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IMPROVEMENT OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF RUSSIAN LEARNERS IN A RUSSIAN SCHOOL WITH THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE IMMERSION
MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

Having listener-friendly pronunciation is one of the ways to be understood and to communicate productively. The present thesis investigates the issues connected with the opportunities for obtaining listener-friendly pronunciation by the learners of English with the Russian background. The definition of the terms `pronunciation` and `accent`, a historical overview of the methods of teaching pronunciation, and the importance of teaching pronunciation are provided. Firstly, the paper aims to examine how English pronunciation skills of Russian learners can be improved. Secondly, it investigates whether the Estonian language could be a means in improving it.

Chapter 1 gives the definitions of pronunciation and accent, a historical overview of different methods and approaches to teaching pronunciation, and the importance of teaching pronunciation, the background information of the vowel systems of Estonian, Russian and English. Also, the reasons why the particular vowels have been chosen for pronunciation improvement are highlighted.

Chapter 2 introduces the aims of the study and research questions, methods, the number of participants, the materials and the procedure of research conducted in the scope of the present paper. A group of 22 8-form students divided into two English language learning groups from Tartu Annelinn Gymnasium were involved in the study and participated in dictation sessions on the initial and final stages held in September 2013 and March 2014. One of the groups dealt with exercises, critical listening, audio recordings and analysis of their speech during the period from September 2013 to March 2014. While the other group was not involved in this extensive phonetic work. The main aim of the research was to find out whether it is reasonable to use the distinctive features of the vowel system of the Estonian language to improve the problem areas in perception, identification and production of the particular English sounds - specifically the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] and the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:] by Russian learners in a school with the Estonian language immersion. Furthermore, the thesis is concerned with the perception and identification of the three vowel contrasts, namely, [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u], where the length is of major importance. The data collected during the final stage of the research were compared to the initial results. The results of listening to dictations and students` critical listening tests were the means for collecting the necessary data. The reference section includes 53 sources, and five appendices present sample materials and links.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IPA   **-** International Phonetic Alphabet

CEFR **-** Common European Framework of References for Languages

EIL   - English as an international language

ELT   - English Language Teaching

RP   - Received Pronunciation

L1   - Language 1 (native)

L2   - Language 2 (foreign)

cps   **-** cycles per second

Hz   - the unit of frequency in the International System of Units (SI). It is defined as the number of   cycles per second of a periodic phenomenon

INTRODUCTION

   The role of the English language in the contemporary world has significantly changed over the last decades. In the new millennium it has become one of the most important means of international communication. The English language has become not only the language of the world community, which means that all nations can communicate with each other by means of English but also the means of scientific progress, which is extremely vital. English has become a *lingua franca* of the contemporary world. This means a growing number of exchanges between native speakers and foreign users as well as between non-natives with different first language backgrounds. These users have various degrees of competence resulting from their different goals and aspirations. As regards the phonetic level of the language some strive to sound like native speakers for professional reasons. Others have a strictly practical goal, treating pronunciation merely as a vehicle for getting their message across without hindrance (Dziubalska-Kołaczyk & Przedlacka 2008).

   Chesnokova (2008), a Russian educator, considers that a language as a means of communication has appeared and existed first of all as a sound language and acquisition of pronunciation skills which form a compulsory condition for communication in any of language forms. Moreover, Tergujeff (2007) underlines that "each language has its own sound system consisting of sounds typical only of that language and continues that differences in sound systems cause problems in learning to perceive and produce a foreign language." Birner (2012) emphasises that "the speech of non-native English speakers may exhibit pronunciation characteristics that later result in the imperfection of the pronunciation of English sounds, either by transferring the phonological rules from their mother tongue into their English speech (interference) or creating false pronunciation of English sounds not found in the

learner`s native language". As far as Russian learners of English are concerned, they transfer the phonological rules from the Russian language into the English language, which creates a distinctive accent. The pronunciation of the Russian sounds has very specific features in comparison with the English sounds and that fact hinders the understanding of the English spoken by Russians. Consequently, according to Gilakjani (2012), "/…/ teaching pronunciation should be a priority because language is primarily a means of communication and this communication should be understood by all. If one does not strive for a common pronunciation, one runs the risk of not being understood by the target audience". It can be frustrating and demotivating for students if they have repeated experiences where communication breaks down because of problems with their English pronunciation. This is perhaps especially true for those who have a good command of other aspects of language such as vocabulary and grammar.

Abayasekara (n.d.) in his article Rope Lesson writes that such floundering communications can lead to loss of time, loss of money, and loss of good will. Even more significantly, in life and death situations such as calls to emergency personnel, such communication failures can be life-threatening. The demonstration of appropriate pronunciation skills takes place at the oral parts of the Years 9 and 12 National Examinations and our students want to accomplish the oral part of both the exams successfully. Pronunciation is one of the aspects that are assessed. In the USA, for example, there are assessments for international teaching assistants, but in other types of language programmes, and especially in Canada, people tend to avoid assessing pronunciation. If pronunciation were tested, it would be taught (Derwing 2010). In other words, if pronunciation of our students is assessed at the Year 9 and 12 National Examinations, it should be paid the same great attention to as it is paid, for example, to grammar and vocabulary. As Hewings (2004: 19),

asserts, in some situations the relative neglect to pronunciation might be justified, for example, if examination syllabus students are following emphasises reading and writing. Unfortunately, the importance of pronunciation is not stressed in the Estonian National Curriculum, only the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) proficiency grids have a detailed description of competences in pronunciation.

Likewise, Muru and Õispuu (1996) warn that if pronunciation is wrong, it is very difficult to retrain it later. That is why studying a foreign language it is essential to pay attention to pronunciation from the very beginning. In addition, teaching pronunciation is crucial since this is the main source of understanding; therefore, teaching pronunciation is essential for our students. Gilakjani (2012) adds that pronunciation work gives the students more knowledge of how the language works because after all, if the students know the language but cannot communicate in it, it is a great pity.

The abovementioned aspects have been the impetus for the research and finding the ways how to make English spoken by Russians more acceptable. Cook (2001) claims that learning to pronounce a foreign language means building up new pronunciation habits and overcoming the bias of L1. It is believed that to build these new habits could be possible by the use of some phonetic features of the Estonian language. Hence, the aim of the research was to deal with the improvement of the English pronunciation of Russian learners whose native language is Russian and who are studying in a Russian school with the Estonian language immersion. A lot of our students are Russian-Estonian bilinguals. The more so, as there are some theories, for example, about interlingual interference, which claims that the second foreign language acquires phonetic features of the first foreign language when learners transfer similarities automatically (Article Unit 4). Moreover, Ellisterri (1995: 97) dealing with the studies of bilingual speakers` perception of sounds in their non-dominant language, presents

the evidence found by Mack that "bilingual production can be more accurate than perception". The influence of the first language or sometimes the language in which the students are educated is a major influence on their accent in English (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 14). Thus, it becomes obvious that Estonian is likely to influence Russian learners` pronunciation and perception of the particular English sounds.

The main interest lays in how Russian learners with the Estonian language immersion can perceive the front fully open unrounded English [æ] and the mixed mid-open unrounded long English [ɜ:] and improve their pronunciation skills concerning the abovementioned sounds through the pronunciation of Estonian. This choice has been made due to the frequent misunderstanding and misuse of those vowels. Furthermore, the thesis is concerned with the perception and identification of the three following vowel contrasts [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u] as the length of vowels is not phonemic in the Russian language. The paper investigated how Russian learners can identify, distinguish and produce Estonian vowels, and whether the identification and production of Estonian sounds help Russian students identify and produce English vowels.

The present paper is organised into two main chapters. The first chapter provides theoretical background of the research. The subchapter 1.1 gives the definition of pronunciation and accent. The subchapter 1.2 provides a theoretical overview of different approaches to teaching English pronunciation in the past and present, subchapter 1.3 highlights the importance of teaching pronunciation. Subchapter 1.4 gives the brief background information on the languages with three corresponding acoustic tables and the comparison of the Russian, English and Estonian vowel systems and that is the reason why the Estonian language could be used as a means for Russian learners of English. The second

chapter contains the research project of activities carried out in class. The aims of the study and the research questions are introduced in subchapter 2.1. Subchapter 2.2 then continues with the explanation of methods, the introduction of participants, materials used and the procedure. Subchapter 2.3 presents tables with the collected data and the analyses. The following subchapter 2.4 focuses on the discussion of the results and subchapter 2.5 suggests ideas for further research. General findings are summarised in the conclusion, which is followed by a list of references and appendices with sample materials.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Subchapter 1.1 deals with the definition of pronunciation and accent. Subchapter 1.2 provides a historical overview of how pronunciation has been treated in language teaching over the past hundred years and some contemporary approaches are introduced. Subchapter 1.3 highlights the importance of teaching pronunciation. Subchapter 1.4 gives the background information of the vowel systems of Russian, English and Estonian. Subchapter 1.5 deals with the comparison of the Russian and English vowel systems and mentions some pronunciation mistakes made by Russian learners. The Estonian and English vowel systems are compared in subchapter 1.6. Also, the reasons why the front, fully open, unrounded English [æ] and the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long English [ɜ:] and the three vowel contrasts, namely, [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u] have been chosen in order to improve Russian learners` pronunciation are given in the same chapter.

1.1   What is pronunciation and what is an accent

The terms pronunciation and accent stand together in numerous books, research papers and articles devoted to phonetics and pronunciation. That is why it is important first to define these two terms. Also, it is essential to mention why it is possible or necessary to get rid of an accent and what model of the English pronunciation teachers are advised to use.

To begin with, pronunciation refers to how we produce the sounds that we use to make meaning when we speak. It includes the particular consonants and vowels of a language (segments), aspects of speech beyond the level of the individual segments, such as stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing, (suprasegmental aspects), and how the voice is projected (voice quality). Although authors often talk about them as if they were separate, they all

work together in combination when we speak, so that difficulties in one area may affect another, and it is the combined result that makes someone's pronunciation easy or difficult to understand (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 11).

Furthermore, Cook (1996) defines pronunciation as a set of habits of producing sounds and the habit of producing a sound is acquired by repeating it over and over again and by being corrected when it is pronounced incorrectly. Learning to pronounce a second language means building up new pronunciation habits and overcoming the interference of L1. A broad definition of pronunciation includes both suprasegmental and segmental features. Although these different aspects of pronunciation are treated in isolation in the present research, according to Gilakjani (2012), it is important to remember that they all work in combination when we speak, and are therefore usually best learned as an integral part of the spoken language. Abayasekara in the article Rope Lesson also writes that pronunciation refers to the way people produce individual sounds and combinations of sounds. These sounds are produced by correctly moving your articulators: your mouth, your tongue, your lips and forming the right mouth cavity, which includes the palate and the teeth. If speakers are non-native English speakers, the way they tend to pronounce some consonants and vowels may be different from the way the Standard English sounds are pronounced.

As far as the problem of an accent is concerned and whether it is possible to get rid of it, a senior lecturer from the University of Leeds Gupta (n.d.) explains it in the following way: an accent is a way of pronouncing a language. It is therefore impossible to speak without an accent. Everyone has an accent. Your accent results from how, where, and when you learned the language you are speaking and it gives impressions about you to other people. People change their accents, often without noticing it. Accents are not fixed. Our accents change over time as our needs change and as our sense of who we are changes and develops. Usually this

happens naturally, and often unconsciously. Accents can be expected to change until we are in our early twenties. To change your accent you have to want to. There is not a single correct accent of English. There is no neutral accent of English. All speakers of English need to cope with many different aspects and learn how to understand them. Some accents are associated with social groups who have high prestige (the kinds of accents spoken by highly educated people, for example), but there are also many of high prestige accents, all of them regionally based. The accents that are traditionally taught to non-native speakers of English are high prestige accents from various places.

Corrigan (2005), describes three major components that make up an accent: sounds (consonants and vowels), rhythm (stressed and unstressed syllables), and intonation (the rise and fall of pitch in a sentence). Concerning Russians, he advises them firstly, to pay attention to the length of the vowel while they are trying to say something and, secondly, to draw their attention to the articulation of the vowel, because native speakers create impact and emotion through their vowel sounds. So it is necessary for the sake of proper articulation, but it is also a leveraging point for powerful speakers.

