

ОБУЧЕНИЕ ФОНЕТИКЕ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА СТУДЕНТОВ ФИННО-УГОРСКОЙ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ГРУППЫ

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Введение. Статья посвящена проблеме преодоления интерференции фонетических навыков родного языка (мокшанского или эрзянского) в фонетические навыки изучаемого иностранного (английского, британский вариант). Актуальность изучения данного языкового феномена обусловлена факторами не только лингвистического, но и экстралингвистического характера: процессом глобализации и мощными интегративными тенденциями в сфере экономики, политики и культуры. Предметом исследования является фонетический аспект иноязычной речи студента финно-угорской языковой группы; объектом – образовательный процесс в вузе. Цель исследования состоит в описании алгоритма работы над произношением английского языка в условиях фонетической интерференции. Практическая значимость определяется использованием результатов при формировании речевой иноязычной компетенции.

Материалы и методы. Материал статьи составили произносительные ошибки, зафиксированные в результате аудитивного анализа речи студентов финно-угорского отделения по завершении вводно-фонетического курса и в ходе дальнейшего изучения английского языка как иностранного.

Результаты исследования и их обсуждение. При обучении фонетике английского языка студентов финно-угорской группы используются два подхода: устного опережения и текстоцентрический, и оба они оправдывают себя. Английские звуки вводятся в мини-текстах: скороговорках, детских стихах, песнях, поговорках, пословицах. Особое внимание уделяется постановке тех звуков, которые отсутствуют в мордовских языках, а также корректирующим упражнениям по формированию национального английского (британского) речевого уклада для создания прочных фонетических навыков с целью повышения качества знаний и их трансформации в языковую компетенцию.

Заключение. Интерферирующее влияние фонетических привычек родного языка (мокшанского или эрзянского) на фонетические навыки изучаемого иностранного может быть преодолено или сведено к минимуму в результате разработанной серии упражнений имитационного характера.

Ключевые слова: преподавание иностранного языка; интерференция; ритм; просодия; акцент.

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Introduction

Reflecting growth in research interest in second language acquisition over the past 35 years, this article sheds light on one of the main topics in this sphere – how to overcome phonetic interference in teaching English, to be more exact, how specially devised phonetic drills can help to minimize the negative influence of the phonetic habits in the native tongue.

Overcoming the native tongue interference in a foreign language acquisition is a key issue for the development of personal, professional and social competence and aims at highlighting the relevance of good knowledge of a foreign language which stimulates and enhance professional promotion.

The phonetic and phonological issues discussed in this article came about as a result of an almost 15-year experience of teaching English to University students of a Finno-Ugric extraction. Language interference is one of the current issues in foreign language teaching.

The research aims at gaining insights into the problem of the most effective methods of teaching phonetics and phonology to a non-Russian class, that is to students whose native language is Finno-Ugric. Russian is their second language which they know since their childhood and school years. Thus, they are initially bilingual, the foreign language they learn at school or university

is actually their third language. In the current paper, the investigation focuses, in general, on the methods of teaching phonetics in classroom activities with students of a Finno-Ugric origin.

Tuition at schools in Mordovia, a national republic, is conducted in Russian, as Russian is the official language. But there are schools, mostly in rural places, where the native tongue is taught. Some urban schools also conduct primary teaching in the Mordovian languages. At primary schools kids may also start learning a foreign language. In most cases, it is English, in very few ones it's German and in even fewer – French. So, when they come to the University they willy-nilly know English, but the level is different. Sometimes some students who used to learn German or French at school want to take up English at the university. Thus, in the long run the class may present a diverse picture as far as the learners' level of English is concerned. But what makes it easier is the fact that they all know their native tongue – one of the Mordovian languages – Moksha or Erzya, so the most solid phonetic habits acquired in the earliest childhood are those belonging to their native language.

In accordance with the curriculum and first-year students' preferences, their first foreign language will be either Hungarian or Finnish, the second one being English.

