

## **TECHNIQUES OF DEVELOPING TRAINEE TEACHERS' PRONUNCIATION SKILLS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION**

*The study deals with the development of future teachers' English pronunciation skills in distance education. Considering the nature of professional teacher training it is recommended to combine synchronous and asynchronous types of interaction between the teacher and students, to teach pronunciation in a communicative context, to develop students' ability to improve their own pronunciation and to teach English pronunciation to other people.*

*The author differentiates between five stages of developing trainee teachers' phonetic skills in distance education (receptive, receptive-analytical, receptive-reproductive, reflective-analytical, self-improvement) and provides examples of activities at each stage. The efficiency of the set of activities is verified through the pedagogical experiment the results of which confirm the hypothesis that activities for analyzing and correcting other students' pronunciation facilitate the process of acquiring phonetic skills by future teachers of English.*

The introduction of quarantine restrictions in the light of the continuing spread of coronavirus disease in Ukraine resulted in temporary implementation of distance education in higher educational institutions. The efficiency of teaching under such conditions depends to a large extent on the application of innovative methods and techniques which could compensate for the absence of live communication between students and the teacher and become a viable alternative to classwork. Distance professional training of future foreign language teachers requires the use of tasks and activities which enable undergraduates to develop all communication skills and acquire the ability to teach foreign languages to other people.

One of the components of future English teachers' professional competence is pronunciation skills. The level of their development affects the achievement of the communicative aim in the process of speaking and the success of teaching others foreign language pronunciation.

Various aspects of developing future teachers' phonetic competence are investigated by Dolyna A.V. (methods of developing future teachers' English phonetic competence in individual work) [3], Lanova O.V. (preparation of trainee teachers for teaching prosodic means of the English language to schoolchildren) [5], Perlova V.V. (the development of future teachers' English pronunciation skills) [7], Chukhno O.A. (teaching future teachers the pronunciation of English after German) [9].

The issue of using information technology in teaching foreign languages at higher educational institutions is studied by Gnedkova O. (distance learning technologies in professional training of future English teachers) [11], Dolyna A.V. (the use of Moodle for improving phonetic competence of trainee teachers of English) [2], Dolynskiy Ye.V. (the

use of Moodle in teaching the English language and translation) [4], Tomilina A.O. (the development of e-learning resources on Moodle while teaching foreign languages) [8].

In spite of scholars' attention to the development of trainee teachers' phonetic competence and the use of e-learning technologies in the process of teaching English in higher educational institutions, the problem of improving pronunciation of students who train to become teachers of English under the conditions of distance education still remains unsolved. Thus, the study aims to devise techniques of distant development of trainee teachers' English pronunciation skills.

The achievement of the aim stipulates accomplishing the following objectives: 1) to analyze the nature of pronunciation skills and their types; 2) to formulate the requirements for the organization of distance teaching of English pronunciation to trainee teachers; 3) to define the stages of developing trainee teachers' pronunciation skills in distance education; 4) to develop a set of techniques within each stage; 5) to conduct a pedagogical intervention in order to verify the effectiveness of the techniques; 5) to analyze and interpret the received empirical data.

Borysko N.F. defines pronunciation skills as the ability to correctly pronounce all the phonemes in the flow of speech and to adequately understand them in the process of listening to other people [6]. Perlova V. V. emphasizes that teachers' pronunciation skills are different from those of an ordinary speaker since they are used in teaching and require conscious perception of other people's pronunciation and conscious reproduction of phonological characteristics of sounds in one's own speech. The researcher introduces the notion «professionally oriented pronunciation skills» and considers them to be automatic actions of sounds perception and reproduction that are performed by the teacher with the aim of teaching students English pronunciation [7]. Thus, we can differentiate between two types of pronunciation skills: receptive and reproductive.

