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Peculiarities of teaching pronunciation in lifelong learning framework

In this article the author reveals some pressing issues of teaching English pronunciation in the history of national and foreign methodology of teaching foreign languages. Kazakh and Western educational materials were studied, which gives a competent opportunity to analyze available methods, approaches and techniques in teaching English pronunciation in order to develop more effective ones. The article deals with the problem of mechanisms of comprehensive approach in teaching the English pronunciation. It contains much useful information about reason for misrepresent the meaning of English phrases, words, different kinds of stresses and about basic tones of English intonation. Pronunciation training is of great importance, as its performance is largely determined by the success in learning spoken language. It minimizes the risk of stabilization of pronunciation habits that are difficult for native speakers to understand. Teaching any foreign language, including English, begins with a clear statement of a question about the correct pronunciation. Without correct pronunciation cannot be delivered by the manifestation of the communicative language function. Especially important is the initial phase of training, because in this period, learners quickly perceive new material, they are characterized by imitation, that helps to a subconscious level, to postpone the newly acquired knowledge. If the issue is not paid enough attention to the beginning of training, then it would be much harder to correct errors and improve pronunciation. The article deals with an unconventional approach in explaining the articulation of English sounds, based on a comparison of the articulation of the English and Russian sounds.

Keywords: pronunciation, phonetics, word stress, foreign language, articulation, sound, speech, intonation.

Pronunciation is undoubtedly an irreplaceable element of language learning and teaching, but is it necessarily an important element? Indeed, pronunciation is often what is being perceived as redundant and is therefore often neglected and avoided by many teachers of second language [1].

General observation suggests that it is those who start to learn English after their school years are most likely to have serious difficulties in acquiring intelligible pronunciation, with the degree of difficulty increasing markedly with age. This difficulty has nothing to do with intelligence or level of education, or even with knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. Of course there is no simple answer to why pronunciation is so difficult to learn - indeed there is a whole range of theoretical perspectives on the question. What is generally accepted among psycholinguists and phonologists who specialized in this area, is that the difficulty of learning to pronounce a foreign language is cognitive rather than physical, and that it has something to do with the way 'raw sound' is categorized or conceptualized in using speech. Many learners of English as a second language have «major difficulties» with English pronunciation even after years of learning the language. This often results in them facing difficulties in areas such as finding employment. Hinofotis and Baily notes that «up to a certain proficiency standard, the fault which most severely impairs the communication process in EFL/ESL learners is pronunciation», not vocabulary or grammar. This is true despite the fact that research by the likes of Davis, for example, reveals that an area of concern and indeed one of the top priorities of ESL students after completing elementary English courses is pronunciation [1]. It is important at this point in time to make a distinction between speaking and pronunciation as it is sometimes wrongly applied interchangeably. Pronunciation is viewed as a sub-skill of speaking. Generally, if we want to change the way a learner pronounces words, we have to change the way they think about the component sounds of those words. This goes not just for individual sounds, but for bigger elements of speech, such as syllables, stress patterns and rhythm. Despite this, the teaching of pronunciation remains largely neglected in the field of English language teaching. In this study, the researchers discuss common misconceptions about pronunciation, factors affecting the learning of pronunciation. Then, they review the needs of learners, suggestions for teaching pronunciation.

Learners need to be taught pronunciation, as all other aspects of language, in a communicative method. Though communicative methods for teaching vocabulary, grammar and pragmatics have been around for decades, there has been little development of a communicative method for pronunciation teaching. One considers here some aspects of what is involved in a communicative approach to pronunciation. One thing learners need is teachers with confidence to assure them that the communicative methods do fulfill their needs.

Some learners believe that what they need is instruction in the articulation of specific English sounds. Some teachers justify a focus on articulation with reference to the learners' desire for this information.