So, taking into consideration “the mixture of languages” in a learner's mind and the fact that an English classroom is of a Finno-Ugric origin, it is important to have a set of well-thought-of methods of teaching phonetics that may lead to overcoming the interference of the phonetic habits of the native tongue, Russian and, perhaps, some other language that had been learnt earlier at school.

When first-year students, whose native tongues are Moksha or Erzya, start a University foreign language curriculum they are to begin it with an introductory – corrective course of 40–50 academic hours of English (British) pronunciation. The subject matter of the article is phonetic interference and methods of its overcoming. The aims of the article consist of solving the problem of phonetic interference of the native tongue

(Moksha/Erzya) into the students' second language (English) phonetic system. The topic preserves a vital scientific and practical interest, first of all, in the situation of multilingualism in Republic Mordovia, and secondly, for the system of Higher Education with the main task being to improve a foreign language competence of the University graduates. The topic of the article is to present a set of specially devised phonetic exercises to overcome the interference and discuss the results achieved.

Literature Review

U. Weinreich once described the sound system of bilinguals metaphorically: the speech sounds pronounced by bilinguals exist on no one's stretch of land – between the two systems of phonemes, and that's why the phonological interpretation of this system preserves a certain difficulty (all the translation is done by I. A.) [2, 22].

The idea of the deforming influence of the native language in the situation of a mixed bilingualism was put forward by L. V. Shcherba [5]. Later on it reincarnated in the term “interference”, introduced by the linguists of the Prague Linguistic Circle.

Interference is defined as a negative influence of the system of the native language on the system of the foreign one by U. Weinreich [2]. Of the two language systems functioning in a man's speech one is usually prior to the other one. It has been either learnt earlier or is still being learnt.

J. Wells reflects on the inner psycholinguistic essence of interference in the following way, “when we encounter a foreign language, our natural tendency is to hear it in terms of the sounds of our own language. We actually perceive it rather differently from the way native speakers do. Equally, when we speak a foreign language we tend to attempt to do so using the familiar sounds and sound patterns of our mother tongue. We make it sound, objectively, rather differently from how it sounds when spoken by native speakers. This is the well-documented phenomenon of phonological interference (Crystal 1987: 372). Our L1 (mother tongue) interferes with our attempts to function in the L2 (target language)” [7].

It is phonetic interference that is most vividly reflected in oral speech. The deviations from the pronunciation norm, caused by phonetic interference, are perceived by the native speaker as a pronunciation accent. G. M. Vishnevskaja is of the opinion that more often than not foreign accent is described by native speakers in terms of “foreign”, “local”, “dialectal”, “professional”. On the whole, foreign accent as a pedagogical problem is paid very little attention to. Though it is well-known that effectiveness of communication to a large extent depends on the speech competence of the interlocutors, on the bilingual’s accent, as the case might be [3, 20].

According to the point of view of B. H. Lekova, “in the modern didactics of foreign language teaching interference is considered to be a particular methodological principle. It predetermines some of the approaches and means of education. The theoretical grounding for interference is explained through the theory of contacts and the theory of bilingualism. Bilingualism means having command of more than one language: native and foreign. The two differ in the degree of command. Communication between the two language systems is the reason for the interference which is the object of psycholinguistics and linguistics research. From the point of view of psycholinguistics, it is a negative transfer of language habits and skills from the mother tongue or from a foreign language to another foreign language. From a linguistic point of view, interference is an interaction or a change in linguistic structures and structural elements. It appears to be a deviation from linguistic norms in the spoken and written language” [6, 320–324].

Materials and Methods

As far as the materials are concerned they are presented by English tongue-twisters and cautionary tales that are usually used for phonetic practice in class.

The main method that is applied in this research is that subjective auditory observation of speech production of the students with the purpose of discerning mispronunciation as a result of phonetic interference.

Results and Discussion

As it is known learning a foreign language is a process realized through imitation and mechanical reaction to the language stimuli. So, when first-year students, whose native tongues are Moksha or Erzia, come to my English classes I usually start a course of 40–50 hours teaching English phonetics paying a special attention to those sounds that are not found either in their native or Russian languages. They are [w, æ, ɪ, ð, ʃ, dʒ, r, v, θ, ə].