An accent itself is not a problem. Mutt (1963: 41) accentuates that "no two people use precisely the same sounds in speaking because each person has his own configuration of the vowel tract. Each set of speech organs is slightly different and gives a special quality to the sounds uttered". We all speak with an accent of some kind, and usually this reflects the area of the world where we grew up, the other languages that we learned there, or how and where we were educated. It is only when our accent is particularly strong and unfamiliar to the people we talk to that it becomes an issue. The speech of adult language learners often bears very strong traces of their first (or sometimes the second or third) language, because they use instinctively what they know about these languages to make sense of learning and speaking a

new foreign language. In our case this is English. It is more difficult for an adult to 'hear' exactly what English sounds are like and to speak using these sounds and rhythms for themselves. These traces affect their accent. It is possible that a strong accent may be perfectly intelligible and may not be an obstacle to understanding, particularly if we are familiar with such an accent. However, a strong accent may also mean that it is not understood what a speaker is saying, or that understanding what he / she is saying takes a lot of effort, that is, the interlocutor`s load is high. This is when having an accent becomes an issue (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 13).

David Crystal (1995: 255) warns that the fact that people speak in different accents means that, from time to time, there may occur ambiguities. A word in one accent will be perceived as a quite different word in another. Usually, the context sorts things out – but not always. Gimson (1981: 43) in his turn mentions that, for example, the meaning can be resolved by the context in the case of a confusion of [æ] and [ʌ]. Some non-native English speakers think that in order to be better understood they need to lose their accent and adopt the accent of the native English speakers around them as they consider it to be a perfect accent, which is arduous and unnecessary as Abayasekara (n.d.) stresses in the article Rope Lesson.

When it comes to teaching English as a foreign language, teachers should bear in mind the need for making sure that students can always be understood and say understandably what they want to say. Students need to master "good pronunciation, not perfect accents". Harmer (1993: 184) underlines that our students should not sound like native speakers, they need not be perfect that just by listening to them teachers would assume that they were British or American or Australian. Teachers should be happy if their students can at least make themselves understood. The students in turn should be able to use pronunciation which is good enough for them to be always understood. If their pronunciation is not up to this standard, it is

thought that there is a serious danger that they will fail to communicate effectively Abayasekara (n.d.) in his article Rope Lesson adds that clarity is more important than accent. Gordon (2012) supports the opinions mentioned above and advises developing intelligible speech which is currently sought. Teachers should lead their students in the direction of obtaining "good pronunciation" or "acceptable pronunciation", according to Gilakjani (2011), when other people can understand what he/she says and the speaker`s English is pleasant to listen to, or to help students achieve, as Gilbert (2008: 1,41) asserts, "listener-friendly pronunciation".

Likewise, in order to help our students to obtain listener-friendly pronunciation the answer to the question what model of English we should use depends on what models our students want to use and what models we are able to provide as teachers. Gimson (1981: 92) states that when it is a question of teaching English as a second language, there is clearly much greater adherence to one of the two main models. According to his knowledge, most teaching textbooks describe either British RP (Received Pronunciation) or General American Pronunciation, and allegiances to one or the other tend to be traditional or geographical: thus, for instance, European countries continue on the whole to teach RP (Received Pronunciation). In addition, students need to have an accent that is close to a regionally recognized standard, a heavy accent can result in negative judgements about speaker`s personality and competence, so they are suggested turning on TV channels like CNN International, BBC, or Sky News.

Furthermore, Hewings (2004: 12), accentuates that teachers making a decision on what model of English pronunciation to teach their students, should consider a number of questions. For example, in what context the students will be using English after the course or after finishing school. It should also be taken into account what variety of pronunciation predominates in teaching materials available for teachers. Published coursebooks and

supplementary textbooks have accompanying recordings and these are used for listening activities and the speakers provide a model of pronunciation for students. Hewings (2004: 13) adds that in most classrooms the English pronunciation that students hear most and are asked to imitate most frequently is that of the teacher. On the whole, the standard of pronunciation to which the students aspire or which the teachers of Tartu Annelinn Gymnasium have selected as a goal for the students and pronunciation found on published recordings (Longman Education) is RP. During the present research the students trying to improve difficult sounds used on-line dictionaries on which the speakers provide a model of RP pronunciation (for example, Macmillan Dictionary and dictionary.cambridge.org).

Learners do not need to aim at a particular accent, but they do need to develop their own accent which is close to a standard variety, because if learners are close to the standard, they can always communicate, and their English will be pleasant (Gilakjani 2011). To conclude, pronunciation can be taught whereas accent is non-trainable because accent acquisition takes place only in communicative, real-life linguistic interaction (Pardo 2004: 8). In the following subchapter methods and approaches of teaching pronunciation are discussed.

1.2   Methods and approaches of teaching pronunciation

The history of teaching pronunciation in English is a study in extremes, according to Levis (2005: 369). He states that some approaches to teaching, such as the Reformed Method and Audiolingualism, elevated pronunciation to a pinnacle of importance, while other approaches, such as the cognitive movement and early communicative language teaching, mostly ignored pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Godwin 1996). Levis (2005)

continues that currently, it seems to be clear that pronunciation deserves neither fate, either to be unfairly elevated to the central skill in language learning or to be banished to irrelevance.

Celce-Murcia et al (2007: 3-7) describe the methods and approaches of teaching pronunciation as follows. To start with, in the Direct Method foreign language instruction, which first gained popularity in the late 1800s and early 1900s, pronunciation was taught through intuition and imitation; according to the Naturalistic Methods learners had to learn solely by listening before any speaking was allowed. The first linguistic or analytic contribution to teaching of pronunciation emerged in the 1890s as part of the Reform Movement in language teaching. This movement was influenced greatly by phoneticians such as Henry Sweet, Wilhelm Viëtor, and Paul Passy, who developed the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). They advocated the notions and practices two of which suggested that learners should be given phonetic training to establish good speech habits and the spoken form of a language was primary and should be taught first.

In the 1940s and 1950s in both Audio-lingual and Oral approach classrooms, pronunciation became very important and was taught explicitly from the start. Teachers used the IPA and charts that demonstrated the articulation of sounds. They also started using the minimal pair drill – drills that use words that differ by a single sound in the same position. This technique, based on the concept of the phoneme as a minimally distinctive sound, was used for both listening practice and guided oral production. Furthermore, in the 1960s the Cognitive approach was introduced. Sound colour charts and Fidel words charts were used. (The Fidel is a set of rectangle charts organised along articulatory lines and presenting all the possible spelling patterns for each sound in the language using the colour code. Sounds appear in the same colour and in the same location on each rectangle.) Colour word charts were also widely used, the words in which are grouped semantically in a way that allows a teacher to

"silently dictate" or tap out phrases, which are then practiced orally and/or written down as a dictation. This Silent Way appeared to have a special focus on teaching pronunciation, and many language educators agree that the principle of sound-colour correspondence, which the Silent Way invoked, provided learners with an "inner resource to be used" (Stevich 1980: 46), "which helped to establish a true feel for the language, its dictation, rhythm, and melody" (Blair 1991: 32). Moreover, rooted in the humanistic client-centred learning Community language learning is a method developed by Charles A. Curran (1976) according to which a key tool of the method is a tape recorder. The words, phrases given by the teacher are recorded, students` pronunciation is compared to the teacher`s and then improved.

The Communicative Approach (Celce-Murcia, et al (2007), which took hold in the 1980s and is currently dominant in language teaching, holds that since the primary purpose of language is communication, the use of language to communicate should be central in all classroom instruction. According to Gilbert (2008), "pronunciation has traditionally been taught with a goal of "speaking like a native speaker, but this is not practical. In fact, it is a recipe for discouragement of both teachers and students. This has been referred to as "the perfection trap" (Morley). A more practical approach is to aim to " listener-friendly pronunciation" (Kjellin 1998)". Celce-Murcia, et al (2007) claim that nowadays people have to pronounce to be understood and a person should understand the words pronounced.

At present, the following techniques and practice materials are being used to teach pronunciation: Listen and Repeat (a technique from the Direct Method, e.g., *She sells sea shells on the sea shore.),* Phonetic Training (a technique from the Reform Movement, e.g., using the bcorrect IPA symbols when identifying the correct vowel (leg-[e] / lag-[æ]), Minimal Pair Drills (a technique introduced during Audio-lingual era, e.g., *beg-bag/ ten-tan*), and Recording of learners´ production. For example, Frazer (2001) supports the idea of critical

listening. She explains that it is ideal if learners can listen to recordings of their own voices, and especially if they can be recorded saying similar things several times, and then listen again to see if they can pick the various pronunciation. She adds that critical listening is an important part of the communicative approach because it involves learners` listening to learners` pronunciation, as opposed to native speakers, and learning to judge whether the pronunciation is "acceptable" or not. Communicative approach by Frazer (2001) is a set of principles by which practices and materials can be devised to fit any particular pronunciation teaching context useful for teaching a particular group in a particular situation. The communicative approach therefore presents criteria not just for devising teaching materials and curriculum, but also for judging on the usefulness of the existing materials for teaching pronunciation in a particular context. Many existing methods and materials are effective, or at least have good aspects and components (Frazer 2001: 10 –11). While improving Russian learners´ pronunciation skills during the present research the Direct method (Listen and Repeat exercises), and Audio-lingual methodology (Minimal Pair Drills) were used. Harmer (2001: 188) states that contrasting two sounds which are similar and often confused is a popular way of getting students to concentrate on specific aspects of pronunciation. Also, communicative approach was used and considered effective – critical listening that is advocated by Frazer (2001) was practised.

Moreover, the emphasis in the pronunciation instruction has been largely given to getting the sound right at the word level dealing with words in isolation or with words in very controlled and contrived sentence-level environments. Today`s pronunciation curriculum thus seeks to identify the most important aspects of both segmentals (the particular consonants and vowels of a language) and suprasegmentals (stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing). In addition, there is also the issue of voice quality setting (pitch level), vowel space, tongue

position, and the degree of muscular activity that contribute to the overall sound quality or accent associated with the language.

Many Russian educators state that Russian learners have trouble with learning an appropriate pronunciation of English. For example, the Russian educator Chesnokova (2008) claims that in circumstances with certain speech tasks in real communicative situations there cannot be equal partners mainly because of poor pronunciation and monotonous intonation. And as a means of improving Russian learners` pronunciation she suggests a method of sequential correction according to which the aim of methodology is to give certain phrases with phonetically difficult words that are placed in different surroundings in the phrases that are gradually made longer and more complicated. For example, *sit/seat: don`t sit / that seat: Don´t sit on that seat!* The idea of importance of improving pronunciation of Russians is also stated by another Russian educator Shestov (2012) who writes that ”/…/ if your English pronunciation is inappropriate, this leads to not hearing what was actually been said to us. People cannot repeat what has been said. In addition, people cannot completely understand what has been said. Somehow we wait for the Russian variety of English and as a result people attempt to speak `pseudo-language`/…/”. According to his methodology, the main stress should be placed on acquiring skills of perception. His ideas are as follows: listen to more English, do slow silent reading, then read out loud, and rewrite texts pronouncing each word out loud. He adopted the ideas presented by the phonetician Daniel Jones, who claimed that the skill in pronunciation cannot be acquired without the skill in hearing, i. e. the skill in the correct recognition of sounds and a good memory for sound qualities, intonation and the other elements of spoken language. The student should be trained to bring to his mind correct acoustic images of the sounds he has to learn; he should not confuse one sound of the foreign language, nor should he identify foreign sounds with those of his mother tongue.

Consequently, a great deal of time should be devoted to "ear-training exercises" (Jones 1978: 182). In addition to ear-training, students are required to do a great deal of mouth-training to enable them to get into the way of using their vocal organs in unaccustomed foreign ways. A teacher plays a huge role in being continually on look-out for unexpected difficulties for which no suggestions are to be found in books. (Jones 1978: 183).

1.3   The importance of teaching pronunciation

As noted above, Jones (1978: 182–183), stressing "ear-training" and "mouth-training", states the idea of the importance of teaching pronunciation. Below, more authors in whose works the ideas of importance of teaching pronunciation are cultivated are mentioned. It will be seen from the discussion below that they explain why to teach pronunciation is challenging and claim that a lot of teachers neglect pronunciation in their teaching practices Also, the question what aspects of pronunciation should be taught arises and when.

Brown (1991: 1) opens his important anthology on pronunciation teaching as follows: "pronunciation has sometimes been referred to as the "poor relation" of the English language teaching (ELT) world. It is an aspect of language which is often given little attention, if not completely ignored, by the teacher in the classroom" (Pardo 2004: 7). Pronunciation is important because it does not matter how good learners` vocabulary or grammar is if no one can understand them when they speak! And to be understood, learners need a practical mastery of the sounds, rhythms and cadences of English and how they fit together in connected speech. Learners with good pronunciation will be understood even if they make errors in other areas, while those with unintelligible pronunciation will remain unintelligible, even if they have expressed themselves using an extensive vocabulary and perfect grammar.