Adult English language learners approach the learning of English pronunciation from a wide variety of native language backgrounds. They may speak languages with sound systems that vary a great deal from that of English. Individuals with a Russian language background constitute the largest foreignborn population in Kazakhstan. The pronunciation goals and needs of adult English language learners are diverse. These goals and needs depend on a variety of factors, which may include the learners' uses of English (in what settings and for what purposes), their motivation to identify with specific English-speaking groups, the degree to which they want to sound like native speakers, and the frequency with which they speak English. Although pronunciation is part of the curriculum in many adult education programs, it is often not included in state language proficiency standards or addressed systematically in instruction. In addition, some teachers working with adult learners do not have training in teaching pronunciation. As a result, teachers may not be able to identify the patterns of or reasons for learners' pronunciation problems or have a systematic way to teach the sound, stress, intonation, and rhythm patterns of English. This brief reviews features of languages (particularly English) that can have an impact on the teaching and learning of English pronunciation, discusses the research on learner acquisition of pronunciation, and describes how teachers can teach pronunciation in their classes.

Recent discussion of and research on the teaching and learning of pronunciation have focused on the following issues: the importance of accent, stress, intonation, and rhythm in the comprehensibility of the speech of nonnative speakers; the effects of motivation and exposure on the development of native-like pronunciation; and the intelligibility of speech among speakers of different English varieties. Many adult learners of English have foreign accents that identify them as nonnative speakers. Some linguists support the idea, known as the Critical Period 2 Hypothesis, that a learner needs to begin learning the language before age 7 in order to develop native-like pronunciation. However, more recent research suggests that environment and motivation may be more important factors in the development of native-like pronunciation than is age at acquisition. An understanding of the features of learner accents and their impact on intelligibility can help teachers identify and address characteristics of learner pronunciation. The primary aim is that students be understood. Good pronunciation is needed for this, but a «perfect accent» is not [2].

Languages have traditionally been classified as either stress-timed or syllable-timed. In stress-timed languages (e.g., British and American English, German, Dutch, Thai), «stressed syllables fall at regular intervals throughout an utterance», and rhythm is organized according to regularity in the timing of the stressed syllables. That is, the time between stressed syllables is equal because unstressed syllables are spoken more quickly and vowel reduction occurs. For example, the sentence «Tom runs fast» is made up of three stressed syllables, as indicated by the letters in boldface. The sentence «Meredith can run fast» is made up of six syllables, but only three of them are stressed. The unstressed syllables -e-, -dith, and can are spoken quickly and vowel reduction occurs, so the time between the stressed syllables tends to be equal, and both sentences take approximately the same amount of time to say. In syllable-timed languages (e.g., some nonnative varieties of English, such as Singapore and Malaysian English, and languages such as Tamil, Spanish, and French), syllables are said to be equal in timing. All syllables are nearly equally stressed, vowel reduction does not occur, and all syllables appear to take the same amount of time to utter. Recent phonetic research has shown that languages cannot be strictly classified as syllable-timed or stress-timed. A more accurate description is that they are stress-based or syllable-based; that is, they are not completely in one category or the other, but tend to have more stress-timed or syllable-timed features. Stress-based rhythm is achieved through the presence of reduced vowels for unstressed syllables in a sentence. Function words (e.g., articles, helping verbs, prepositions) typically have reduced vowels instead of full ones, and the reduced vowel version is known as a weak form. For example, in the sentence «Bob can swim» the words Bob and swim have the major stress, and can, which is unstressed, is pronounced [kin] — its weak form. The distinction between stress- and syllable-based languages is important, especially if an adult English language learner speaks a first language that is different rhythmically from stress-based British or American English. An understanding of whether a learner's first language is stress-based or syllable-based will help a teacher plan appropriate pronunciation exercises. In examining the role of stress — «the degree of force used in producing a syllable» — in intelligibility, asked trained listeners to transcribe recorded material when the variables of word stress and vowel quality were manipulated. He determined that when word stress is erroneously shifted to an unstressed syllable, without a change in vowel quality, utterances are significantly less intelligible than when only vowel quality is manipulated. Native and nonnative English speakers responded similarly when judging the intelligibility of words with misplaced word stress [3].

