

**DCCD 2020****Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding****SPEECH WITHOUT A HITCH: ON TEACHING  
PRONUNCIATION CULTURE**

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***Abstract***

The article explains necessity for foreign pronunciation culture formation in would-be EFL teachers. The authors focus on the need to revise the target and meaningful components of English pronunciation teaching. The nature of pronunciation is constituted with such components as socio-psychological (right choice of expressive means depending on communication situation and speaker's individual personality); cultural studies (ability to adapt pronunciation in accordance with culture requirements, traditions and national spiritual heritage); pragmatic and aesthetic (changing pronunciation characteristics to gain a more effective impact on the interlocutor); methodological. It seems essential to shift from teaching usual pronunciation skills to forming students' pronunciation culture as a necessary condition for success of their professional (didactic) speech. The essence of this reconceptualization is that would-be EFL teacher's speech should not only be phonetically correct, but professionally labeled, which requires consideration of functional and sociocultural aspects of pronunciation. This is directly related to mastering a foreign language culture as a goal and content of foreign language education. The article describes foreign pronunciation culture as combination of features that determine authenticity, intelligibility, expressiveness, social relevance of speech and methodological effectiveness of managing its parameters. The authors underline that introduction of foreign pronunciation culture concept will contribute to more effective training of FL teachers.

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## 1. Introduction

Global changes in society and different spheres of life, including education, determine emergence of a new teaching foreign languages paradigm, which allows to take a fresh look at some concepts in teaching foreign languages methodology. Thus, more and more often researchers discuss professional teacher formation in discourse framework, namely pedagogical and academic (Lukoshus, 2017; Suleimanova, 2018).

Learning process is known as a two-way process, where a teacher often becomes dependent on various stereotypes that are imposed on them in / by professional environment (Michugina, 2018). To overcome these stereotypes a teacher needs to possess special knowledge and skills that contribute to effective organization of educational and speech interaction and productive implementation of communicative intention in various communication situations (e.g. educational, professional, real).

We argue the need for students to form a FL pronunciation culture as a necessary component of professional (didactic) speech. Insufficient level of this culture can lead not only to the limitation of opportunities in different spheres of communication but also to the occurrence of psychological discomfort or doubts in professional skills. Distortion of normative pronunciation, unstable, and often imperative-aggressive and authoritarian speech tone of a FL teacher creates a negative effect both in terms of perception of teacher personality and in their activity assessment. Students are apt to stop respecting their teacher if they consider his/her pronunciation bad and inappropriate. A teacher is sometimes the only source of foreign speech for students (of course there are a lot of opportunities to practise your language with the help of the Internet but we are speaking about face to face communication) that is why he/she should demonstrate pronunciation culture in the best way. When students realise that the speech cannot be taken as an example a teacher will have difficulties involving students in any activities at lessons. But if a teacher has a high level of pronunciation culture his/her students have a chance to get it too. So, it is becoming more and more obvious to people that knowledge of the norms of literary pronunciation is a necessary component of teachers' training and a person's intelligence in general. High quality of speech, sounds have a social significance because they contribute to better information transfer and acute perception of the speaker's main idea.

Traditionally language universities aim at formation of students' phonetic / pronunciation skills at different levels of the pronunciation system: phonemes and their combinations, words and phrases, intonation as a combination of rhythm and tempo. Teaching pronunciation in a university, as a rule, consists in gradual isolated drill of the indicated levels until it becomes a skill and students achieve an acceptable level of standartized English speech. All kinds of imitation and visualization techniques for educational purposes allow to achieve a high level of language acquisition due to developing similar neural networks when viewing actions by others (Michugina, 2018).

At the same time, the quality of generated phonetic / pronunciation skills is evaluated only by compliance with English phonological norms. Thus, the level of students' phonetic / pronunciation skills is assessed outside the context of professional pedagogical communication.

This approach to teaching students pronunciation, according to Buzhinskij (2006), limits "the content of pronunciation concept and boils it down to linguistics, which negatively affects formation and development of FLT professional speech" (p. 94). The scientist highlights that for a would-be teacher it is

