The Main Results and Findings

An analysis of modern domestic and foreign teaching materials and visits to educational institutions have shown that systematic work on pronunciation, as a rule, is carried out at the initial stage, and it is mainly associated with teaching reading. Practice shows that work on pronunciation should be carried out throughout all stages of education in a general education institution. The emphasis of teaching and the proportion of phonetic exercises change from stage to stage. At the initial stage, the most time is spent working on pronunciation, at the senior stage - the least (provided that phonetic skills at the previous stages were correctly formed and need support and further automation, and not relearning).

In case of refusal of consistent training, de-automation of phonetic skills and a decline in speech skills occurs. The most difficult language to pronounce is English.

Currently, one of the central questions when teaching English pronunciation is the question: "What pronunciation should be taught in a general education institution?" This issue is complex and multifaceted. Firstly, in many countries English is the native language: England, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, etc. Secondly, students are traditionally taught the so-called "standard" pronunciation (Received Pronunciation: RP), which is often called Standard Pronunciation, BBC English, Oxford English, etc.

However, it has changed over the last century and even in recent years and we can distinguish the so-called "new standard" pronunciation (neo-RP), which is spoken by young people, and the "local standard" pronunciation (Reginal RP), which is spoken in London, Manchester or other major city or county, and literary pronunciation (Advanced RP), which is spoken by highly educated people. Recently, the "intermediate" accent of the south of England has become widespread, which represents a modified RP, combined with London pronunciation and called Estuary English (Nicholas Widdows). Thirdly, a problem has arisen, which has recently been often discussed at international phonetic congresses, namely: whether it is necessary to destroy the foreign accent. Phonetic skills, like no other, reflect national, social and personal identity. Attempts to remove or "average" the accent contribute to the change and sometimes destruction of national identity (The Cambridge Guide..., 2001). When choosing a pronunciation option, first of all, it is necessary to take into account the needs of students, the goals of their learning a foreign language and their personal and social identity. If the goal is to enter the society of the country of the language being studied (for example, immigration), then the pronunciation should be as close as possible to the standards of a native speaker, and the Reginal RP model should be chosen. If the goal is to increase social status, then you need to learn Advanced RP. If a foreign language will be used as a lingua franca (intermediary language) for international communication, most often with non-native speakers, then it is enough to pronounce it in such a way as to be understood without difficulty by others.

In many European countries, universities and schools still teach the Received Pronunciation model. This is due, first of all, to the fact that this model is the most frequent, easier to understand in intercultural communication and the most developed from a learning point of view. The use of the model is also facilitated by the fact that audio media for domestic teaching materials are recorded by educated people, RP speakers, and also by the fact that most foreign English textbooks used in Europe are published in London, Oxford or Cambridge. Thus, British literary pronunciation is the most convenient form as a school norm.

However, both at school and at university, audio media with different accents, primarily American, are often offered for review. If this is not done, then when faced with other accents in real life, students will not be able to understand what they are talking about. Another important question when teaching English is the question: "What transcription system should we teach children at school?" From the mid-1960s to the present, different transcription symbols have been introduced in different dictionaries. This was due to the fact that over the past half century there have been some changes in the phonetics of the British English language,

and a number of phoneticians considered it necessary to reflect the qualitative changes in sounds in their transcription symbols. Currently, the phonetic transcription of A. Gimson, who improved the phonetic transcription of Daniel Johnson, introducing the qualitative-quantitative principle (Watson E. R., 2005), has in many ways become universal, international and has been recognized by the majority of famous phoneticians and authors of dictionaries. A. Gimson noted that vowels differ from each other not so much in their length, but in the method and place of articulation, that is, in their quality (Gimson A., 1980). Gimson's transcription can be found in modern dictionaries from leading publishers - Longman, Cambridge. Until 1993, it was also used in Oxford dictionaries. Currently, the dictionaries of this publishing house use a phonetic system developed by Cleve Upton, a professor at the University of Leeds.