People are likely to assume that they do not know much English, and – even worse – they are incompetent or stupid. However, many learners find that pronunciation is one of the most difficult aspects of English to master, and feel the benefit of explicit help right from the beginning of their language learning (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 11). Unfortunately, pronunciation seems to be a perennial hot topic for language learners, and yet many teachers find that it is not given the attention it deserves in teacher training courses. There is often insufficient time to investigate the issues that learners face or to explore how to approach pronunciation in the classroom or how to make the best use of the variety of techniques and activities for focussing on pronunciation (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 6).

Cook (2001: 86) notes that in language teaching, pronunciation has been seen as peripheral compared to central aspects such as vocabulary or grammar. The lack of emphasis on pronunciation in language teaching has hampered not just the students` ability to pronounce words, but also their fundamental capacity to process and learn the language. She advises to take pronunciation more seriously, not just for its own sake, but as the basis for speaking and comprehending. But Ur (1996: 55) has an opposite point of view and claims that probably the deliberate teaching of pronunciation is less essential than the teaching of grammar or vocabulary. Nevertheless, she adds that this does not mean it should not be done at all and recommends occasional short sessions directing learners` attention to and giving practice in aspects of pronunciation that are clearly problematic for them, as well as casual correction in the course of other activities. From Gimson`s (1981: 299) point of view, the teacher should deal systematically with the teaching of pronunciation, even though he may be forced to postpone the correction of some mistakes which occur in the early stages. Consistent attention to pronunciation in regular lessons helps to reinforce the message that pronunciation is very important (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 21). According to Harmer (1993: 186), a teacher has to

decide when to include pronunciation teaching into lesson sequence. For example, sometimes students may listen to a longer tape, working on listening skills before moving to the pronunciation part of the sequence, sometimes students may work on aspects of vocabulary before going on word stress, sounds, and spelling. At other times students spend a few minutes on a particular aspect of intonation or on the contrast between two or more sounds. Many teachers get students to focus on pronunciation issues as an integral part of the lesson. When students listen to a tape, for example, one of the things which could be done is draw their attention to the pronunciation features on the tape, if necessary having students work on sounds that are especially prominent.

Of course, teaching pronunciation involves a variety of challenges. To begin with, teachers often find that they do not have enough time in class to give proper attention to this aspect of English instruction. When they do find the time to address pronunciation, the instruction often amounts to the presentation and practice of a series of tedious and seemingly unrelated topics. Drilling sounds over and over again (e.g., minimal pair work) often leads to discouraging results, and discouraged students and teachers end up wanting to avoid pronunciation altogether. There are also psychological factors that affect the learning of pronunciation in ways that are not so true of studying grammar or vocabulary. For one thing, the most basic elements of speaking are deeply personal. Our sense of self and community are bound up in the speech-rhythms of our L1. These rhythms were learned in the first year of life and are deeply rooted in the minds of students. Therefore, it is common for students to feel uneasy when they hear themselves speak with the rhythm of L2. They find that they "sound foreign" to themselves, and this is troubling for them. Although the uneasiness is usually unconscious, it can be a major barrier to improved intelligibility in the L2 (Gilbert 2008: 1).

Interestingly, Pardo (2004: 6) in her article claims that many teachers remain sceptical about the teacheability of pronunciation and continue to consider explicit pronunciation instruction of relatively little importance in their practice.

Unfortunately, the word *pronunciation* [italics mine] tends to make people think exclusively of sounds that get confused, which has traditionally led to dependence on minimal pair drills. Both because this is inherently an unengaging activity, and because the results tend to be discouraging, it takes enormous effort on the part of the teacher to keep a class enthusiastic. Also, teachers tend to think the subject is very technical, since it is often presented that way in teacher training courses. Some teachers try hard to teach pronunciation as if it were a course in phonetics, and this also tends to discourage both teachers and students. Some course books present impractical stress and intonation rules, further burdening the teacher. Actually, the core prosodic structure of spoken English is quite simple and requires little technical terminology. If teachers become aware of the teaching pronunciation importance of discourse intonation as a simple foundation system, pronunciation becomes much more rewarding for both teachers and students (Gilbert 2008: 42).

According to Derwing (2010), in recent years several researchers and practitioners have pointed out that pronunciation seems to be the orphan of second language research and teaching, and it tends to be neglected in the second language classroom. She also claims that more people are likely to avoid dealing with pronunciation altogether and that "/…/the phenomenon noted by Otto Jespersen in 1904 that teachers are worried about not preparing for teaching pronunciation and incorporating some pronunciation activities into their regular language classrooms is still strong/…/ "(Derwing 2010: 24). She (2010) gives an example that in Canada they could concentrate more on conversational strategies while people are in their language courses. The focus right now is heavily weighed to grammar, reading and

writing, but if people came out of those courses with stronger speaking skills, they would have a heightened willingness to communicate. In addition, she suggests that pronunciation could be better incorporated into L2 curriculum and better assessed.

According to Levis (2005: 369), to a large extent, the importance of pronunciation has always been determined by ideology and intuition rather than research. Teachers have intuitively decided which features have the greatest effect on clarity and which are learnable in a classroom setting. Derwing and Munro, according to Levis (2005), recognizing this tendency towards teachers` intuition in determining classroom priorities, make an appeal for a carefully formulated research agenda to define how particular features actually affect speaker intelligibility. That such an appeal is needed suggests, in Derwing and Murso`s works, that instructional materials and practices of pronunciation "are still heavily influenced by common sense intuitive notions and that such intuitions cannot resolve many of the critical questions that face classroom instructions/…/" (Levis 2005: 370). He adds that "/…/ pronunciation teachers have emphasized suprasegmentals rather than segmentals in promoting intelligibility (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Morley, 1991), despite paucity of research evidence for this belief (Hahn, 2004)". Recent carefully designed studies have shown some support for the superiority of suprasegmental instruction in ESL contexts (e.g., Derwing & Rossiter 2005). Also, wider availability of software that makes suprasegmentals` discourse functions more accessible to teachers and learners will encourage work with suprasegmentals. However, the importance of suprasegmrntals for communication in English as an international language (EIL) is uncertain (Jenkins 2000; Levis 1999).

Gordon (2012) considers that some studies suggest more attention to suprasegmentals (or prosody) and not just segmentals (i.e. vowels and consonants) in the instructions, as "suprasegmentals seem to play a major role in what is perceived as clear and intelligible

speech." Correct pronunciation is often a later step in the process of teaching English as L2. However, a focus on the correct articulation of vowels can significantly improve listening and comprehension skills as well as articulatory skills. Introducing the phonetic properties of vowels is relatively easy. L2 teachers can train students to listen to vowel distinctions and teach the articulatory properties of vowels, strengthening students' listening and articulatory skills. The focus on vowel sounds also supports the instruction in the stress patterns of English, allowing students to more easily recognize individual words within sentences (McCombs 2006). Moreover, both Harmer (2001, 183) and Hewings (2004: 10 – 11) state that pronunciation teaching is very important and this not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features, but can also improve their speaking immeasurably. "Teachers should pay a lot of attention to those areas of pronunciation with which their students experience more problems, for example, there are many individual sounds which can cause difficulty to L2 learners (Harmer,2001: 183)". In other words, they support the idea of being reasonable to start improving Russian students` pronunciation on the segmental level.

There is no simple answer to the question what aspects of pronunciation are most important. It is important for learners to attend to any aspect of their pronunciation that improves their intelligibility and helps them minimise miscommunication. What exactly a learner will find most difficult about English pronunciation will vary from learner to learner, and the influence of their L2 plays an important role, as we saw in the previous chapter. However, in general, it is essential that learners attend to both those aspects of pronunciation which relate to larger units of speech such as stress, rhythm, intonation and voice quality (suprasegmental aspects) and to how the various sounds of English are pronounced (segmental aspects) (Yates 2009: 18). Dalton and Seidlhofer (2001: 130) draw teachers` attention to the

fact that when it comes to teaching and learning of the sounds of the target language, the problem could arise how to make sure that particular sounds occur in a sufficient concentration to be noticed while at the same time avoid meaningless drills. In this case Brown`s table can help (Brown 1991: 114) it provides a rank ordering of vowels and consonants to guide teachers in deciding which segments their students may need to work on. The table presented below (Fig.1.1) takes the form of two rough-and-ready 10-point scales, one for vowels and one for consonants.

Vowels   Consonants

10	/e , æ/	10	/p, b/
	/æ, ʌ/		/p, f/
	/æ, ɒ/		/m, n/
	/ʌ, ɒ/		/n, l/
	/ɔ: , əʊ/		/l, n/
9	/e, ɪ /	9	/f, h/
	/e, eɪ/		/t, d/
	/ɑ: , aɪ /		/k, g/
	/ ɜ:, əʊ/		
8	/i:, ɪ/	8	/w, v/
			/s,z/
7		7	/b, v/
			/f, v/
			/ð, z/
			/s, ʃ/
6	/ɔ: , ɜ:/	6	/v, ð/
	/ ɒ, əʊ /		/s, ʒ/
5	/ɑ:, ʌ/	5	/θ , ð/
	/ɔ: , ɒ/		/θ, s/

	/ ɜ:, ʌ/		/ð, d/
			/z, dʒ/
			/n, ŋ/
4	/e, eə/	4	/θ, t/
	/æ, ɑ:/		
	/ɑ, ɒ/		
	/ɔ:, ʊ/		
	/ɜ:, e/		
3	/i:, ɪə/	3	/tʃ, dʒ/
	/ɑ:, aʊ/		
	/u:, ʊ/		
2	/ ɪə, eə/	2	/tʃ , ʃ/
			/ ʃ, ʒ /
			/j, ʒ /
1	/ɔ:, ɔɪ/	1	/f, θ/
	/u , ʊə/		/dʒ, j/

Fig. 1.1: Rank ordering of conflations according to importance (Brown 1991:114)

In Figure 1.1, number 10 represents maximal importance, and number 1 minimal importance, based on the factors of cumulative frequency, probability of occurrence, occurrence and stigmatization in native accents. The sounds chosen for improvement of the pronunciation of Russian learners occupy the following places in Brown`s table. Rank 10 [e] / [æ] is a very important contrast which must therefore figure in pronunciation work. The contrast [i:] / [i] belongs to rank 8, contrasts [ɔ:] / [ɜ:] to rank 6 and [ɔ:] / [ɒ] to rank 5. Two last contrasts occupy the middle place of importance in Brown `s table. The contrast [u:] / [u] in rank 3 is of least importance. This means that teachers, working on the pronunciation of their students, should pay more attention to the contrasts [e] / [æ], [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɜ:] and [ɔ:] /

[ɒ] and to the contrast [u:] / [u] could be drawn less attention to. Harmer (1993: 186 –187) also cultivates the idea of working with sounds and he often asks students to focus on one particular sound, which allows demonstrating how it is formed and how it can be spelt.

Lastly, as phoneticians have different opinions on which level to teach pronunciation: on segmental or suprasegmental or on both and there are also supporters of teaching pronunciation on the segmental level only. The idea that it is possible to work on and try to improve the pronunciation of Russian learners of English on the segmental level was cultivated by the author of the present paper. The sounds which cause a lot of problems for Russian learners of English and which are to be improved are described in the following subchapter after the description and comparison of the vowel systems of English, Russian and Estonian.

1.4   Background information on the vowel systems of English, Russian and Estonian

This subchapter provides a brief overview of the three vowel systems of three languages to clarify the perception and production tasks involved. Since the study is dealing with English studied by Russian learners and who are simultaneously acquiring Estonian, it is useful to outline the phonetic systems of the three languages: English, Russian and Estonian, and to clarify why it seems that it is possible to improve the pronunciation of Russian learners, particularly the pronunciation on segmental level and why the Estonian language can be a means.

English vowel system

According to Mutt (1963: 59) English has twelve monophthongs. The front vowels are /iː, i ,e, æ /, as in *bee ,pit, pet, pat.* All the front vowels are unrounded. The central vowels are / uː, u, ə, ɜː, ʌ /, as in *boot, put, the, bird, but*. The sounds / ɜː /, / ə / and / ʌ/ are unrounded. The central vowels /uː/ and /u/ are slightly rounded. The vowels /ɔː, ɒ, ɑː /, as in *board, pot, bard,* are back vowels. The o - vowels are rounded, but / ɑː / is unrounded. The English vowels have lax short and tense long forms. Mutt (1963: 59) continues that "/…/ if we compare the tongue-raising of English monophthongs in terms of the region of the mouth in which it takes place (front, centre, or back) and the degree of raising (close, i.e., the tongue is high in the mouth, or open, i.e., the tongue is low in the mouth), we can establish a table of rough articulatory relationships as it can be seen in Fig. 1.2 below.