The acquisition of professional practical skills in a foreign language is also considered to be one of the professional competences in Bachelor's Educational Program [1]. Therefore, the process of developing trainee teachers' English pronunciation skills must be professionally oriented and include activities for the acquisition of skills to teach others. At the initial stage of training future teachers at university, such activities include identification of pronunciation mistakes in other undergraduates' speech and their correction. In distance education instant audio feedback, which can be provided by using video conferencing services such as Zoom, Google Meet, etc., enables students to perform these activities successfully.

Synchronous audio connection is also of paramount importance for the teacher to timely correct undergraduates' mistakes in reproductive activities. At this stage the level of some students' phonetic sensitivity to English and Ukrainian sounds may be insufficient for self-correction. Thus, the absence of teacher's control can result in fossilized pronunciation in the future. Conducting lessons in video conferencing format is also efficient for practicing English pronunciation in speaking. The obvious advantages of this format are: 1) the opportunity of developing undergraduates' ability to demonstrate correct pronunciation in unprepared speech; 2) the opportunity to

organize group and pair work for increasing the amount of time of trainee teachers' speaking and practicing pronunciation; 3) the opportunity of auditory and visual demonstration of the model of pronunciation with its further imitation and analysis of its phonological characteristics. It is worth mentioning that in class the model of pronunciation is, as a rule, provided by the teacher who demonstrates correct pronunciation and the position of speech organs. However, in distance education, the teacher can use videos produced by native speakers. In this way trainee teachers perceive a model of articulatory and acoustic features of sounds that facilitates their correct reproduction.

One of the outcomes of professional teacher training according to Educational program is critical self-evaluation of learning, devising and implementing effective strategies of self-improvement and professional growth [1]. Trainee teachers' individual work on improving their own pronunciation skills is favorable for achieving such result. Therefore, it also seems reasonable to use the asynchronous type of interaction between the teacher and students. For instance, the distance education platform Moodle enables students to access materials on English pronunciation uploaded by the teacher, tests and academic performance rates. The platform provides the opportunity to inform students about deadlines, events or changes in the course that organizes and motivates them to study.

Taking into account the nature of professional teacher training we consider it necessary to follow such recommendations: 1) to combine the opportunities of synchronous and asynchronous types of interaction between the participants of the educational process in order to enhance the development of future teachers' English pronunciation skills in distance education; 2) to practice pronunciation in communication; 3) to use activities that develop students' skills to teach pronunciation to other people; 4) to develop trainee teachers' ability to improve their own pronunciation skills.

Considering the necessity to use visual and auditory aids, communicative context and professionally oriented activities and drawing on the stages of teaching pronunciation [6] we differentiate between the following stages of developing trainee teachers' English pronunciation skills in distance education:

- I. Receptive (watching a video with the new sound in a communicative context);
- II. Receptive-analytical (watching the video with a native speaker's demonstration of the new sound pronunciation that is followed by students' analysis of its phonetic characteristics);
- III. Receptive-reproductive (listening to and reproducing speech units with the new sound accompanied by video and audio recording of speech);
- IV. Reflective-analytical (watching video records, identifying pronunciation mistakes in one's own and other students' speech, giving recommendations for improving pronunciation);
- V. Self-improvement (video and audio recording of one's own speech taking into account the results of self-analysis and other students' recommendations, comparing the pronunciation with the original variant) [10].

The examples of activities which can be done at each stage in distance education are as follows:

Receptive stage:

- Watch a part of the film/Ted-talk/video-blog and pay attention to the pronunciation of the sound [w] in the words in bold (transcript is provided).
- Watch a part of the film/Ted-talk/video-blog and pay attention to the pronunciation of the first sound in the words in bold (transcript is provided).
- Watch a part of the film/Ted-talk/video-blog and choose the word in the transcript that you hear.

While working in video conferencing format at this stage the teacher demonstrates the video and the transcript simultaneously. The students type their answers in the group chat that enables the teacher to quickly control their correctness.

Receptive-analytical stage:

- Watch the video in which a native speaker explains the pronunciation of the sound [w]. Repeat the sound and the examples of words with this sound after the speaker.
- Watch the video in which a native speaker explains the pronunciation of the sound [æ]. Answer the questions (e.g. Is it a long or a short vowel? Is it a diphthong or a monophthong? Is the tongue high or low in the mouth cavity? etc.).
- Watch the video in which a native speaker explains the pronunciation of the sound [θ]. Explain the pronunciation of the sound to another student.