Another question that influences learning is the question: "Is it possible to rely on the principle of approximation (approximation to standard pronunciation: achieving understanding of the speaker's speech) when developing phonetic skills?" If in old foreign language teaching programs this principle was considered as one of the leading ones, in new programs this principle is not mentioned. However, in reality, as a rule, in secondary schools they rely on the principle of approximation, which allows for phonetic errors that do not disrupt communication. When assessing pronunciation skills, mainly phonemic (affecting the meaning) errors are taken into account. The same approach was reflected in the Unified State Examination criteria in foreign languages. In linguistic lyceums, gymnasiums and schools with in-depth study of a foreign language, as a rule, they do not rely on the principle of approximation and require maximum approximation to the pronunciation of native speakers. As mentioned above, this requirement may be excessive, since the vast majority of students will use a foreign language as a lingua franca. Another issue that requires consideration is the question of what materials should be selected for teaching pronunciation. First of all, the materials must correspond to the learning goals, needs of students and their age characteristics. Materials should include tasks for comparing the phonetic system of the target language with the native phonetic system. Rodney Jones believes that it is important, along with traditional audio-lingual listening texts and phonetic rules, to include more material on producing sounds and intonation in context, as these focus on the communicative aspects of pronunciation. He also notes the importance of involving tasks for self-control of students (Jones R. N., 2002, pp. 184-185).

As mentioned above, the main requirement for foreign language pronunciation is phonemicity. Phonemicity refers to the correctness of pronunciation, sufficient to understand the sound of speech without difficulty. The success of learning pronunciation depends on the development of phonemic awareness, which is a person's ability to analyze and synthesize sounds based on phonemes. A phoneme is the basic and minimal unit of sound structure of a language. Signs of phonemes can be distinctive (differential) and non-distinctive (integral).

In school state standards for a foreign language (2004), the requirements for the phonetic aspect of speech include adequate pronunciation and auditory discrimination of the sounds of the foreign language being studied, including long and short vowels, vowels with a hard attack, voiced and voiceless consonants. Other requirements are devoicing/non-deafening of consonants at the end of a syllable or word, no softening of consonants before vowels, compliance with verbal and phrasal stress, division of sentences into semantic groups, compliance with the basic rhythmic and intonation features of communicative types of sentences (statement, question, incentive) (Federal component state educational standards in foreign languages, 2004, p. 68).

Another requirement, not stated separately in the standards, but important if we are talking about the adequacy of pronunciation, is fluency of speech. Speech fluency implies sufficient automation of pronunciation skills, allowing the speaker to speak at a normal pace

characteristic of the language being studied. S.K. Folomkina provides the following data: the speech rate for English and French is 130-150 words per minute, and for German - 110-130 words per minute (Teaching Methods..., 1980).

In some cases, the requirements differ between languages. So, for example, in English, unstressed vowels are reduced, while in French there is no reduction, and unstressed vowels are pronounced clearly. In German, at the end of a syllable or word, consonants are deafened; in French, voiced consonants at the end of words are not deafened (Exemplary programs., 2004).

3. Conclusion

The content of teaching pronunciation includes a) sounds, b) intonation, including stress and rhythm, c) phonetic phenomena. The selection of components of the phonetic minimum has not been studied in the same way. The principles for selecting phonemes are best developed, and those for selecting intonemes are almost not developed.

The selection of the phonetic minimum is carried out in close connection with other aspects of the language being studied. It will be effective if it is sufficient to master the pronunciation of words of the lexical minimum and the intonation of phrases built on the basis of the lexicogrammatical minimum. Like the lexical and grammatical phonetic minimum, the phonetic minimum is divided into active and passive. However, in the phonetic minimum, both parts are related to each other more organically, since they belong to the same type of speech skill - oral speech, both in terms of speaking (pronunciation skills) and in terms of understanding speech (auditory skills). This feature determines the need to simultaneously master the active and passive parts of the minimum (Mirolyubov A.A., 2005).

The selection of the content of the phonetic minimum is based on a number of principles.

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