	Front	Centre	Back
Close	iː		uː
	i		u
Mid-open	e	ɜː	
		ə	ɔː
	ʌ		
open	æ		
			ɒ
			ɑː

Fig. 1.2: English vowel system: Articulatory Realization (Mutt 1963:59)

Also, it has been a custom to explain the relationship of monophthongal vowels by means of a diagram. Mutt (1963: 59) explains that such a diagram was widely popularized by Jones and his pupils, colleagues and critics in the form of the cardinal vowel diagram

(Fig.1.5). The diagram was developed on the basis of a series of eight X-ray photographs showing the position of the tongue for each of the vowels. Mutt (1963: 60) continues that "/…/ the original composite diagram was conventionalized into the form of a trapezium and the total diagram can be taken as a conventionalized representation of the human mouth, with the lips to the left and the pharynx to the right." According to Mutt (1963: 60), "/…/such a set or scale of cardinal vowels with known acoustic qualities and invariable tongue and lip positions is convenient as a basis for describing the vowels of any language amongst themselves or the vowel sounds of different languages /…/." Although the whole concept of cardinal vowels is artificial, it is nevertheless, useful for the purpose of comparison (Mutt 1993: 61). Fig. 1.3 represents the diagram of English cardinal vowels designed by Jones.
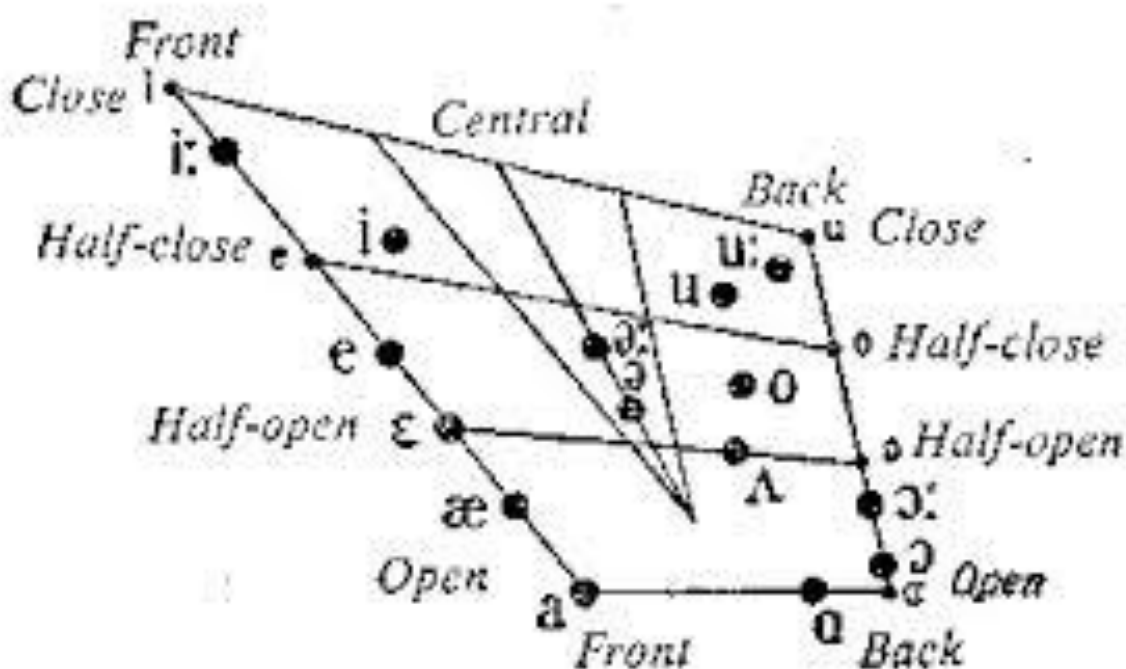

Fig. 1.3: Diagram of the English cardinal vowels (Jones 1965)

Furthermore, "the basis of all normal vowels is the glottal tone produced by the vibration of the vocal cords. The vocal cords vibrate in such a way as to produce, in addition to a basic vibration over their whole length, a number of overtones or harmonics having frequencies which are simple multiples of the fundamental or first harmonic. Thus, there is a fundamental frequency of vibration of 100 cycles per second, the upper harmonics will be of 200, 300, 400, etc. The number and strength of the component frequencies of the complex glottal tone differ from one individual to another and this accounts at least in part for the differences of voice quality by which we are able to recognize a speaker. The complex range of frequencies of varying intensity which make up the quality of a sound is known as the acoustic spectrum. Those bends of frequencies which are characteristic of a particular sound are known as the sound formants. Thus, formants of, for example, [ɑ:] are said to occur in the region of 800 and 1,200 cps. The sound spectrograph gives a 3-dimensional record or spectrogram of the acoustic spectrum"(Mutt 1963: 31-32).

Dudnikov (1967: 143-144) defines a spectrogram as a drawing made by a spectrograph. This spectrogram allows seeing what overtones of a given sound are strengthened. The horizontal axis counts frequency in Hz, whereas the strength of a sound is shown on the vertical axis. The spectrogram surrounds a sound. All visual distinctions of spectrograms find matching in the sounds which these spectrograms represent. Saying that there is a sound [a] presented on the spectrogram we describe that pattern which represents the spectrogram reflecting this sound. The spectrogram explains and justifies dichotomous classification of sound features, each of these features corresponds to a certain distinction of spectrums, and consequently, corresponds to spectrograms. Dudnikov (1967: 144) asserts that the advantages of dichotomous classification are indisputable. It is acoustic classification i.e. directly, not indirectly, defines sound units of a language. Fig. 1.4 below presents an acoustic

spectrogram of the English vowels in which the dichotomous classification of all English vowels is shown (see Appendix 1.Spectrograms, p. 75).

Russian vowel system

According to Leontyeva (2010: 3), the basic Russian vowel system consists of 5 vowels /i, e, a, o, u, /. The articulatory realizations of Russian vowels are given below in Fig. 1.4.

	Front	Central	Back
High			u
Mid	e		**o**
Low		a	

Fig. 1.4: Russian vowel system: Articulatory Realizations (Pogorelova 2008)

Furthermore, Panov (1967: 40 - 41) in his turn, has designed the table that characterizes Russian vowels in a more detailed way, which can be seen in Fig 1.5. He adds that to present all sounds of the Russian language is impossible in a hundred times more detailed table, the further studying of the sounds of speech by hearing and by means of the instrumental phonetics continues, the more varieties of sounds are discovered and such a process is still going on. Any table of sounds and any phonetic transcription works with a certain degree of accuracy.

и		ы		у
э	э			
э	ö	ъ,ö		л,о
	ä			
		a	a	

Fig. 1.5: Russian vowels (Popov 1967)

In addition, the trapezium in Fig. 1.6 shows the position of the tongue for each cardinal vowel of Russian. The dichotomous classification of the Russian vowels can be seen in the spectrogram in Appendix 1 (see p.75).
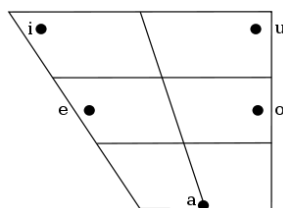
Fig. 1.6: Diagram of the Russian vowels (by Dudnikov 1990)

Estonian vowel system

According to Eek (2008: 57), the Estonian language has nine vowels. According to the position of the speech organs they are characterised as front and back, close, mid and open, and according to the role of lips they can be rounded and unrounded. The front vowels are /i, ü, e, ö, ä/ and the back vowels are /u, õ, o, a/. The front vowels /i, e, ä/ and the back vowels /õ,

a / are unrounded. The front close /ü/ and the back closed /u/ are rounded. The mid front /ö/ and the back /o/ are also rounded. There are nine phonemic monophthongs, with three phonetic lengths. Some Estonian phoneticians claim that all these lengths are phonemic but in the present paper only short and long vowels are observed and analysed. The duration of vowel sounds can be short, long, or overlong, depending on the word. Erelt (2003: 21) establishes that standard Estonian has short and long monophthongs of all nine qualities (Fig. 1.7). The meaning of the word often depends on the length of the vowel. The length is phonemic, for example, *pole-poole, ropp-roop*.

	Front		Back	
High or close	i	ü		u
Mid	e	ö	õ	o
Low or open	ä		a	

Fig. 1.7: Estonian vowel system: Articulatory Realizations (by Erelt 2003)

Moreover, the trapezium in Fig.1.8. shows the position of the tongue for each of the Estonian vowels. The dichotomous classification of the Estonian vowels can be seen in the spectrogram in Appendix 1 (see p. 75). Last but not least, the spectrograms presented in this subchapter play an essential role in comparison of the vowel systems of English, Russian and Estonian. Despite the fact that the comparison is going to be described in the following subchapter, it is very important to mention that three tables of the spectrograms of English, Russian and Estonian are available on separate transparency films. When the three

spectrograms are put together it becomes clearly visual that the spectrograms of the English

vowel [æ] and the Estonian vowel [ä] have some common area which gives the right to claim

that the English vowel [æ] and Estonian vowel [ä] are close in pronunciation. When it comes

to the spectrograms of the English vowel [ɜ:] and the Estonian vowel [ö:], they also have some

common area. This fact also allows us to claim that the English vowel [ɜ:] and the Estonian

long [ö:] have some common features in forming. See the spectrogram of the Estonian vowels

in Appendix 1 (see p. 75).
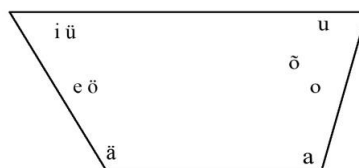
Fig. 1.8: Diagram of the Estonian vowels (Külmoja 2003)

1.5   The comparison of Russian and English sound systems and some pronunciation mistakes of Russian learners

The Russian and English sound systems differ from each other significantly, which

complicates the Russian learners` task to learn English. According to Makarova (2010), there

are five vowel sounds in Russian / a, o, u, e, i/. The sounds /i / and /e/ are formed in the front

of the mouth, /a /in the middle, and /o/ and /u/ in the back. The back vowels /o/ and /u/ are

rounded. The lips play a more important role in the formation of the Russian vowels than they

do in the articulation of the English vowels. The English vowel system has twice the number

of the vowels as compared to the Russian system, Russian speakers have to include 6 vowels not present in their native language, As it can be seen in two articulatory realization tables (p. 29, p. 32), the approximate place of the articulation for these vowels can be found. Makarova (2010) considers that one might hypothesize that Russians would have difficulty distinguishing the vowels [æ] and [a], since they would all map onto the Russian [a]. However, given the phonetic pronunciation of them, one finds that [æ] is usually "mapped" onto the Russian [e], and does so together with the English [e], which make the acquisition of the English contrast [æ] / [e] very challenging. Monk and Burak (2001: 146) have the same point of view and write that [æ] tends to be replaced by a more close sound resembling [e], leading to confusion between pairs as *sat* and *set*. Makarova (2010: 42-43) having the same point of view, claims that the articulation basis of English and Russian vowels are different and states that articulating the English vowels Russian students are apt to make a lot of mistakes among which are such as not observing the quantitative character of the long vowels, and replacing the English vowel [æ] by the Russian vowel [э].Viereck and Bald (1986) also remark that Russians pronounce borrowed words like *dandy* with the Russian [э] instead of the English [æ]. Furthermore, as Sokolova (2001) considers, the sound [ɜ:] which is not found in Russian, causes the greatest difficulty for Russian learners of English. They often substitute the Russian sounds [ё] or [o] for the English [ɜ:].

All Russian vowels are shorter than their English counterparts. There are no long vowels in Russian. According to Kadler (1970: 147), in Russian the distinction between short and long vowels is subphonemic, non-functional and lengthening a vowel has only emotional or accentual value. Daniel Jones (1978: 183) also lays emphasis upon the distinctive importance of length. So do Monk and Burak (2001: 146). They consider the two major

features which distinguish the Russian sound system from the English: 1) the absence of the short-long vowel differentiation and 2) the absence of diphthongs.