Teaching English phonetics and phonology to a Finno-Ugric class I indulge in using at least two very important approaches: the first one is more general – it is that of oral advance, the second one, supporting the former – a text-centered approach. In accordance with the first one every presentation of any language unit is done orally, it goes ahead all the other work – writing, reading, learning vocabulary. And then a text-centered presentation is used. The vocabulary units – words, phrases and idioms are introduced in text, but not as a list of long and short units. The same concerns sounds. They are presented orally in mini texts of English tongue-twisters, limericks, nurseries, sayings, proverbs and clichés. Thus, for example, the very first sounds that are usually introduced in the oral phonetic course in a Finno-Ugric class are [w, æ]. We start with the tongue-twisters: 1) why do you cry, Willy? Why do you cry, Willy? Why, Willy? Why, Willy? Why, Willy, why? 2) A black cat sat on a mat and ate a fat rat.

The actual pronunciation of the words with the sounds [w, æ] is preceded by mute phonetic gymnastics: I ask my students to take their small mirrors and watch their organs of speech – the lips and tongue – working: protrude the lips forward and return them to the neutral position for [w] and for [æ] – lower the low jaw and return it to the neutral position. The tip of the tongue should be pressed to the low teeth.

The initial presentation of a sound is done in the phonetic context of a word, the next stage is a notional pair of words: // a black cat // sat on a mat // and eat a fat rat or // a black cat // a fat rat // on a mat. All these continuities are pronounced many times in chorus until I am satisfied with the quality of the

students' performance. After that I listen to their individual performance and see to it that [w] does not resemble [y] or [û], which is a common mistake.

From the very beginning a special attention is paid to the neutral sound occurring in the given phrases. Both in Moksha or Erzia and in Russian the phenomenon of unstressed vocalism differs greatly from that in English. Finno-Ugric students of English tend to make the neutral not so much neutral or reduced. It gets the coloring of the [a]-sound, for example, as in the Russian word "strana" (country) or in the Moksha word "kafta" (two). In the Russian word "strana" the first "a" is unstressed, but it preserves some quality. Only quantity changes due to its unstressed position. In the Moksha word "kafta" the first "a" is stressed, the second one is unstressed. But it preserves its quality, the quantity being shortened.

On the whole, it can be stated that it is quite a job to teach English unstressed vocalism to a Finno-Ugric class. Doing that a teacher should develop a Germanic model of rhythm. Rhythm is considered to be one of the linguistic components of intonation [4, 138]. "Speech rhythm is viewed as a complex phenomenon, a form of prominence which is cued by a bunch of various acoustic properties of a speech signal" [1, 18]. In accordance with this definition, rhythm in English and Moksha is created by different properties of a speech signal. So it is not only the alteration of stressed and unstressed syllables, but vowel length, unstressed vocalism, tempo as well and some other characteristics of the prosodic systems of languages. Compare the different rhythms of the following: "The 'chief de'fect of 'Henry 'King was 'chewing 'little 'bits of 'string. || At 'last he 'swallowed 'some| which 'tied it'self in 'ugly 'knots in 'side... And in Russian, a Slavic language, for example," Широ'ка стра'на 'моя род'ная, 'много в 'ней ле'сов, по'лей и 'рек... (Shiroka strana moya rodnaaya, mnogo v ney lessov, polye i rek...)» or «Как 'ныне сби'рается' Вещий О'лег от'мстить нераз'умным ха'зарам...» and in Moksha: «Поэзась Эс'тониять 'колга. Бга 'эвондаф 'кулушта 'фениксь. Ся 'масторсь 'лиссь 'таколдфста чай. Кли сонь аф 'кассь

'нинге вийсь-эрьясь, 'Мон 'кеман, што 'сон 'виензай...». If pronounced aloud, the phrases get their peculiar rhythms, and one can easily perceive these different types of rhythm.

Of all the possible rhythm determinants unstressed vocalism, relating to teaching English phonetics to a Finno-Ugric class, is especially salient. Unstressed vocalism is strongly connected with the segmental level of speech and it is necessary to pay a good deal of attention to teaching students how to pronounce reduced vowels.