not enough to master Standard English phonetics; they should “demonstrate” in speech certain language phenomena in the context of specific methodological problems [ibid]. This implies a special level of speech skills formation not only in terms of performance correctness and expressiveness, but also in terms of ability to adapt pronunciation to speech situation at the lesson to achieve pedagogical influence goals. Thus, pronunciation is regarded as “an integral component of communication, rather than an isolated drill and practice sub-skill” (Hismanoglu & Hismanoglu, 2010, p. 984). It is an open secret that semantic perception of information depends on speech pace while intonation helps to highlight logical and emotional significance of a statement. There are some situations when the intonation and the content of the speech are different. For example, a teacher is speaking about an interesting issue while explaining a new topic but his/her voice sounds dull or too quiet. The topic is fascinating but the students cannot get the main idea. It causes a lot of problems later. The other situation is connected with the process of assessing a student. The teacher wants to express sympathy for a student who has got a bad result but a student perceives the speech with hostility and thinks that the teacher is aggressive because of the wrong intonation. The connection between FL pronunciation culture and the effectiveness of the process of learning is obvious. The brighter teacher’s emotional responsiveness, the richer their speech with melodic expressiveness since speech is numb if it is deprived of due melodic accents.

## **2. Problem Statement**

The abovementioned prompts to reconsider purpose and content of teaching pronunciation in FLT framework. The essence of the revision corresponds to the fact that would-be English teacher's speech should not only be phonetically correct, but also professionally labeled. Mirzoeva (2010) underlines the need for pronunciation culture formation and development as a component of would-be English teacher's professional competence. The scientist points out that the most important condition for pronunciation culture formation is situational conditioning of the learning process.

Highlighting shortcomings of the traditional approach to teaching pronunciation in University students in relation to their professional (didactic) speech formation, Buzhinskij (2006) discusses the need to revise purpose and content of teaching pronunciation in the framework of a foreign language vocational education. Instead of phonetic / pronunciation skills as a habitual goal of learning, the author puts forward the idea of pronunciation culture that brings teaching pronunciation to a completely different level.

We share Buzhinskij's stand on promoting pronunciation culture as teaching pronunciation goal in the framework of foreign language vocational education, though, we have to clarify that this idea is found in the works of Russian researchers, e.g. in the framework of school education and specificity of pronunciation culture in interpreters (Korzun, 2008). Today the phenomenon of “pronunciation culture” is the subject of study for many researchers. There are attempts to define the whole concept of “pronunciation culture”, that Buzhinskij (2006) describes as "combination of features that determine authenticity, intelligibility, expressiveness, social relevance of speech and methodological effectiveness of managing its parameters" (p. 96).

Mirzoeva (2010) refers to pronunciation culture as speaker's ability to use normative phonetic language means (both sound and rhythmic-intonational) in accordance with speech situation to achieve maximum expressiveness and intelligibility of speech.

Furthermore, specifics of interpreter's pronunciation culture has been studied which is understood as “ability to handle pronunciation norm of the target language, ability to choose phonetic means, which in a specific situation of intercultural communication provides the greatest effect in achieving communicative tasks set by the speaker” (Korzun, 2008, p. 11).

The importance of pronunciation culture should be realized by students – would-be English teachers as a “guarantee of success” in their professional (didactic) speech formation. This determines development of a special syllabus for students to form pronunciation culture. Moreover, this syllabus should be incorporated into the framework of professionally oriented TEFL.

The syllabus to form pronunciation culture among students could be implemented in at least two ways:

1) in a professionally oriented elective course;

2) in the context of educational practices, which, as Tareva (2015) points out, should rely “exclusively on cognitive and educational activity of students themselves. The introduction of such technologies will ensure the transition from “transmitting” to “activity” pedagogy” (p. 80).

The indicated problem determines the search for rational didactic strategies to form pronunciation culture in students and the current situation made it possible to identify a significant problem that needs resolution.

### **3. Research Questions**

Despite a number of linguo-didactic researchers on pronunciation culture phenomenon, the question to follow remains unsolved today: what is structure and content of EFL teacher's pronunciation culture?

The indicated problem requires a solution in the framework of theoretical and practical research. It seems that introduction of EFL teacher's pronunciation culture concept into the thesaurus of modern linguodidactics and TEFL will contribute to more effective training EFL teachers, in particular, to their professional (didactic) speech formation.

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

The article aims at revealing essential characteristics of “pronunciation culture” phenomenon of would-be EFL teachers.

### **5. Research Methods**

The concept of “foreign pronunciation culture” was firstly introduced into methodology terminological apparatus by V. V. Buzhinskij in relation to teaching students at primary level of education and later to training linguists-teachers. The problem of teaching pronunciation has received a wide coverage in a number of foreign studies (Cimenli, 2015; Ding et al., 2019; Liakin et al., 2017; Martinsen & Alvord, 2012; Mroz, 2018; Munro, 2008; Pawlak & Szyszka, 2018; Shamat, 2019).