Birner (2012) writes that "it seems to be very difficult to overcome the tendency to keep using the familiar sounds from your native language. In this sense, your native language causes "interference" in your efforts to pick up the new language". So foreign learners can follow some advice given by Gimson (1981: 109 –110). In the case of [æ], learners should establish the qualitative opposition [i] – [e] – [æ], at the same time use a type of [æ] which is not too open. Foreign learners often find it helpful to make a conscious constriction of the pharynx for [æ].The opposition [e] – [æ] may be emphasized by making use of the length component e.g. in *men - man ; bed - bad.* When it comes to [ɜ:], Gimson (1981: 125) asserts that it is comparatively rare to find a long central vowel such as [ɜ:] in other languages. Many languages, however, he claims, possess somehow centralized front rounded vowels of such type but these are quite unacceptable in English because of lip rounding. An articulation with spread lips should, therefore, be insisted upon, keeping the same lip position for such words as *fur, bird, learn,* as for, *fee, bead, lean.*

Paul Shoebottom, an English teacher from Germany, considers that due to differences between the languages, it is relatively difficult for Russians to acquire native-speaker-like standards of pronunciation. Russian consists of five vowel sounds, with no differentiation between short and long vowels. This contrasts with English which has 12 vowel sounds (5 long, 7 short), plus 8 diphthongs. Possibly the most significant vowel difficulty for Russians is the sound in *her / cur*. Other vowel problems include the failure to discriminate between the sounds [e] / [æ] in *set /sat* or [i:] / [ɪ] in *seat / sit.* To conclude, when teachers decide on their priorities for pronunciation teaching, it is useful to know in general what kinds of errors are

most likely to interfere with communication, and what special problems particular first-language speakers will have with English pronunciation (Hewings 2004: 15).

1.6   The comparison of the Estonian and English vowel systems

Obviously, Estonian and English are also different languages. Yet, some slight similarities have been found. According to general phonetic acceptability, [ɜː] and [æ] sounds do not exist in the Russian language, even though Külmoja (2003: 10) considers that they exist in a slightly different form in certain sound combinations where the consonant precedes the vowel [i] or [a] and the consonant is palatalised (e.g. *мяли/ ляля*) and Petrova (1990: 10) remarks that the English [ɜː] exists in the name *Гёте.* (actually these both sounds completely differ from the English sounds [ɜː] and [æ]) but they exist in Estonian with minor modifications that are described by Mutt (1965: 64, 70). He writes that it is comparatively rare to find a long central vowel as the English [ɜː] in other languages and Estonians tend to replace it by the Estonian front rounded [ö]. He continues that the Estonian [ö] is quite unacceptable in English but despite this fact can be obtained by pronouncing the Estonian [ö] with slightly spread lips. But if to follow Gimson`s advice and to teach students to pronounce the Estonian [ɜː] without lip rounding we can achieve the more or less rightly pronounced English [ɜː]. Kostabi (2004: 14) also advises students to produce the English vowel [ɜː] avoiding rounding the lips and continues that learners can start practicing the English vowel [ɜː] by pronouncing the Estonian [ö] with slightly spread lips. This proves that the Estonian vowel [ö] can be a starting point for the rightly pronounced English vowel [ɜː].

Secondly, it is difficult for Russians to distinguish between the sounds [e] and [æ] in *set/ sat* and [iː] / [ɪ] in *seat /sit* and again Estonian can help: *tema - täna, seda - säde, Tiina -*

tina, said - sad, ten - tan. As Mutt (1965: 65) claims, the English [æ] is tenser than the Estonian [ä] and also somewhat more open. Consequently, such a description gives the right to consider the Estonian sound [ä] to be a starting point in the pronunciation of the English [æ] too. According to Kostabi (2004: 8), "this vowel should not prove difficult to Estonian learners, who have a vowel of approximately the same quality in their native system of sounds".

And thirdly, the present paper deals with the length of vowels, which phonemically is non-existent in Russian but exists in Estonian and English (e.g., [iː] / [ɪ]: *мина* (Russian) */tina - tiim /Tim - team* (English); [uː] / [ʊ]: *сун* (Russian) */ suul - sul* (Estonian) */ soon - soot* (English); [ɔː] / [ɒ]: *пот* (Russian) / *tool - toll, pool - poll* (Estonian) */port - pot* (English). Mutt (1965: 62) writes that the English sound [iː] is quite similar to the Estonian long [iː]. Kostabi (2004: 6) advocates Mutt and claims that the Estonian vowel [i] exists in the third degree of length of approximately the same quality and quantity. Both Mutt (1965: 69) and Kostabi (2004: 13) consider that the English vowel [uː] differs from the Estonian [uː], the sound [ɔː], according to Kostabi (2004: 11), does not create much difficulty. As far as Russian learners are concerned, they could take advantage of the existence of the length of the above-mentioned Estonian vowels, while there is no length differentiation in their L1.

To make things clearer, the spectrograms of the Estonian and English vowels designed by Toots (1972) and the spectrogram designed by Bondarenko and Lebedeva (1983) and presented in the research of Kondaurova and Francis (2004) make the comparison of vowels more visual. That is why it was stated at the end of subchapter 1.4 that these three spectrograms are of major importance in the scope of the present research. It is clearly seen that the Estonian sounds [ɜː] and [æ] stand closer to the similar English sounds, whereas according to Bonk (1994: 29, 61), there are no Russian equivalents of these sounds at all.

Taking into consideration the fact of the proximity of the Estonian and English sounds [ɜ:] and [æ], it is possible to assume that pronouncing the Estonian sounds correctly Russian learners of English can improve the pronunciation of the similar English sounds.

The present paper deals with the correction of the pronunciation of the most difficult vowels causing a wrong accent or sometimes even misunderstanding. Taking into consideration difficulties that Russian learners of English experience while studying and speaking the language, the fact that Estonian pronunciation is closer to the English pronunciation and the presence of the programme of the Estonian language immersion, the idea of the present paper to improve the pronunciation of one foreign language through another one became feasible. The theoretical value of the paper lies in eliciting some aspects showing the proximity of the pronunciation of the particular vowels of the two languages: Estonian and English. The practical value of the paper lies in the suggestion to improve the pronunciation of Russian learners and to develop a number of exercises which can help them improve their pronunciation of English. Up to now no such papers have been written in Estonia and it is believed that the present study may make some contribution to the study of improvement of some pronunciation skills by Russian learners of English who study and speak Estonian.

CHAPTER 2. EMPIRICAL STUDY

The second chapter provides an overview of the empirical study conducted in the scope of the present paper. The chapter is divided into 5 subchapters. In subchapter 2.1 the aims of the study and the research questions are provided. Subchapter 2.2 gives a summary of the methods of the study, presents the participants, shows the procedure and subchapter 2.3 summarizes the results. The second chapter concludes with the subsection 2.4 which discusses the results and subchapter 2.5 gives ideas for further research.

2.1 The aims of the study and the research questions

The research has been carried out to implement some of the suggestions of how the English pronunciation of certain problematic sounds by Russian learners could be improved. The area for improvement involved primarily those vowels the perception and pronunciation of which cause some problems for students and mispronouncing of which increases the so-called Russian accent. Thus, the aims of the research were 1) to improve the ability to pronounce the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] and the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:]; 2) to ease the perception and distinction of the front, mid-open, unrounded [e] and the front, fully open, unrounded [æ]; 3) to ease the perception and distinction of the back, open, rounded long [ɔ:] and the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:] and 4) to recognize the vowel lengths in the three vowel contrasts [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u] by Russian learners simultaneously studying Estonian.

The research questions were

1. Does the perception and production of Estonian vowels help Russian learners perceive and identify English vowels more easy?

2. Do students need additional training with Estonian words in order to perceive and produce the English vowels correctly and reduce the accent generally?

2.2 The method

In order to explore how Russian speakers perceive and identify English vowels and their length in particular words and how to reduce the Russian accent in certain sound combinations initial listening tests and critical listening tests for native Russian learners were arranged in two separate groups. The first task was to write a test in which they had to fulfil the tasks mentioned in subsection 2.1. The results of the tasks were analysed and the summary was made. The second step was to carry out exercises in the experimental group (Group 2) knowing Estonian not very well, to identify how Russian learners perceive, identify and produce Estonian sounds with their knowledge of Estonian. They practiced with a specially designed system of exercises (Appendix 4, see p. 81), and writing a number of dictations using suggested sites from the Internet (Appendix 5. Recommended online sources, see p. 83). The method of critical listening, the method of audio recording as well as minimal pair drills were used, and the students` speech was analysed.

The participants

A total of 22 students from Form 8, divided into two language learning groups, have participated in the study. Group 1 consisted of 10 students and Group 2 consisted of 12 students. These are 14-year-old Russian-speaking students who attend Tartu Annelinn Gymnasium, a Russian school with the Estonian language immersion. These students have been studying Estonian for seven years. They started studying Estonian in the first grade at the age of 7. In the case of language immersion the process of studying the language is not limited to the lessons of Estonian, but most of the subjects are also taught in Estonian. The learners have been studying English for five years starting in the third grade at the age of 9. The groups were formed accordingly to the pupils` knowledge of the Estonian language, because some of them could speak Estonian better than the others, having Estonian friends or one of the parents being Estonian. Group 1 represented the students who had a better command of Estonian and English (according to their marks) and Group 2 were the students who had some problems in speaking Estonian. Also, the students from Group 2 have some problems with English. Both the groups took part in the tests in September 2013 and March 2014 simultaneously in different classrooms with two teachers.

Materials

During the initial and final tests every student had an A4 sheet of paper with words printed on it. After each word some space with square brackets was left into which they had to write the appropriate IPA symbol according to the sound they heard. The material of the study consisted of 50 single monosyllabic English words. The words were collected from the books of Toots (1976), Kostabi (2004), Baker (1981,1982), and Leontyeva (1980). These English

words were pronounced by native speakers of British English on online Macmillan Dictionary available at www.macmillandictionary.com.

For critical listening tests (both initial and final), two tables of 49 single monosyllabic English words were presented on A4 sheet of paper. The students had to read the printed words line by line. The teacher had a copy of the same test with some space and square brackets at the end of each word which she used for marking with the symbol "+" for the rightly pronounced vowels and the symbol "-" for the wrongly pronounced vowels. She had to do it for every single student. After each test the materials were collected and then analysed.

Besides the initial and final tests during the period from September 2913 to March 2014 Group 2 had to carry out numerous tests where English and Estonian sounds of more or less of similar sounding (*lurk-löök, tool-tuul*) had to be perceived, identified and pronounced (see Appendix 4, see p. 81). The materials of Toots (1976), Leontyeva (1980), Baker (1981-1982) and Kostabi (2004) were widely used by the students.

The procedure

The experiment proceeded as follows. The initial listening tests were conducted in September 2013 in Tartu Annelinn Gymnasium. The tests were carried out by two groups of students who were seated in two quiet classrooms, and a computer was used. The first initial test was an identification task for identifying the right length of [iː] / [ɪ], [uː] / [ʊ], [ɔː] / [ɒ] (e.g., *beat or bit)* and for differentiation between [e] / [æ], [ɔː] / [ɜː] (e.g., *beg or bag).* During the initial test the students listened to 35 words specially chosen for the test. The students were told that they would hear English words taken directly from Macmillan Dictionary, which is available at www.macmillandictionary.com . All the students participating had A4 sheets of paper with the words on them and each word there was followed by square brackets for

writing the needed phonetic symbol of the IPA e.g., [e] / [æ], [ɔ:] / [ɜ:], [i:] / [ɪ], [ɔ:] / [ɒ], [u:] / [u] (Appendix 2, see p. 76). The participants were allowed to ask questions during the instruction period of each test if the task remained unclear. Before the listening test, a few words were played to the participants without asking them to write anything down, so that they would know what to expect. In the recording of the test there were tiny pauses between the words in order to make sure that the participants had some time to write down the appropriate IPA symbol without a hurry. None of the words was repeated, so the students were instructed to make their decision as quickly as possible.

The second test was a critical listening test (Appendix 3, see p. 79) run on the following day for both the groups. Taking turns the same participants read out particular words, namely the words with the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] and the front, mid-open, unrounded [e], the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:] and the back, open, rounded long [ɔ:]. The teacher listened to the pronunciation of the above - mentioned vowels by each student and identified whether the certain vowel was pronounced rightly or wrongly. All the participants were asked to read the words with natural pauses. At the end of March 2014 the final dictations were carried out the same way and organized similarly (only with some difference in the words: see respectively Appendix 2, see p. 76 and Appendix 3, see p. 79). During the period (from September 2013 to March 2014) between the initial and final dictations Group 2 practised doing specially designed exercises (Appendix 4, see p. 81), which include Estonian and English words and wrote dictations on English words available on the Internet (Appendix 4, see p. 81). Also, the students using a dictaphone had to make recordings with problematic vowels and had to compare them to Macmillan dictionary pronunciation. During the period from September 2013 to March 2014 Group 1 did not do any additional exercises.

2.3 Results

This subchapter presents the results of the initial and final listening tests. The results are presented in tables that show the number of participants (in the round brackets), what sort of vowels were listened to or pronounced and the percentage of correct answers. Then the results of the initial tests and the final ones of the both groups were compared in order to draw a conclusion whether it has been reasonable to use the suggested method for the improvement of Russian learners` perception and production of the above - mentioned English sounds and as a result of the experiment to improve their pronunciation in general.