For the first and the second activities given above we recommend using the materials «Pronunciation Tips» from [bbclearnenglish.com](http://bbclearnenglish.com), which were created by speakers of standard British pronunciation and which are freely available on the internet.

For the third activity in video conference format it is advisable to divide the group of students into two session halls and demonstrate the video to only one subgroup. After that a representative of this subgroup explains the articulation of the new sound to the other subgroup. If students manage to reproduce the sound correctly, it can be concluded that the explanation is detailed and clear. If two new sounds are introduced at the lesson, the students of each subgroup watch a video with the explanation of the articulation of only one of these sounds. Afterwards, the subgroups share the information with each other.

Receptive-reproductive stage:

- Listen and repeat. Pay attention to the sound [ŋ].
- Listen to the text/dialogue/story and read it together with the speaker. Keep the same rhythm and tempo.
- Listen to the text/dialogue/story. Then read it out loud and record your voice.

The teacher video records students' speech for them to analyze their own pronunciation and the pronunciation of other undergraduates in individual work.

Reflective-analytical:

- Listen to the recording of your speech. Compare it with the original. Underline the words in which you made mistakes (transcript is provided).

- Practice reading the words that you mispronounced out loud.
- Listen to another student's recording. Compare it with the original. Underline the words which are mispronounced.
- Write a comment to this student with the recommendation of how to pronounce the words correctly.

All the activities at this stage are done individually. The teacher may upload the recorded videos with students' speech at the previous stage to the common group on social media or to the platform of distance education (e.g. Moodle). The students work in asynchronous format.

#### Self-improvement:

- Read the text/dialogue/story out loud again paying special attention to the pronunciation of the words in which you made mistakes. Record your voice.
- Read the text/dialogue/story out loud again following the recommendations in your group mates' comments. Record your voice.
- Listen to the recording and compare your pronunciation with the original. If you still make mistakes, try again.

The activities at this stage are also done individually. They make the process of developing future teachers' phonetic skills professionally oriented and enhance autonomous acquisition of English pronunciation.

In our opinion, in distance education the development of pronunciation skills following the proposed stages and activities facilitates trainee teachers' acquisition of English pronunciation and the ability to teach it to other people.

To verify the effectiveness of the devised set of techniques we conducted a pedagogical experiment whose hypothesis was formulated as follows: the development of future teachers' English pronunciation skills is more effective if the teacher 1) combines synchronous and asynchronous types of interaction; 2) demonstrates videos with the explanation of new sounds articulation by native speakers and with the use of these sounds in a communicative context; 3) uses activities that enable students to analyze phonological characteristics of sounds, to identify phonetic mistakes in one's own and other students' speech and give recommendations for improving pronunciation.

The verification of the hypothesis stipulated the necessity to set the objectives of experimental work: 1) to define the initial level of the students' pronunciation skills; 2) to conduct experimental teaching of English pronunciation based on the proposed stages and set of activities; 3) to define the achieved level of pronunciation skills; 5) to compare, analyze and interpret the received empirical data; 6) to make conclusions regarding the effectiveness of the developed techniques.

The experimental training involved 38 first-year students of H.S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University who train to become teachers of English. The only variable factor of the experiment was a set of activities. In experimental group 1 (EG1), which consisted of 19 students, at the reflective-analytical stage trainee teachers analyzed their own pronunciation with its further improvement. In experimental group 2

(EG2), which had the same number of students, the participants analyzed their group mates' pronunciation as well and made recommendations for its correction.