However, this issue is not fully implemented in the existing curricula of 44.03.01 Pedagogical education (undergraduate level), as well as in textbooks and teaching aids for pedagogical university students that train EFL teachers. Our own experience and colleagues' observations over Bachelor students'

speech during their teaching practice indicate that most students (more than 75%) demonstrate professional (didactic) speech at an average level. The main disadvantages of students' speech, according to Varlamova (2015), are: the use of unauthentic expressions; difficulties in putting questions, requests, instructions regarding students' activities, and as a result – unreasonable use of the native (Russian) language at English lessons.

Observations of students' speech show that students do not refer to communicative influence methods, which are said to be an important professional quality of teacher's speech. Golovchanskaya (2018) highlights that “a sounding speech, devoid of expressive intonation design, cannot properly convey information to students, arouse interest and desire to study the subject” (p. 338).

Cimenli (2015) shares this stand, pointing out that “communication is itself a two-way process and therefore intelligibility depends on both speaker and the listener” (p. 636).

The current situation determines importance of students professional (didactic) speech development considering all its components and a different approach to organizing classes that would allow achieving desired learning outcomes in relation to formation and development of students professional (didactic) speech. Moreover, development of professional (didactic) speech would contribute to a more effective development of intercultural competence. A modern teacher has a lot of opportunities to communicate with colleagues from different countries. Lots of teachers go to international conferences to share their experience with their colleagues or learn something new about foreign practice. For these purposes, FL pronunciation culture as a part of intercultural competence is needed too. Intercultural communicative competence is ability and willingness to recognize, understand, and interpret the native and another picture of the world in their interaction (Tareva & Tarev, 2017). It is important to sound right in intercultural communication. Bad phonetic skills can distract the listener from the content of the conversation by focusing on the external side of the speech that can lead to intercultural misunderstanding. FL pronunciation culture can be named as a teacher's calling card so it should be representative. In the framework of this article, we would like to dwell on the problem of teaching students English pronunciation culture.

## 6. Findings

Based on the existing definitions of "pronunciation culture" concept presented in the work by O. O. Korzun, V. V. Buzhinskij, E. Yu. Mirzoyeva, we argue that a FL teacher should demonstrate:

- 1) ability to rely on language pronunciation norm in a specific situation of pedagogical communication;
- 2) ability of adequate speech impact on the student in accordance with language pronunciation norm studied by them.

We assume that these abilities are due to:

- FL pronunciation standards knowledge;
- skills formation degree in using FL phonetic material in a specific situation of pedagogical communication;
- skills formation degree of opting for necessary language pronunciation norm depending on pedagogical communication situation;
- teacher's willingness to rely on FL pronunciation norm.

Obviously, formation process of would-be teachers pronunciation culture implies development of certain knowledge, skills and abilities.

Having summarized the sources, we came to the conclusion that pronunciation culture knowledge can include:

- knowledge necessary for English language sounds articulation;
- knowledge of correct sounds implementation in words and phrases composition;
- knowledge of English language phonetic phenomena (aspiration, palatalization, reduction, assimilation);
- knowledge of English statement intonation design in accordance with specific pedagogically determined situation of intercultural communication.

A would-be EFL teacher should not only possess this knowledge to implement FL pronunciation culture in a situation of pedagogical communication, but also should be able to apply this knowledge in real professional conditions. In this regard, during pronunciation culture formation, development and improvement, it is necessary to carry out development of skills and abilities relevant for educational linguistic manipulation of a FL teacher. Among phonetic skills, the following can be distinguished:

- audiolingual (articulatory) skills;
- sound realization skills as a part of a word, phrase: articulatory (lateral explosion, aspiration, palatalization, velarization, loss of explosion) and articulatory (reduction, assimilation)
- rhythmic-intonation skills for filling out English statements (automatic division into intonation groups; phrasal and logical stress, intonation) in accordance with specific situation of pedagogical communication.

Students abilities include:

- ability to correctly design a sound stream with suprasegmental characteristics of speech (pace, stress, intonation);
- ability to deliver information in an accessible and attractive form due to speech pace, diction, tonality in accordance with specific situation of pedagogical communication.

## 7. Conclusion

Pronunciation is said to be the voice of speech culture, the prism through which a would-be EFL teacher conveys their thoughts, emotions, sensations, feelings, values. This function of pronunciation culture is not only pragmatic, but also aesthetic, since a targeted impact on the listener by means of pronunciation forms a figuratively associative hearing in students. To achieve an adequate pragmatic and aesthetic effect, individual strategies formation for EFL teacher pronunciation culture seems to be a priority.

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