One more very important phonetic drill consists in practicing junctions of words. A junction is, on the one hand, a fact of occurrence of two sounds – the last sound of the preceding word and the first sound of the following one – in the connected speech in one place. On the other hand, it is a process of influence and variation of the neighboring sounds. In fluent speech they influence and change each other: the last stage of articulation of the preceding sound overlaps the first stage of the following sound, and these changes can be substantial. Thus, for example, in the phrase "a black cat" ['blæk 'kæt] the second [k] loses its plosion (they are both occlusive plosive consonants) or, for example, in the following: Thomas thinks of terrible things and to the troubled teacher brings... there are at least 5 difficult junctions in this phrase. They are: Thomas thinks ['tɒməs 'θiŋks əv 'teribl 'θiŋz...]. Here [s] changes its place of articulation due to the interdental [θ]. The junctions are also found within the borders of the words "terrible, troubled", on the borders of the words "and to", "and troubled teacher".

Singing songs in English classes with students of a Finno-Ugric origin helps a lot in improving phonetics. At the very beginning verses are practiced: difficult sounds, junctions, unstressed vowels, after enough practice the verses are sung to the music. Music is a wonderful means of relaxing and overcoming articulation defects if there any, such as lisping, excessive nasalization, mumbling, stammering.

Aspiration as a phonetic phenomenon does not exist either in Moksha or in Erzia, which

is a reason of accent. This accent, of course, doesn't distort the meaning of words, because it is not a phonological mistake, but, nevertheless, it reveals a foreign accent. Aspiration is practiced with the help of the tongue – twister “Peter Piper...”.

Conclusion

Phonetic interference of the phonetic habits of the learners' native tongue results in accent, which can be and should be overcome or reduced to the minimum with the help of phonetic exercises. The aim of a teacher of English in a Finno-Ugric class is to arrange work in the most effective way to eliminate phonetic accent and to minimize the influence of the native tongue on the phonological system of the language under study. This article has presented a set of exercises for overcoming phonetic accent.

Besides some preventive measures require: 1) the teacher should have a very good command of the target language so that he/she is aware of the facts of phonetic interference and will take adequate measures; 2) there ought to be course books or educational materials considering the native language system peculiarities and predicting common phonetic mistakes in a particular foreign language learning as a result of accent; 3) a foreign language teacher should have files of typical mistakes which he/she should review before teaching or practicing the language material with his/her students.

The further development of the topic might be directed into analyzing prosodic and intonation accent in a Finno-Ugric class learning English as their foreign language.

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TEACHING ENGLISH PHONETICS TO A FINNO-UGRIC CLASS

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Introduction. This article is devoted to the problem of overcoming the interference of the phonetic habits of the native tongue (Moksha or Erzya) into English pronunciation (British variant). The importance of the research of this linguistic phenomenon is defined by both linguistic and extra-linguistic factors, such as processes of globalization and integration in the spheres of economy, politics and culture. The subject of the research is presented by the phonetic of the system of a foreign language acquisition in a Finno-Ugric classroom. The object of the research is educational process at the University. The research is aimed at creating an algorithm of work on English pronunciation to overcome native tongue interference. The practical value of the research is determined by use of the results in building up a foreign language competence.

Materials and Methods. The article is based on the data received in the course of auditory analysis of Finno-Ugric students' speech after the introductory phonetic course and further study of English as a foreign language.

Results and Discussion. In developing English phonetics to a Finno-Ugric class two approaches have been used – one is that of oral advance, the other one is textocentric. They proved to be effective in building-up English pronunciation skills. English sounds are introduced in a phonetic context of mini-texts: tongue-twisters, nursery rhymes, songs, and sayings. In building-up phonetic skills a special attention is given to those English sounds that are not found in Moksha or Erzia. The devised system facilitates to form the British articulatory setting to provide the quality of learning with its further transformation into language competence.

Conclusion. The interfering influence of phonetic habits of native tongue can be overcome by a series of exercises devised by the author.

Key words: second language teaching practice; interference; rhythm; prosody; accent.

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