

TEACHING WORD STRESS: RESULTS of EXPERIMENT

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The article is focused on the problem of teaching phonetic skills in Turkmen groups of students. The steps and results of the experimental training are described and analyzed.

Introduction. Possession of the sound structure of a language is a prerequisite for communication in any form. The ability to formulate your thoughts in accordance with the sound norms of the language is important not only for speaking, but also for understanding of spoken language. Thus, the phonetic side of the language becomes the first step and the basis on which direct live communication is built. The sound richness of a particular language also determines its specific features, often determining the degree of its recognition and attractiveness for representatives of other nations. Therefore, we can learn many languages by ear and name them without knowing a single word. At the same time, some people have individual preferences among languages, considering a particular language beautiful, meaning, of course, the sound. The role of a foreign language teacher in teaching students intercultural communication becomes much more complicated: the teacher must have socio-cultural knowledge about the country of the target language, have experience of intercultural communication, implying respect for another culture, and possess the ability to represent the culture of his country, correctly and appropriately, use sociocultural marked linguistic means.

Word stress in some cases causes a number of problems for foreign language learners. It concerns the difference between the English and Turkmen languages. English word stress is a complex phenomenon formed by interdependent components: loudness, pitch, length and vowel quality. The syllables in a word have different degrees of prominence. In English they generally distinguish three linguistically relevant degrees of stress: primary, secondary and weak. Some scholars also include tertiary stress, but the first classification is more acceptable for teaching English as a foreign language. According to its placement stress can be fixed or free. Both in English and in Russian word stress is not only free, but it is also shifting, it can change its position in different forms of the word. To define the position of word stress in an individual word it is helpful to consider the following factors: the phonological structure of a syllable (syllable weight), the number of syllables in the word, the morphological factor (if the word is simple, complex or compound) and the grammatical category the word belongs to. Stress is the pronunciation of one syllable or syllables of a word. The strength of this stress may vary according to intonation or to the quickness of speech. Pronounced in isolation word receives stress on the last syllable. If a word consists of one syllable then no additional emphasis is placed on its pronunciation. When suffixes are added to a word the stress falls on the last syllable. [1, p. 44].

Task formulation. Taking into account the peculiarities of the Turkmen and English languages and the difference in their word stress, we anticipate that the number of phonetic mistakes in students' speech will be fewer and the level of phonetic skills in word stress will grow, if the training: 1) includes specially prepared phonetic exercises; 2) takes place on a regular basis; 3) includes elements of teaching reading skills and transcription.

Methods of research. Experimental training included the following steps:

- 1) interview concerning the attitude of students to the level of their phonetic skills;
- 2) development, organization and conduct of a pre-experimental test in order to determine the level of word stress skills among Turkmen students before experimental training;
- 3) Experimental training per se;
- 4) post-experimental test;
- 5) analysis of the results of experimental training and assessment of the efficiency of the developed set of exercises;
- 6) questioning of students based on the results of experimental training.

Results and their discussion. Therefore, first we interviewed the students. The analysis of the data obtained in the course of the interview allows us to say that the majority of students in both groups need additional work to improve their phonetic skills. They also unanimously point out that phonetics is an obstacle in learning. However, students spoke about their level of phonetic skills as satisfactory. Perhaps this position is associated with insufficient understanding of the requirements for the level of mastering these skills. At the same time, it can be stated that both groups need specially organized work to improve phonetic skills.

The results of pre-experimental test are shown in Figure 1.

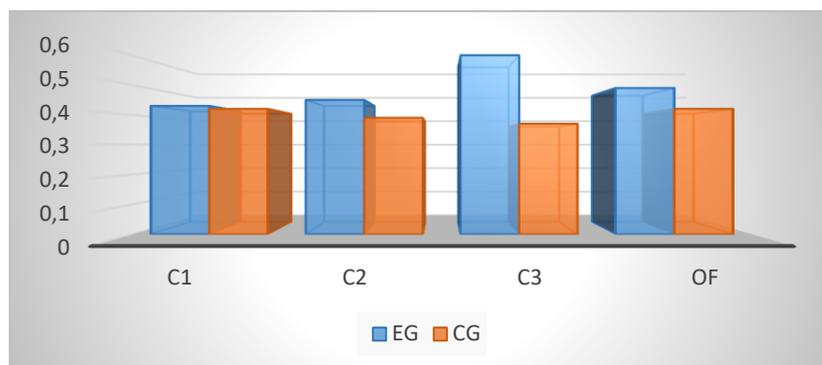


Figure 1. – Results of pre-experimental test in control group (CG) and experimental group (EG)

As you can see in the diagram, the students of the experimental group showed better results than the control group. In connection with the goals of the experimental study, it became necessary to develop criteria for assessing the formation of word stress skills used in the pre-experimental and post-experimental tests. The following criteria were identified:

- 1) adequate word stress when reading individual compound words (C1);
- 2) adequate word stress when reading words passing from one part of speech to another (C2);
- 3) adequate word stress when reading free and non-free word combinations (C3).

These criteria formed the basis for the development of tasks for the pre-experimental and post-experimental tests. The first task was aimed at testing the reading skills of individual compound words; the second and the third - reading of words passing from one part of speech to another; fourth and fifth - reading free and non-free word combinations. Non-variable learning conditions in the experimental and control groups included: duration of training (4 weeks); the same number of classes and their distribution in the schedule (6 hours per week); types and forms of checking the initial and final level of word stress skills; basic educational material (training was carried out according to the course book "New Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate"). The variable conditions included the methodology of work to improve the pronunciation skills of students (in the experimental group).

The results of the post-experimental test are show in Figure 2.

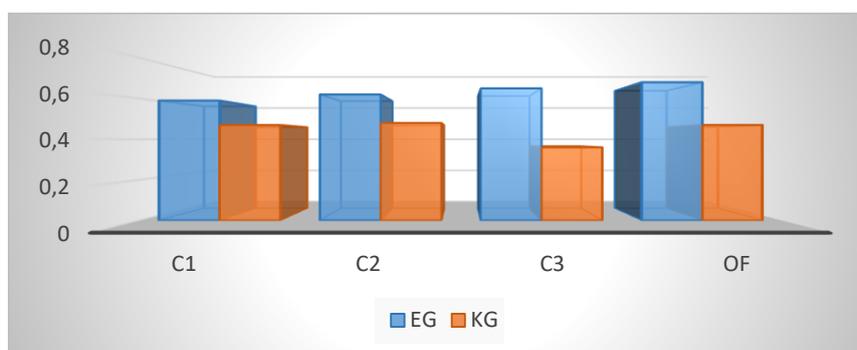


Figure 2. – Results of post-experimental test in control group (CG) and experimental group (EG)

As the result showed, the level of phonetic skills in the experimental group improved than that of the control group. Because of the experimental training, the effectiveness of the developed set of exercises was proved. Taking into account the peculiarities of the Turkmen and English languages and the difference in their word stress, we found out that the students in the experimental group make fewer mistakes, are more sure of their phonetic skills and not afraid to engage in the activities during classes. We have also noticed a significant improvement in their reading skills which is an important step forward in second language acquisition. Overall, the results obtained let us say that the hypothesis of the research has been proved.

REFERENCES

1. Larry, C. Turkmen reference grammar /C. Larry. – Germany : Wiesbaden Harrassowitz, 1998. – 44 p.