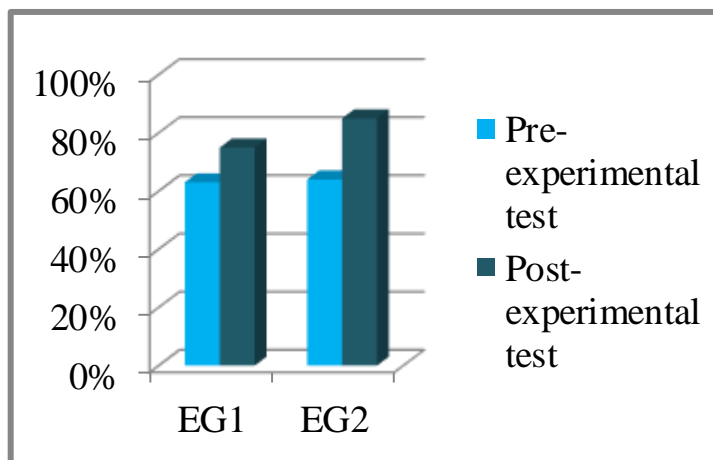
To define the participants' initial level of pronunciation skills we conducted a pre-experimental test. The students received a task to watch and read out loud a part of a TED-talk delivered by the speaker of British English Maisie Williams «Why talent carries you further than fame» which comprised 200 words. The participants recorded their speech while reading. We analyzed and assessed trainee teachers' pronunciation using the 100-point assessment system accepted at universities. For every word pronounced correctly the students received 0.5 point. It is necessary to emphasize that we considered phonetic (leading to accent) and phonological (affecting the meaning) mistakes equal since teachers' pronunciation must be as close to native speakers' one as possible.

The results of the pre-experimental test indicated that the average indices of pronunciation skills development of the students in EG1 and EG2 were 63% and 64% correspondingly. This proves the necessity of systematic development of trainee teachers' phonetic skills while teaching English at university.

The experimental training lasted 3 months (12 lessons). We followed the proposed stages and techniques of pronunciation skills development in distance education using the online video conferencing tool Zoom for synchronous types of activities and the distance education platform Moodle for individual work. In order to provide a communicative context we selected TED-talks delivered by speakers of British English. The contents of the talks corresponded to the level of first-year trainee teachers' proficiency in English. Special attention was devoted to the sounds which do not have equivalents in the native language (e.g. [w, r, ɪ, θ, ð, ʒ, æ]). However, we also analyzed the sounds which are, at first sight, similar to the native sounds but in fact differ from them significantly (e.g. [t, d, p, k]).

To define the participants' level of pronunciation skills at the final stage of the experimental training we conducted a post-experimental test. The students received a task to watch and read out loud another part of the talk chosen for the pre-experimental test which also consisted of 200 words. The participants recorded their own speech which we later analyzed and assessed. The analysis of the empirical data indicated the increase in the level of pronunciation skills development in both groups. In EG1 the index of the increase was 12% and in EG2 it was 21%.

On the basis of the comparison of the pre- and post-experimental tests results we built a diagram to visually represent the increase in the level of pronunciation skills in EG1 and EG2 (see Figure 1).



**Fig.1. Average indices of the level of trainee teachers' pronunciation skills before and after the experimental training**

The findings of the experiment enable us to make a conclusion that both variants of the sets of techniques are effective. Nevertheless, the use of activities based on analyzing not only one's own but other students' pronunciation as well and giving recommendations for correcting mistakes increase the effectiveness of the process of developing future teachers' phonetic skills. Its logical explanation could be that the participants in EG1 were not able to hear their own pronunciation mistakes; consequently, they failed to identify them in the recordings. The students in EG2 analyzed others' speech and identified mistakes that they themselves did not make. Moreover, after the experiment some of the participants from EG2 mentioned that they felt more responsible for correcting other students' pronunciation and were more diligent in doing the activities.

In conclusion, we analyzed the nature of pronunciation skills, formulated the requirements for developing trainee teachers' English pronunciation skills in distance education, defined the stages of professionally-oriented teaching of English pronunciation to students training to become teachers of English, devised a set of activities and conducted the pedagogical experiment to verify its effectiveness. The findings of the experiment confirmed the hypothesis and stipulated the necessity of implementing the activities for analysis and correction other people's pronunciation in the process of teaching future teachers English pronunciation.

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