The results of the initial tests

Right after the first dictation in which students had to differentiate [e] / [æ], [ɔː] / [ɜː] and identify the right length [iː] / [ɪ], [uː] / [ʊ], [ɔː] / [ɒ] and in both Group 1 and Group 2 the A4 sheets of paper were collected and the results were calculated. The students had to fulfill two different tasks: firstly, the data analysis focuses on 1) perception and identification of the English vowels [e] / [æ], 2) the students` differentiation of [ɔː] / [ɜː], and 3) distinguishing the vowel length [iː] / [i], [ɔː] / [ɒ], and [uː] / [u]. The qualitative analyses of the results were carried out to calculate the percentage how many of the above mentioned students could identify English vowels and whether the failures were due to the surrounding of different consonants. The data of both the groups were compared and some conclusions were drawn.

The Tables below present the percentage of rightly perceived vowels by the students of both the groups. The identification of English vowels [ɔː] and [ɜː] is shown in Table 1 (p. 48). The vowels were perceived and identified differently by both the groups. 96% of the students

from Group 1 identified the vowel [ɔ:] in the suggested words correctly, whereas only 90.4% of the students from Group 2 perceived the vowel [ɔ:] rightly. In terms of identification of the vowel [ɜ:], 76% of the students from Group 1 perceived it correctly and 72% of the students from Group 2 identified the vowel [ɜ:] correctly. The sounds were confused mostly in such words as *walk, work, born, burn.* The percentage shows that the students had more difficulties perceiving the vowel [ɜ:] than the vowel [ɔ:]. Students perceived the vowel [ɔ:] better most likely due to the existence of the same sound [o] in Russian, although the sound is of a different length, whereas the English vowel [ɜ:] has no equivalents in Russian. Also, probably they know the words, which helps identify the sound.

Identified by	Vowels [ɔ:] and [ɜ:]	
Group 1 (10)	96%	76%
Group 2 (12)	90.4%	72%

Table 1. Perception and identification of the vowels [ɔ:] / [ɜ:].

The identification of the English vowels [e] and [æ] was tested by listening to the words containing these vowels. The results are seen in Table 2 (p. 49). The vowel [e] was differentiated righty by 86.6% of the students from Group 1 and by 76% of the students from Group 2. The English vowel [æ] was identified correctly by 91.2% of the students from Group 1 and only 78% of the students from Group 2. The identification of the vowel [æ] differs greatly between the groups. The mistakes were made in the words such as *and, end, merry, marry, act, add, head, had.* Firstly, the mistakes occurred because there is no such vowel in Russian and secondly, apparently because the English [æ] precedes consonants like *d* or *r* and a combination of the consonants like *dd, nd, ct* in which *t* and *d* also cause some problems

to Russian learners. As for Group 1, they made less mistakes probably partly due to knowing Estonian better.

Identified by	Vowels [e] and [æ]	
Group 1 (10)	86.6%	91.2%
Group 2 (12)	76%	78%

Table 2. Perception and identification of the vowels [e] / [æ].

Next part of the initial listening dictation was dedicated to differentiation of the English sounds with special attention to the length: [iː] and [ɪ]. The results are presented in Table 3 (p. 49). 78.5 % of the students from Group 1 and 75% of the students from Group 2 identified the long [iː] correctly. The result in the identification of the vowel [ɪ] by Group 1 was 5% higher than by Group 2. As Makarova (2010) rightly considers, it is very difficult for Russian learners of English to observe the quantitative character of the long vowels. A great deal of mistakes in distinguishing the English vowels [iː] and [ɪ] were made in the following words: *reach, rich, leave, live, steal, still.* The reasons for poor performance probably lie in the absence of the short-long vowel differentiation (Monk, Burak, 2001:146) in the learners` L1.

Identified by	Vowels [iː] and [ɪ]	
Group 1 (10)	78.5%	80%
Group 2 (12)	75%	75%

Table 3. Perception and identification of the vowels [iː] / [ɪ].

The distinction of the English vowels [ɔ:] and [ɒ] is shown in Table 4 (p. 50). Surprisingly, all the participants from Group 1 attained a high degree of success in distinguishing the vowel [ɔ:] (100%). The majority of the participants from Group 2 distinguished the vowel [ɔ:] correctly (90.5%), and the majority of the participants from Group 1 identified the sound [ɒ] rightly (90%), whereas Group 2 had difficulty in distinguishing the English vowels [ɔ:] and [ɒ]. The mistakes occurred in such English words as *cord, caught, all, call, walk, wall, launch.* As Kostabi (2004: 11) emphasizes, [ɔ:] is not a long variant of [ɒ] but a completely different vowel. So, this could also leave an imprint on the [ɔ:] / [ɒ] perception. However, some improvement in perception of these two vowels is possible as more phonetic input is received. In Russian [o] is diphthongized and that is another reason why the perception of the vowel [ɔ:] may be difficult.

Identified by	Vowels [ɔ:] and [ɒ]	
Group 1 (10)	100%	90%
Group 2 (12)	90.5 %	78.6%

Table 4. Perception and identification of the vowels [ɔ:] / [ɒ].

The last part of the initial listening dictation was dedicated to distinguishing the English vowels [u:] and [ʊ], the results of which are shown in Table 5 (p. 51). 77% and 90 % of the students from Group 1 distinguished accordingly the English vowels [u:] and [ʊ]. Comparing to the participants from Group 1, the performance of the participants from Group 2 in distinguishing the English vowel [ʊ] was poorly performed. Surprisingly, poor performance compared with [ɔ:] and [ɒ] may be because of slight diphthongization of the English [ʊ] in

certain positions and the students do not hear a pure [ʊ] sound. According to Makarova (2010), Russian speakers are could not be successful on any of the contrast concerning length as the Russian language has no long vowels. Thus, their poor performance might be explained this way. Major difficulties occurred in distinguishing the vowels in such words as *good, soot, foot, food, rumour, proof.*

Identified by	Vowels [u:] and [ʊ]	
Group 1 (10)	77.4%	90%
Group 2 (12)	77.1%	66.7%

Table 5. Perception and identification of the vowels [u:] / [ʊ].

The second test was a critical listening test (Appendix 2, see p 76) and it was run on the following day for both the groups. One question of interest was the participants` correct versus incorrect pronunciation of the English vowels [æ] / [ɜ:], because there are no equivalents to these vowels in their L1. The students were instructed to read English words from the table line by line and to pay attention to the differentiation between [e] / [æ] and [ɔ:] / [ɜ:]. A great deal of their attention had to be drawn to the right pronunciation of the English vowels [æ] and [ɜ:]. The qualitative analyses of the results were also carried out to calculate the percentage how many students from Group 1 and Group 2 could pronounce the English vowels [æ] and [ɜ:] correctly and whether the failures were due to the surrounding of different consonants. Similarly, as in the case of the first dictation, the data of both the groups were compared and some conclusions were drawn. The tables below present the percentage of rightly pronounced vowels [æ] and [ɜ:] by the students of both the groups. Table 6 (p. 52) shows that the students from Group 1 had a very high accuracy rate for the tasks: 97% of the

students from Group 1 pronounced the English vowel [æ] correctly, while only 90% of the students from Group 2 pronounced the English vowel [æ] rightly. Taken together, the results for both the groups show that even in the words with a high degree of familiarity the mistakes were made. The majority of mistakes occurred in the words like *add, lack, gat, act, trap, Jack, sag, lass.* Instead of the English vowel [æ] some participants pronounced the English vowel [ʌ] as in the English word *bus*. Some students pronounced the vowel [ɑ:] in the words like *lass, mass* lengthening it like in the English word *park*. In some participants` pronunciation the differentiation between [e] and [æ] was somewhat obscure.

Pronounced by	Vowel [æ]
Group 1 (10)	97%
Group 2 (12)	90%

Table 6. Pronunciation of the vowel [æ].

The pronunciation of the vowel [ɜ:] was slightly worse than the performance of the pronunciation of the English vowel [æ]. As can be seen from Table 7 (p. 53) 93% of the participants from Group 1 and only 89% of the students from Group 2 pronounced the English vowel [ɜ:] correctly. Not all the words in this part of the dictation received high familiarity ratings with all participants, for example, *mirth, lurk, surge, err.* In addition, the words with the combination of the letters *ir* was pronounced as [ɪr] in the words like *fir, sir, mirth.* This suggests that for those students who made these errors there was some uncertainty about their knowledge of the words or the rules of reading. In some participants` pronunciation the differentiation between [ɔ:] and [ɜ:] was also somewhat obscure as in the performance of [e] and [æ]. Overall, Russian learners of English have difficulty in pronouncing the English

vowels [æ] and [ɜ:] since they, according to Makarova (2010), would all map the English vowel [æ] onto the Russian [a] or the Russian [e], which make the acquisition of the English contrast [æ] / [e] very challenging. In addition, Sokolova (2001: 102) also considers that the sound [ɜ:] causes the greatest difficultyfor Russian learners of English. It is often substituted by the Russian sounds [ё:] or [o:].

Pronounced by	Vowel [ɜ:]
Group 1 (10)	93%
Group 2 (12)	89%

Table 7. Pronunciation of the vowel [ɜ:].

After the initial tests during the period from September 2013 to March 2014 the students from Group 2 dealt with improving their perception and differentiation of the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] and the front, mid-open, unrounded [e], the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long **[**ɜ:] and the back, open, rounded long [ɔ:]. Also, they practised recognizing the vowel lengths in the three vowel contrasts [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u]. In order to improve perception, differentiation and pronunciation of such Estonian vowels as [a] / [ä], [o:] / [ö:], [i] / [i:], [ɒ] / [ɔ:] and [u] / [u:] the students from Group 2 practised listening to and reading Estonian – Estonian words (see Appendix 4, see p. 81). In order to improve perception, differentiation and pronunciation of such vowels as [æ] / [e], **[**ɜ:] / [ɔ:]. [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u] in English words the students from Group 2 listened to, read and compared Estonian and English words with the same vowels. (Appendix 4, see p. 81). Moreover, the students listened to and repeated different words containing the vowels the perception, differentiation and pronunciation of which they had to improve, wrote phonetic

dictations and did various phonetic exercises which are available on the Internet (see Appendix 5, see p. 83). Furthermore, the students dealt with drilling English minimal pairs (see Appendix 5, p. 83), recorded their own and their classmates` pronunciation in order to find out how they perceived and identified the vowels they were trying to improve or how well they pronounced English vowels [e] / [æ], [ɔ:] / [ɜ:]. Then their recordings were compared with the pronunciation of the same words available on online Macmillan Dictionary at www.macmillandictionary.com   and appropriate conclusions were dawn. The exercises designed by Toots (1976) and Kostabi (2004) have been of invaluable help on the way towards improving the students` pronunciation.

To conclude, Hewings (2004: 16) considers that it is a useful assumption that for most learners for most of the time hear features of pronunciation which will be at least a useful starting point for developing their ability to produce sounds in their own speech. He continues that it is important to teach and test both receptive (listening) and productive (speaking) skills. Thus, teachers should help their students improve their listening skills and to develop discrimination skills which provide a foundation for the improvement of pronunciation in the students` speech (Hewings 2004: 17).

The results of the final tests

In March 2014 the participants from Group 1 and experimental Group 2 had to write final tests. The purpose of the final tests was to find out whether Group 2 improved their pronunciation or not and how much they did improve it. The results obtained from the final test in which the participants had to fulfil the same tasks as in the initial tests are presented in the tables below and show the percentage of correctly perceived vowels.

The results, as shown in Table 8 (p. 55), indicate that 97% of students from Group 1 perceived the vowel [ɔ:] rightly and 95% of students from Group 2 perceived the same vowel correctly. There is only a slight difference (of 2%) in the results of the two groups this time. Compared to the results of the initial test, the students from Group 2 improved their ability of perception by 4.6%.The students from Group 1 improved their skills only slightly. This time 80% of the students perceived the vowel [ɜ:] correctly and this result is by 3% higher than during the initial test, whereas the students from experimental group improved considerably their ability of perception and their new result was 92%, which was by 20% higher compared to the results of the initial test. Hewings (2004: 233, 237) mentions that words with vowels [ɔ:] and [ɜ:] are often confused by Russian learners. According to Wiik (2003: 83), learners of L2 do not have a chance to correctly recognize the vowel that cannot exist in their L1, they recognize it as the closest equivalent in their own language. Thus, it is obvious that Russian learners of English sometimes substitute [ɜ:] with the Russian [o]. In addition, the errors were made for example, in *world, church and berth.* It should be pointed out that the students from Group 1 also improved their abilities because their pronunciation errors were dealt with when some problems arose. According to Derwing (2010) and Harmer (2001), pronunciation errors should not be neglected and should be dealt with which should become a necessity.

