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FOSSILIZED ERRORS CORRECTED: TEACHING TECHNIQUES

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Abstract

The article investigates the issue of fossilized errors which are common in undergraduate students learning English as their second foreign language in multilingual university environment. It provides creative tasks and formats of working with students within the course “Practical English Phonetics”. It is believed that phonetic competence is more influenced by interlingual interference and needs constant and deliberate efforts to practise and advance especially within the framework of intercultural education. To do this, the system of higher pedagogical education seeks ways to implement creative learning technologies to boost efficacy of classroom environment and stimulate self-improvement in students. In this paper, we provide methodological guidelines to correct fossilized errors and suggest such creative working formats as *marathon*, *contest*, *ensemble* all aimed at mastering phonetic skills with the following task types: *dominoes*, *lotto*, *maze* also of aphonetic type. We relied on theoretical, empirical and statistical methods for in-depth analysis of phonetic skills acquisition. The research features the steps taken to achieve the goal of the study in concordance with the systemic approach to language training. It is vital for soon-to-be professionals to acquire skills and knowledge that correspond to the English level B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference as their competence in many aspects of foreign language will shape their careers and play the integral part in international communication.

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1. Introduction

As of today, the system of higher pedagogical education witnesses a trend to develop and implement groundbreaking creative learning technologies that are based on theoretical generalization of scientific knowledge on different levels which is the issue of “optimistic projection” in mastering linguistic educational practices (Tareva, 2015). Such innovative approach in education correlates with the cultural orientation and the anthropocentric paradigm which presents “a challenge that is due to be met employing a new complex and credible approach which is the case of intercultural education” (Borbotko et al., 2019).

Dictionaries provide the following definitions for the concept “creativity”:

- creative thinking, creative activity;
- an ability to create or produce something new in any other way: a new solution to a problem, a new method, a new work of art;
- creative skills of an individual that imply that the said individual is capable of producing brand new ideas.

The contemporary pedagogical science widely uses the term “teaching creativity”. When studying this concept, scientists mark that “the teaching profession has to be considered as one of the forms of practical art which is expressed through an approach that a teacher relies on to outline and solve issues, he/she is facing”. Moreover, teaching and training as an occupation and calling are of creative nature, thus, it is up to the teacher to establish and reinforce the professional and business surroundings necessary to organize the students’ working routine and to contribute to their development. When teaching undergraduate pedagogy students, one of the most essential aspects is to build a creative environment that would foster their professional skills and their “professional creativity” in particular. The latter is relevant for teachers to be competitive and ready to implement new intellectual products and skills to boost the educational process (Vikulova, 2018).

2. Problem Statement

The English language gained popularity as the language of international communication in the XX-XXI centuries. Still learning English as the second foreign language often leads to lower requirements in terms of acquiring conventional phonetic rules. As result, many linguistic universities find it vital to develop activities to advance audiolingual and intonation patterns in undergraduate students who choose English as their second foreign language. What is more, second language learners are usually aware of some typical phonetic mistakes they make under the influence of their native language. The striking point is that second language learners perceive their own accent more similar to the target language than the accent of their fellow peers (Mitterer et al., 2020).

The problem of fossilized errors and their correction was primarily developed in western scientific community, especially by English and German researchers, see, for example, publications by Long, Han, Hirschfeld. Yet, in Russian studies this phenomenon calls for further investigation as we rely on different approaches to teaching. For instance, Russian foreign language textbooks, manuals and materials are developed by language specialists and do not consider students’ personal interests. In other words,

courses are programmes as well as teaching materials are standardized. In the west, on the contrary, they start with learners' needs analysis and, after that, the educator works on an individual programme for a group.

Our research focuses on the issue of correcting phonetic skills fossilization in undergraduate pedagogy students training under the course "Foreign Language" in the process of fostering their phonetic skills by means of creative pedagogical technologies.

3. Research Questions

The concept "fossilization" was formerly used in geosciences and was introduced to linguistics by Selinker (1972), who observed that the majority of adults (95%) who were studying foreign languages could not become as proficient as native speakers.

In linguistics by fossilization is meant premature arrest of language development despite optimal learning environment. We can also mark local fossilization in the phonetic language sub-system that is caused by the influence of the native and the first foreign languages (the fixed position of articulatory organs) as well as by lack of motivation. The compensatory strategies and techniques are widely used to overcome fossilization. Apart from this, considering that the fossilization-caused mistakes become intrinsic, it is recommended to employ the full range of teaching methods to correct them.