Along with age at acquisition of a language, the learner's motivation for learning the language and the cultural group that the learner identifies and spends time with help determine whether the learner will develop nativelike pronunciation. Research has found that having a personal or professional goal for learning English can influence the need and desire for native-like pronunciation. The review by Marinova Todd of research on adult acquisition of English concluded that adults can become highly proficient, even native-like, speakers of second languages, especially if motivated to do so[3]. Moyer found that experience with and positive orientation to the language appear to be important factors in developing native-like pronunciation. In a study of learners of Kazakh, one found that accuracy in the production of Kazakh is significantly related to age at first exposure to the language, amount of formal instruction in Kazakh, residence in a Kazakh speaking country, amount of out-of-class contact with Kazakh, and focus on pronunciation in class. Therefore, in addition to focusing on pronunciation and accent in class, teachers will want to encourage learners to speak English outside the classroom and provide them with assignments that structure those interactions.

Because English has become an international language, teachers need to keep in mind that their adult students will speak with both native and nonnative English speakers outside of the classroom. Jenkins' seminal work on the phonology of English as an international language, in which she studied which phonological features caused a breakdown in communication when two nonnative English speakers were communicating with each other, has popularized the notion that specific features of pronunciation must be mastered in order for a speaker to be understood. Jenkins calls these minimal features of pronunciation a lingua franca core. Teachers of adults learning English should be aware that the goal of improving pronunciation for many adult learners is mutual intelligibility, not perfection [4].

Based on the discussion above, there are a number of instructional strategies for teaching pronunciation that can help students meet their personal and professional needs. For example, teachers can do the following:

- Cultivate positive attitudes toward accuracy
- Identify specific pronunciation features that pose problems for learners
- Make learners aware of the prosodic features of language (stress, intonation, rhythm)
- Focus on developing learners' communicative competence

Teachers should create a classroom atmosphere in which affiliation with the native language group is respected at the same time that learners work on their English pronunciation in order to be understood. To do this, teachers might first give a background lesson on varieties of English in the United States and around the world and how these varieties have developed. They can then help students work on specific pronunciation features.

Linguists have tried to identify potential pronunciation difficulties of nonnative speakers of a language by using contrastive analysis, which was popular in the 1950s and 1960s [5]. The Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis posits that by contrasting the features of two languages, the difficulties that a language learner might encounter can be anticipated. Features of many languages were catalogued by linguists, but it was not possible to systematically predict which areas of English would be difficult for speakers of particular native languages. A less predictive version of the hypothesis was eventually put forth that focused on cross-linguistic influence, which claims that prior language experiences have an impact on the way a language is learned, but these experiences do not consistently have predictive value. From this work, linguists have been able to develop lists of sounds that native speakers of particular languages may find problematic in learning English. For example, speakers of Asian languages may have difficulty producing /l/ and /r/ sounds; speakers of Spanish may have difficulty distinguishing between and producing /sh/ and /ch/ sounds. These lists for specific language backgrounds are now featured in pronunciation texts, such as *Sounds Right*, and pronunciation software programs, such as *American Speech Sounds* [6].

English learners in their classes as they communicate with each other. By noting the places where communication breaks down and determining the pronunciation features that caused miscommunication to occur, teachers can identify pronunciation features that they should focus on in class. When students are giving presentations or working together in pairs or groups, the teacher might use a checklist or in *Well Said* to note when a student is not understood or when several students make the same pronunciation mistake. This information can become material for subsequent pronunciation lessons. The checklist can also be used to make learners aware of particular features of speech that have the potential to cause problems for intelligibility and to help them develop their own pronunciation goals. Teachers and learners can work together to complete a learner pronunciation profile that includes (a) an inventory of the sounds and stress intonation patterns that the learner does well and those the learner wants to change and (b) a questionnaire about when

and how the learner uses English. This profile can help learners develop pronunciation goals and check their progress toward achieving those goals.