Identified by	Vowels [ɔ:] and [ɜ:]	
Group 1 (10)	97%	80%
Group 2 (12)	95%	92%

Table 8. Perception and identification of the vowels [ɔ:] / [ɜ:].

The identification of the English vowels [e] and [æ] was tested by listening to the words with the mentioned vowels. Table 9 (p. 56) below illustrates the results of both the groups. 89% of the students from Group 1 identified the English vowel [e] correctly. The students from Group 2 showed a bit better results comparing to the results of Group 1. Having been involved in additional practice, the students from experimental group noticeably improved their skills and showed very good results – 90%. The students from Group 2 improved the perception of the English vowel [e] by 14% (see Table 2, p. 49) and the perception of the English vowel [æ] has also improved considerably – by 17% (see Table 2, p. 49). As Hewings (2004: 233, 237) mentions, Russian learners often confuse [e] and [æ]. On the whole, the minimum of errors were made and they were made in the words as *gnat, add.* The occurrence of these errors can be explained by the absence of the vowel [æ] in the system of the Russian vowels and consonants *t* and *d* can also cause some problems to Russian learners when the English [æ] precedes these consonants.

Identified by	Vowels [e] and [æ]	
Group 1 (10)	89%	93%
Group 2 (12)	90%	95%

Table 9. Perception and identification of the vowels [e] / [æ].

Table 10 (p. 57) below presents the results received from the final test in which the students from Group 1 and Group 2 had to differentiate the English vowels [iː] and [ɪ] paying special attention to the length of these two vowels. 80.1% of the students from Group 1 and 87% of the students from Group 2 identified the long [iː] correctly. The students from Group 2 improved their results by 12% compared to their previous results (see Table 3, p. 49). The

students from Group 1 improved their skills in differentiation of the vowel [iː] by 1.6% and in differentiation of the vowel [ɪ] the students from Group 1 improved their results by 2% (see Table 3, p. 49). Group 2 had an amazing improvement in differentiating [ɪ] – by 10%. As Leontyeva (1980) and Makarova (2010) assert, Russian learners do not observe the qualitative character of the long vowels. In addition, Leontyeva (1980: 44) also stresses that it is worth keeping in mind why Russian learners make mistakes in perception of the long [iː]: because of its diphthongoidal pronunciation. However, if students can be involved in additional training, they can improve their ability significantly. Despite the fact that Group 2 significantly improved their ability in perception and differentiation of the English vowels [iː] and [ɪ], the data show that students still need more practice. The errors were made in the words *sip, dim, deem. stick.* In Brown`s table the pair [iː] / [ɪ] occupies rank 8 which suggests that this pair is of high importance and should be given much attention when studying English.

Identified by	Vowels [iː] and [ɪ]	
Group 1 (10)	80.1%	82%
Group 2 (12)	87%	85%

Table 10. Perception and identification of the vowels [iː] / [ɪ].

The results of distinction of the English vowels [ɔː] and [ɒ] is shown in Table 11 (p. 58). As can be seen from the table below, 99% of the students from Group 1 and 95,5% of the students from Group 2 perceived the English vowel [ɔː] correctly. 92% of the students from Group 1 and 93% of the students from Group 2 perceived the English vowel [ɒ] rightly. The most striking result to emerge from the data is that the students from Group 2 improved

considerably their skills of perception of the vowel [ɒ] and they improved their results by 14.4%. Also, the students from Group 2 improved their perception of the English vowel [ɔ:] but not so significantly, only by 5%.The results of perception of the long [ɔ:] by Group 1 declined somehow by 2%. May be the participants from Group 1 were not so attentive during the final test. The words which were not correctly identified were *mod, thong, moth* and *yacht,* According to Leontyeva (1980: 44), because of the peculiarities of the vowel system of English in which long and short vowels exist, for example [ɔ:] and [ɒ] in the present case, students do not observe the length of the vowel and Russian learners cannot perceive the stable articulation in the [ɔ:] pronunciation. The errors were also made probably because of the combinations of consonants *ng, th* and *cht* that follow the vowels [ɔ:] and [ɒ], which was considered difficult by the students. Generally, good results can be achieved when more practice is provided and some effort made by students.

Identified by	Vowels [ɔ:] and	[ɒ]
Group 1 (10)	99%	92%
Group 2 (12)	95.5 %	93%

Table 11. Perception and identification of the vowels [ɔ:] / [ɒ].

Table 12 (p. 59) below illustrates the results of the final test in which the students from both the groups had to distinguish the English vowels [u:] and [ʊ]. 78% of the students from Group 1 and 87% of the students from Group 2 distinguished these vowels correctly. As far as the vowel [ʊ] is concerned, it was distinguished correctly by 90% of the students from Group 1 (the result remained the same: see Table 5, p. 51) and it was distinguished rightly by 87%

of the students from Group 2. Despite the fact that the results of Group 2 are not too high, the students from Group 2 considerably improved their perception of the English vowels [u:] and [ʊ]. Comparing with their results of the initial test, they improved their skills of distinguishing the English vowel [u:] by 9.9% (see Table 5, p. 51) and distinguishing of the English vowel [ʊ] by 20,3% whereas the results of the students from Group 1 remained approximately the same with a little difference in perception of the vowel [u:],they increased their performance only by 0.6%. (see Table 5, p. 51). Mostly, the errors were made, for example, in the following words: *sleuth, ruin, chew, rook* and *loop*. Leontyeva (1980: 111) mentioning that the English [u:] is a diphthongoid, because its beginning is a short [ʊ] gives a clue to understanding why Russian learners make errors in perception and differentiation of the English vowels [u:] and [ʊ].

Identified by	Vowels [u:] and [ʊ]	
Group 1 (10)	78%	90%
Group 2 (12)	87%	87%

Table 12. Perception and identification of the vowels [u:] / [ʊ].

The second test was a critical test (as in September 2013) and it was also run on the following day for Group 1 and Group 2 simultaneously. As during the initial test, the question of interest was the participants´ correct versus incorrect pronunciation of the English vowels [æ] and [ɜ:]. Before this test Group 1 did not do any additional exercises while Group 2 received much of phonetic input. After the test the qualitative analyses of the results were carried out to calculate the percentage how many students from Group 1 and Group 2 could

pronounce the English vowels [æ] and [ɜ:]. Table 13 (p. 60) shows that 97% of the students from Group 1 pronounced the English vowel [æ] correctly and 99% of the students from Group 2 pronounced [æ] correctly. The final test revealed that after receiving a lot of phonetic input, the participants from Group 2 performed very well and improved their results by 9%, while the participants from Group 1 stayed at the same good level at which they were in September 2013 (see Table 5, p. 51). The most difficult words were *cattle* and *strand*. Leontyeva (1980: 44) claims that "… Russian learners make the sound [æ] narrow because they do not open the mouth properly". That is why we do not always hear properly pronounced the English vowel [æ] by Russian learners. Russian learners have a tendency to substitute English vowels by similar Russian vowels (Leontyeva 1980: 44). However, in the final test (as in the initial test) the students showed very good results. The data show that at the present stage the students from both the groups do not need any additional practice. The words which were found difficult were *plaid* and *strand*.

Pronounced by	Vowel [æ]
Group 1 (10)	97%
Group 2 (12)	99%

Table 13. Pronunciation of the vowel [æ].

The pronunciation of the English vowel [ɜ:] was worse (see Table 7, p.53) and still remains slightly worse than the pronunciation of the English vowel [æ]. However, the participants from Group 2 showed very good results. As it is shown in Table 14 (p. 61), 96% of the students from Group 2 pronounced the vowel [ɜ:] rightly, which is by 7% higher than during the initial test, whereas the participants from Group 1 improved their pronunciation of

the English vowel [ɜ:] only by 1.5% but in spite of this factor, their performance remains at a high level.

Pronounced by	Vowel [ɜ:]
Group 1 (10)	94.5%
Group 2 (12)	96%

Table 14. Pronunciation of the vowel [ɜ:].

The next subchapter moves on to discussing the results, summarising the general findings and mentioning the strengths and limitations of the present paper.

2.3 Discussion of the results

The current subchapter starts with reminding the research questions of the present study. It is continued by a brief summary of the findings and the discussion of the results. Furthermore, the general conclusions based on the findings are summarized and the strengths and limitations of the thesis are considered.

The following research questions were raised. Firstly, whether the perception and producing of Estonian vowels help Russian learners perceive and identify English vowels more easy and make their speech understandable for native speakers. Secondly, whether the students need additional training with Estonian words in order to perceive and produce the English vowels correctly and reduce the accent of Russian learners generally.

Some theoretical material allowed eliciting the proximity of the particular vowels of Estonian and English and considering Estonian to be a means in improving these particular English vowels. Thus, in order to answer the first research question it could be claimed that the perception and production of Estonian vowels could help Russian learners perceive and identify English vowels more easy because the Estonian language could be a link between Russian and English.

In order to answer the other research question whether the students need some additional training with Estonian words in order to perceive and produce the English vowels correctly there are three steps that were taken during the research period. First, in September 2013 the initial tests were conducted in two groups of the students. The fact that the Estonian vowel system is closer to the English one, and the role of the Estonian language immersion showed that no one failed to do the initial test, it is seen that during the initial tests the participants from Group 1 who had a better command of both Estonian and English differentiated the English vowel sounds [e] / [æ], [ɔ:] / [ɜ:] better than the participants from Group 2. During the period from September 2013 to March 2014 Group 2 was involved with additional practice which included Estonian and English words with the vowels that should have been improved. They did the exercises that are specially designed by Toots (1976), Leontyeva (1980), Baker (1981, 1982) and Kostabi (2004) and the exercises from Appendix 4 (p. 81).

Using critical listening assignments was ultimately essential to find out how learners could improve the production of the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] and the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:]. The students recorded their own pronunciation and then compared

their own pronunciation of difficult sounds to their classmates and to those recorded on on-line Macmillan dictionary. The students were encouraged by the teacher and the classmates, the social atmosphere seemed to be warm and friendly enough. Using recommended cites (Appendix 5, see p. 83) they wrote more dictations and became more experienced. Moreover, providing students with a vast amount of materials on difficult sounds and allowing more practice with particular sounds constantly comparing them with the corresponding Estonian vowels and vowel lengths (Appendix 4, see p. 81) has led to better results which were shown by the students from Group 2 during the final tests. The students from the experimental Group significantly improved their ability in perception and differentiation of the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:] by 20%, the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] by 14%, the front, close, unrounded [i:] by 12%, the back, close, rounded and [u:] by 9.9% and the back, open, rounded [ɔ:] by 5%. The same students improved their pronunciation of the front, fully open, unrounded [æ] by 9% and the mixed, mid-open, unrounded long [ɜ:] by 7%. All this can prove the idea of the use of the Estonian language as a means in the process of improving the English pronunciation of Russian students from a Russian school with the Estonian language immersion.

Overall, the results obtained from the initial and final tests suggest that students without any additional training can slightly improve their skills of pronunciation due to the constant dealing with the English language, they read, they enrich their vocabulary, watch films and consequently they cannot stay on the same level, they constantly develop their pronunciation skills. However, those students who received additional training can immensely improve their pronunciation skills. All this suggests that in order to find the middle way, teachers should develop a set of activities for recurring problems. According to Hewings (2004: 21), some pronunciation problems are likely to occur repeatedly, and it can be useful to

develop a set of short, simple activities which do not require preparation, to use when some pronunciation problems arise. For example, some students have problems producing or discriminating between particular vowels or, for example, the length of the vowels remains a constant problem. Harmer (2001: 187) also considers that "the most successful way of dealing with pronunciation is tackling a problem at the moment when it occurs".

Finally, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, very little information was found in the literature on the issue of using three languages while improving pronunciation. Second, the current study is based on a small sample of participants and subjective opinion of the teacher while listening to the students and assessing their pronunciation. Thirdly, it must be admitted that doing a sufficient number of various listening exercises is time consuming and that is why a lot of teachers of English try to avoid spending much time on teaching pronunciation. Notwithstanding these limitations, the study suggests that the pronunciation can be improved.

Further studies on the current topic are highly recommended. Further research should be done to investigate the possible ways how to ease perception and production of the consonants which Russian learners find difficult due to the differences in the vowel systems of English and Russian and a different tongue position of the consonants.

2.5 Ideas for further research

The present subchapter presents some ideas for further research on the assumption of the differences between Russian and English vowel and consonant systems and taking into consideration problems that a number of English sounds cause difficulties to Russian learners of English.