To prevent fossilization process, it is suggested to present the phonetic material relying on the comparative contrast of the features in the native, the first and second foreign languages and then employ compensatory strategies and specific teaching methods, thus combining rational techniques of traditional and communicative methods as well as creative technologies. The fossilization correction process is aimed at preventing and timely fixing fossilized mistakes as well as filling the gaps in phonetic knowledge and students' skills.

4. Purpose of the Study

Fossilization is common in learners of English. This phenomenon is defined in terms of typical persistent errors as opposed to occasional mistakes (Kostina et al., 2017). It hinders the process of acquiring language skills in the target language.

There can be identified three notions on this kind of pronunciation problems. Some researchers relate fossilization to a matter of intelligibility, others believe that achieving perfection is optional and another trend that some professionals share is the idea that fossilization cannot be applied to the multilingual context (Rahal, 2018).

The article seeks to provide theoretical background and share practical ways concerning the methodology of correcting fossilization when approaching phonetic competency in pedagogical bachelors learning English as the second foreign language in multilingual university environment. The ultimate goal is to advance pronunciation skills in undergraduates and foster reflexive nature of education with the focus on students' aspirations to self-improvement following experimental testing and methodological guidelines to correct fossilization when scaffolding phonetic competence.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Methods

The research involved theoretical, empirical and statistical methods. Theoretical methods embraced critical analysis of the scientific literature on the issue (Han, 2005; Lardiere, 1998; Nakuma, 1998; Tarone, 2006); general observations and authors' analysis experience and expertise in teaching practical English phonetics. Empirical methods: reliance on questionnaires for students to decide whether it is relevant to develop methodology to correct fossilization when approaching phonetic competence; testing undergraduate students to identify their level of phonological competence; participant and non-participant observations of phonetic classes with undergraduate students; providing in-depth account of dynamics in mastering phonetic skills; adjusting the learning process; experimental testing of the developed methodology.

5.2. Research design

To carry out the research the following steps were abided by.

Step 1 was to state the objective, subject, scope, tasks, methods and methodology of the research. This step was based on pedagogical methodical literature review.

Step 2 was to clarify the objective, subject, scope, tasks, methods and methodology of the research; the pilot experiment was conducted at the Department of Romance Philology (Moscow City University) to identify: 1) the relevance of fossilized errors correction in undergraduate students learning English as the second foreign language after French or German; 2) the level of phonetic competence in undergraduate students. Apart from that, there was designed authors' methodology to correct fossilized errors in bachelor students studying English as the foreign language in multilingual university environment; there was a developed and implemented algorithm of correcting fossilization of phonetic skills among bachelors in pedagogical studies within the process of shaping their phonetic competence in multilingual university environment.

In Step 3 the experiment was conducted to test and approve the pattern, algorithm, manual aid and methodological guidelines for educators to prove the efficacy of the developed model in correcting fossilized errors in pedagogical bachelor students learning English as the second foreign language in multilingual university environment.

6. Findings

When correcting fossilization, it is absolutely relevant for a teacher to introduce a wide range of exercises that are meant for practicing, reinforcing and controlling phonetic skills. Moreover, another method to overcome fossilization requires a higher level of motivation as well as of proactivity, self-dependence, and creativity in students.

The article suggests various types of creative tasks and formats of working with students within the subject "Practical English Phonetics" which could be also referred to as energizers – small exercises

that relieve tension, create a comfortable, friendly and creative environment, and help divide students into groups) (Shamanova & Vishnevskaya, 2019).

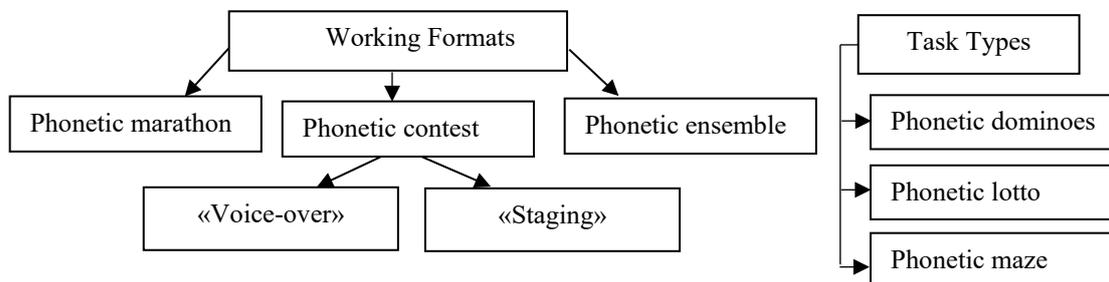


Figure 1. Creative working formats and task types within the subject “Practical English Phonetics”

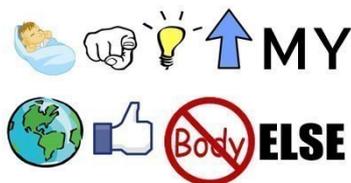
Let us consider the working formats and task types as shown on Figure 01.