There are a number of activities teachers can do to help learners use word stress correctly. Lead perception exercises on duration of stress, loudness of stress, and pitch. These exercises will help learners recognize the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables. For example, learners can be taught to recognize where stress falls in words with two or more syllables by learning the rules of parts of speech and word stress (e.g., the primary stress is on the first syllable in compound nouns such as airport, laptop). Learners can also use a pronunciation computer program, such as American Speechsounds, to learn the duration and loudness of stress. Do exercises on recognizing and producing weak, unstressed syllables. For example, one exercise helps learners identify computer voice recognition mistakes that have occurred because of mispronunciation of weak vowel forms (e.g., «Alaska»).

If she wants to come with us» instead of «I'll ask if she wants to come with us». Present pronunciation rules for stress [7]. For example, teach learners that in reflexive pronouns, the stress is always on the syllable -self (e.g., myself, ourselves). Teach word stress when teaching vocabulary. For example, any time that new words are introduced, point out to learners where the major stress falls. Use analogy exercises. Words sharing similar stress patterns are easier for listeners to remember. For example, give learners a list of words with similar stress and ask them to state the rule (e.g., in compound adverbs of location, such as inside, downstairs, and outdoors, the stress is on the final syllable). At higher levels, teach learners how to break words into syllables and predict where word stress lies. For example, the number of syllables in a word can be taught to the class with examples from the teacher. The Making Tracks board game, played in pairs, gives learners practice breaking up words into syllables. Focus on unstressed syllables. There are many exercises that a teacher can use to focus on unstressed syllables, or weak vowel forms, in connected speech. Liang discusses three strategies to teach weak vowel forms. Use function words. Introduce weak forms through the grammatical category of function words, such as articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and prepositions. Present sentence drills where both strong and weak forms appear. For example, the teacher can read a passage while learners underline the weak forms in the passage. Allow learners to practice using weak forms in conversations in order to simulate real-life speech encounters. For example, the teacher might focus the lesson on the ability to do things. Student A can play the role of an interviewer, and student B can be the interviewee. Student A poses a list of questions regarding student B's ability to do things. For example, student A asks, «Can you dance?» Student B uses both the strong and weak form of the vowel in can and can't in an answer such as this, «I can't dance very well, but I can try».

The goal of pronunciation teaching and learning is communicative competence, not the complete absence of an accent. Savignon stressed the need for meaningful communicative tasks in the language classroom, including those that focus on pronunciation [7]. Pronunciation exercises that relate to daily use of English include, for example, role-plays of requests that learners have to make (e.g., to ask a boss for a day off or to ask a bank teller to cash a check). Learners can become careful listeners in their own conversations. Pitt shows that learners need exposure to conversations so they can hear variation in pronunciation. By using audiotapes and videotapes, especially of speakers of different varieties of English, teachers can give learners meaningful exposure to variation in pronunciation and increase their communicative competence.

Although there are challenges to teaching and learning English pronunciation, it is an area vital to adult English language learners' communicative competence. Recent research has shed light on pronunciation features to be taught and on learners' goals and motivations for improving their pronunciation. By incorporating current research and its implications into their teaching practice, teachers can help learners gain the skills they need for effective communication in English.

Pronunciation can be one of the most difficult parts for a language learner to master and one of the least favorite topics for teachers to address in the classroom. There are many reasons why the teaching of ESL pronunciation is currently less than optimally effective, and certainly it is wrong to blame anyone group, whether teachers, pronunciation specialists, or academics. Second language pronunciation is a topic of great theoretical interest and practical relevance which unfortunately has been out of fashion for some decades. It seems that a few well-publicized interesting developments would help to swing this topic back into fashion among a range of people with relevant skills and interests and put EFL learners in a position to contribute impressively to worldwide developments in this area. EFL/ESL teachers should focus on the students' needs, level and ability, incorporate pronunciation into their oral skills and other classes and focus on both segmental and supra-segmental features whenever there is opportunity and time [8]. Pronunciation must be viewed as more than correct production of individual sounds or isolated words. Instead, it must be viewed as a cru-

cial and integral part of communication that should be incorporated into classroom activities. Teachers can help students by highlighting elements such as sounds, syllables, stress and intonation. Once the students understand the functions of these elements, they will know what to focus on and can build upon this basic awareness. Teachers can actively encourage the students' actual production, build pronunciation awareness and practice through classes gradually building skills in listening and speaking in both formal and informal situations. It can be concluded that with careful preparation and integration, pronunciation can play an important role in supporting the learners' overall communicative power.

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Н.В. Дениварова, Е.А. Костина, А.Е. Сейлханова

Үздіксіз білім беру аясында дыбыстап-айтуды оқытудың ерекшеліктері

Мақалада отандық және шетелдік шетел тілдерін оқыту әдістемесінің тарихындағы фонетиканы оқытудың өзекті мәселелері қарастырылған. Шетелдік оқу материалдарына зерттеу жүргізудің арақасында ағылшын тілінде дыбыстап айтуды оқытудың әдіс-тәсілдері анықталып, бағдарламаны жақсартудың тиімді жолдары айқындалды. Авторлар ағылшын тілінің дыбыстап айтуды оқытудың кешенді тетік мәселелерін ұсынды. Мақалада сөздерді, сөйлемдерді және дыбыстарды бұрмалау себептері, екпіннің түрлі нысандары мен ағылшын интонациясы негізгі ережелері туралы пайдалы ақпарат берілген. Дыбыстап айту оқытудың маңыздылығы ретінде ауызекі тілде сөйлеудің көрсеткіші болмақ. Дыбыстап айтудың нормаларынан ауытқу тыңдаушылар арасындағы түсінбеушілікке алып келеді. Мақалада шеттілдік дыбыстап айтуды оқытудың кейбір тәсілдері ұсынылған. Кез келген шетел тіліне оқыту, оның ішінде ағылшын тіліне, бастапқыда дұрыс дыбыстап айтудан басталады. Тілдің коммуникативті функциясының белгісі дұрыс бағытталған дыбыстап айтудан анықталады. Оқытудың бастапқы кезеңі өте маңызды. Себебі осы кезеңде тілүйренуші жаңа материалды жылдам ұғады, оған тән имитация, бейсаналық деңгейде, жаңа ақпарат толықтай бастайды. Осы мәселеге бастапқы кезеңде көңіл бөлінбесе, кейін қатені түзету және дыбыстап айтуды жақсарту, ересек жастағы тілүйренушілердің дұрыс ағылшын тілі білігін дамыту қиын болмақ.

Кілт сөздер: дыбыстап-айту, фонетика, екпін, шетел тілі, артикуляция, дыбыс, сөйлеу, дауыс ырғағы, нормалардан ауытқу.

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Особенности обучения произношению в рамках непрерывного обучения

В статье подняты актуальные проблемы обучения произношению в истории отечественной и зарубежной методики обучения иностранным языкам. Было проведено исследование западных учебных материалов, что позволяет компетентно проанализировать методы, подходы и приемы обучения английскому произношению с целью извлечения эффективных приемов для дальнейшего усовершенствования программ. Представлена проблема механизмов комплексного подхода в обучении произношению. Приведена полезная информация о причинах искажения слов, фраз и звуков, об уда-

рени в его различных видах, а также об особенностях английской интонации. Обучение произношению имеет большое значение, так как его эффективностью в значительной мере определяется успех в овладении устной речью — большие отклонения от норм произношения ведут к непониманию речи собеседника. Описаны некоторые приемы обучения иноязычному произношению. Подчеркнуто, что обучение любому иностранному языку, в том числе английскому, начинается с четкой постановки вопроса о правильном произношении, без правильной постановки которого невозможно проявление коммуникативной функции языка. Особенно важен начальный этап обучения, ибо в этот период обучаемые быстро усваивают новый материал, им свойственна имитация, что помогает на подсознательном уровне откладывать вновь полученные знания. Если данному вопросу не уделять должного внимания в начале обучения, то потом исправить ошибки и улучшить произношение, добиться правильной английской речи у студентов будет намного сложнее. Рассмотрен нетрадиционный подход в объяснении артикуляции звуков английского языка, основанный на сравнении артикуляции английских и русских звуков.

Ключевые слова: произношение, фонетика, словесное ударение, иностранный язык, артикуляция, звук, речь, интонация.

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