1) Phonetic marathon implies that a competition is held during class and the students are offered to complete various creative tasks, for instance:

Read and transcribe:

1. TGIF / _____
2. Sk8t / _____
3. IDK / _____
4. Be4 / _____
5. IMHO/ _____
6. NASA / _____
7. BTW / _____
8. HTML / _____
9. CD / _____
10. TBH / _____

Good Read the sentence. Write it. Indicate the intonation patterns.



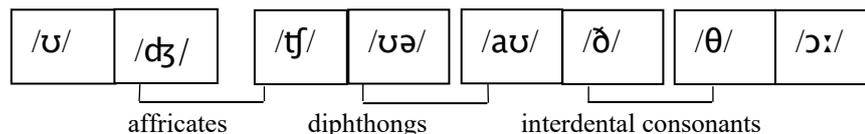
2) Phonetic contest “Voice-over” refers to working with video recordings in the target language. The students choose any movie or animation fragment, remove the original voice track and do re-voicing. The primary goal is to work on rhythm and intonation.

3) Phonetic contest “Staging” aims at enhancing the phonetic competence as well as pronunciation skills in the flow of speech. The students act out a fragment of a literary work in the target language. The type of discourse presented is specific due to theatricalization being its primary objective (Borbotko & Gorshkova, 2017) which impacts the skills mastered by students.

4) Phonetic ensemble classes shape the skills through musical-phonetic practice. The students learn songs and sing them as a group in the target language. Apart from that, the students are asked to read the lyrics both individually and collectively focusing on pronunciation patterns relevant for choir singing, for example, exaggerated consonants, especially in their final position, and clear diphthongs articulation. It is vital to pay attention to the rhythm as it makes singing synchronized.

5) Phonetic dominoes are an effective technique for teaching vowels and consonants classification as well as transcription rules.

For example:



<u>grandmother</u>	further	broth	himself	smart	thousand	dish
birthday	together	cloth	special	speaker	length	snake
either	bother	sympathy	path	south	something	breath
though	thaw	stealthy	zenith	thigh	truth	context
another	leather	smooth	hawthorn	youth	froth	myth
synthesis	enthusiasm	therefore	neither	pothor	method	thirst
arithmetic	expression	north	nothing	other	furthermore	thesis
soup	pleasant	expensive	ought	rebirth	heathen	breathe
next	spelling	sound	fantastic	three	ethics	<u>southern</u>

6) Phonetic lotto improves recognizing the sounds of English.

The example of a lotto ticket:

aɪ		ʊə	ɔɪ	s			
		aʊə		ɔ:		eə	eɪ
v	ʃ				ʊ		l

7) Phonetic maze encourages students to go through the maze finding the words with the given sound or stressed syllable.

This technique can be employed to acquire proper pronunciation concerning audible shape of the word and stressed syllables.

For example:

/ð/

keys:

Grandmother – further – together – bother – either – though – another – leather – smooth – therefore – neither – pothor – other – furthermore – heathen – breathe – southern

The tasks provided are integrated in “Practical English Phonetics” classes to increase motivation, curiosity and creativity as both teachers and students are active participants to the learning process.

7. Conclusion

The phonetic skills in undergraduate pedagogy students learning English as the second foreign language should correspond to the English level B1 in the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

Furthermore, proper English pronunciation is a significant part of teachers' communicative competence which contributes to turning students into confident speakers of English. Still, there is evidence that some teachers have poor pronunciation with phonetic fossilization errors at the top of the scale. Such errors are difficult to correct which makes it urgent to design the armoury of methods and techniques to correct phonetic fossilization in undergraduate pedagogy students learning English as the second foreign language after French or German.

It is relevant to develop phonetic skills in undergraduate pedagogy students learning English as the second foreign language at each class as consistency brings quality.

There can be an introduced range of phonetic exercises and activities aimed at phonetic skills assessment, practising and honing both within the initial stage of learning a foreign language or at introductory phonetic courses.

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