The present paper deals with the correction of the pronunciation of the most difficult vowels causing a wrong accent or sometimes even misunderstanding. Besides these difficult vowels such as the front fully open unrounded [æ] and the mixed mid-open unrounded long [ɜ:] and the three vowel contrasts [i:] / [i], [ɔ:] / [ɒ] and [u:] / [u], Russian learners of English experience many other problems in pronouncing English sounds. According to Monk and Burak (2001: 146), of the 24 English consonants, the forelingual apical (inter-) dental fricative voiceless [θ] and the corresponding voiced [ð], the backlingual velar nasal sonant [ŋ], and the bilabial velar sonant [w] which are not found in Russian, prove to be very difficult. The two [θ] and [ð] present major difficulties and are often replaced by [s] and [z]. Typical errors: *tin*/*sin* for *thin*, *useful* for *youthful*, *den*/*zen* for *then*. Interestingly, in Brown`s table (Fig. 1.1., see p. 27) contrasts [ð] and [θ] occupy rank 5, which is the middle place of importance. This means that quite much attention should still be paid to the pronunciation of these sounds. It is the duty of the first teacher of English. According to Hewings (2004: 18),"…all features of pronunciation (individual sounds, word stress, features of connected speech, intonation, etc.) will be present even *in the very earliest lessons with beginner students* [italics mine], both with what they hear and in what they are required to say." The sounds become easy once the student acquires the right position of the tongue as they have no counterparts in Russian. The Russian language cannot interfere. As for the sound [w] the Russian sounds [v] and [u] may interfere and often replace [w]. As for the sound [ŋ], the students tend to use the combination of [ŋ], [g], [n], which does not harm the understanding of the language although it gives a strange accent.

The sounds [l], [n], [t], [d] are often produced with the tongue touching the upper teeth which gives them a foreign sound. In Brown`s table contrasts [l] / [n] occupy rank 10, which is of high importance, the contrasts [t] / [d] occupy rank 9, which is also of high importance.

Russian learners of English tend to palatalise most English consonants before front vowels such as [i:], [i], [e] and [ɪə] in words like *tea,* (where the sound [t] begins to resemble [ts], *deed* (where the sound [d] begins to resemble [dz] (Monk and Burak 2001: 147). The difference between [w] and [v] is often not clearly felt, leading to confusion between, for example, *while* and *vile*, *west* and *vest.* The sound /w/ seems to cause special difficulties in words beginning with it such as *were / work / worth* (Shoebottom,n.d.). The contrast [w] / [v] occupies rank 8 in Brown`s table, which is of high importance.

The above-mentioned difficulties that Russian learners of English experience with pronouncing English sounds due to the differences in the phonetics of Russian and English and constant interference of Russian counterparts cause particular problems which give Russian learners sound with an accent and these problems are unfortunately inherent in a big number of Russian learners of English. As the further objective is to continue improving the segmental level of pronunciation of Russian learners of English, special approaches have to be found and special exercises have to be compiled how to make the effort most efficient while producing the sounds mentioned in this subchapter. Also, another group of students should participate in the following research. Then hopefully Russian learners of English would be able to obtain "listener-friendly" (Gilbert 2008) or good /acceptable pronunciation.

CONCLUSION

The present study has investigated the issues connected with improving the English pronunciation of Russian learners at a school with the Estonian language immersion. The topic has been prompted by teaching practice which has shown Russian students` problems while pronouncing particular English vowels such as [ɜ:] and [æ], distinguishing [e] / **[æ]**, [ɜ:] / [ɔː] and not always differentiating long and short vowels such as [iː] / [i], [ɔː] / [ɒ], [uː] / [u]. The idea was that the Estonian language could help Russian students with the improvement of especially difficult sounds mentioned above.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the present study. First, after comparing the vowel systems of English, Russian and Estonian the study has demonstrated, for the first time, that the vowel system of Estonian can help Russian learners to acquire better pronunciation. Second, this empirical study has shown that obtaining additional pronunciation practice with English and Estonian words, listening to dictations and doing critical listening tests that contain difficult sounds can help Russian students perceive and produce difficult English sounds and words with such sounds more correctly.

The thesis is organized into two main chapters. The first chapter of this thesis provides theoretical background of the research. The terms pronunciation and accent are defined, the importance of teaching pronunciation is accentuated and methods with approaches of teaching pronunciation are described. Moreover, background information on the vowel systems of English, Russian and Estonian is given, the comparison of the three languages was carried out and some pronunciation mistakes of Russian learners were mentioned.

The empirical part of the thesis (Chapter 2) introduces the method and the results of the research carried out during the period from September 2013 to March 2014. The results of

listening to dictations and students` critical listening tests were the means for collecting the necessary data. The research yielded relevant data presented and analysed herein. The second chapter finishes with presenting some ideas for further research.

This research may serve as a base for future studies in the field of phonetics and the findings of the present paper suggest a role for the Estonian language in promoting the quality of the pronunciation of Russian students. In addition, the present research could be useful for other teachers of English, whose learners simultaneously study Estonian and English, in order to improve their students` pronunciation or the material presented in this paper could be used for further research. Further research on improving pronunciation of Russian learners on the segmental level could focus on difficult consonants.

It is very difficult to obtain "listener-friendly" pronunciation for Russian learners of English, first of all due to the differences between the sound systems of Russian and English and the pedagogical objective of working on Russian learners` pronunciation is to help them achieve "listener-friendly pronunciation" (Gilbert 2008: 1). Although vocabulary and grammar are important elements in a foreign language learning, actually nowadays where oral communication has become vital and inevitable, the most important element in a foreign language learning is how to pronounce the vocabulary correctly (Yates & Zielinski 2009: 11). A speaker may try hard to say the word but the listener will not understand it because the wrong pronunciation will distort the whole message. "Learners with good English pronunciation are likely to be understood even if they make errors in other areas, whereas learners with bad pronunciation will not be understood, even if their grammar is perfect "(Gilakjani 2012). He adds that "/…/ such learners avoid speaking in English, and experience social isolation, employment difficulties and limited opportunities for further study". People are judged by the way they speak, and so learners with poor pronunciation may be judged as

incompetent, uneducated or lacking in knowledge. Being able to speak English with proper pronunciation not only makes our speech intelligible, but also builds up proper rapport with the listeners.

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APPENDIX 1. **Spectrograms of the English, Russian and Estonian vowels (in Hz)**

Spectrogram of the English vowels (Toots 1972)

Spectrogram of the Russian vowels (Bondarko & Lebedeva 1983)

Spectrograms of the Estonian vowels (Toots 1972)

APPENDIX 2.Sample test (initial). Identification and differentiation

[e] or [æ]:

merry[ ]	add [ ]	marry[ ]	hat[ ]	ham[ ]	pat[ ]	end[ ]
bag [ ]	man[ ]	set[ ]	said[ ]	pet[ ]	lend[ ]	band [ ]
hem [ ]	and[ ]	lack[ ]	head [ ]	act[ ]	flesh[ ]	sat[ ]
back [ ]	had[ ]	men[ ]	land [ ]	end[ ]	tan[ ]	ten[ ]
flash[ ]	gap[ ]	sad[ ]	lack [ ]	bend[ ]	at[ ]	beg[ ]

[ɔ:] or [ɜ:]:

world[ ]	work [ ]	first[ ]	worth[ ]	learn[ ]	purr[ ]	torn[ ]
ward [ ]	bore[ ]	fourth[ ]	store[ ]	lawn[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
fern [ ]	berth[ ]	were[ ]	stir [ ]	curt[ ]	[ ]	birth[ ]
form [ ]	burn[ ]	wore[ ]	church[ ]	court[ ]	[ ]	bought[ ]
walk[ ]	born[ ]	war[ ]	chalk [ ]	sought[ ]	saw[ ]	turn[ ]

[i:] or [ɪ] :

reach [ ]	hill[ ]	leave[ ]	live[ ]	heal [ ]	ship[ ]	mill[ ]
still[ ]	rich [ ]	seat[ ]	sheep[ ]	seed[ ]	fit[ ]	be[ ]
meal[ ]	leave[ ]	sin[ ]	steal[ ]	lick[ ]	bit[ ]	bee[ ]
least[ ]	fill[ ]	leak[ ]	sit[ ]	ski[ ]	seat[ ]	list[ ]
feel[ ]	tin[ ]	bid [ ]	feet[ ]	teen[ ]	bead[ ]	beat[ ]

[ɔː] or [ɒ]:

launch[ ]	walk[ ]	caught[ ]	all[ ]	port[ ]	cord[ ]	hop[ ]
wall[ ]	lord[ ]	pot[ ]	wrong [ ]	nought **[ ]**	for [ ]	four[ ]
call [ ]	lot [ ]	calk[ ]	odd [ ]	cot [ ]	cock[ ]	law[ ]
raw[ ]	saw [ ]	on [ ]	got[ ]	rock[ ]	pond[ ]	draw[ ]
not[ ]	nod[ ]	hot[ ]	blot[ ]	on[ ]	pod[ ]	jaw[ ]

[u:] or [u]:

soon[ ]	boot[ ]	foot[ ]	roomer[ ]	rude[ ]	moon[ ]	group[ ]
food [ ]	look[ ]	soothe[ ]	proof[ ]	shoot [ ]	suit [ ]	fool[ ]
full [ ]	root[ ]	pool [ ]	room[ ]	do[ ]	soup[ ]	shoe[ ]
lose [ ]	soot[ ]	duke[ ]	loop[ ]	pull[ ]	tool[ ]	sooth[ ]
good [ ]	rumour[ ]	new[ ]	doom[ ]	due [ ]	noon [ ]	nude[ ]

Sample test (final). Identification and differentiation

[e] or [æ]:

merry[ ]	add [ ]	marry[ ]	hat[ ]	ham[ ]	pat[ ]	end[ ]
bag [ ]	man[ ]	set[ ]	said[ ]	pet[ ]	lend[ ]	gas [ ]
hem [ ]	and[ ]	lack[ ]	head [ ]	act[ ]	flesh[ ]	sat[ ]
back [ ]	had[ ]	men[ ]	land [ ]	end[ ]	tan[ ]	ten[ ]
flash[ ]	gap[ ]	sad[ ]	lack [ ]	bend[ ]	gnat[ ]	beg[ ]

[i:] or [ɪ] :

reach [ ]	wit[ ]	leave[ ]	live[ ]	heal [ ]	ship[ ]	deem[ ]
still[ ]	rich [ ]	seat[ ]	sheep[ ]	seed[ ]	fit[ ]	be[ ]
sheath[ ]	leave[ ]	key[ ]	steal[ ]	weed[ ]	bit[ ]	bee[ ]
veal[ ]	leash [ ]	stick[ ]	yin[ ]	quay[ ]	seat[ ]	list[ ]
feel[ ]	neet [ ]	dim [ ]	feet[ ]	neat[ ]	bead[ ]	sip[ ]

[ɔ:] or [ɒ]:

launch[ ]	walk[ ]	caught[ ]	all[ ]	port[ ]	cord[ ]	mod[ ]
wall[ ]	lord[ ]	pot[ ]	cod [ ]	nought **[ ]**	for [ ]	four[ ]
call [ ]	talk [ ]	calk[ ]	odd [ ]	cot [ ]	moth[ ]	law[ ]
oar[ ]	saw [ ]	jaw[ ]	thong[ ]	yacht[ ]	pond[ ]	draw[ ]
not[ ]	nod[ ]	hot[ ]	blot[ ]	orb[ ]	pod[ ]	jaw[ ]

[u:] or [u]:

soon[ ]	boot[ ]	foot[ ]	roomer[ ]	rude[ ]	moon[ ]	flue[ ]
food [ ]	look[ ]	blue[ ]	proof[ ]	shoot [ ]	suit [ ]	fool[ ]
full [ ]	you[ ]	rook [ ]	room[ ]	do[ ]	chew[ ]	shoe[ ]
lose [ ]	soot[ ]	crew[ ]	loop[ ]	pull[ ]	tool[ ]	sooth[ ]
good [ ]	rumour[ ]	sleuth[ ]	doom[ ]	true [ ]	noon [ ]	ruin[ ]

APPENDIX 3. Sample test (initial). Critical listening

Read: [e] or [æ]?

1	add	peck	lass	pack	get	ate	Sal
2	lack	lap	trap	act	bad	gat	set
3	nag	sad	sag	Ken	men	Jack	bat
4	mass	gem	jam	bag	sat	at	beg
5	ten	tan	man	hen	back	bet	flesh
6	had	bed	lend	land	bend	hand	lag
7	sack	band	head	ant	fat	ash	flash

Read: [ɜ:] or [ɔː]?

1	fir	worm	warn	sir	blur	dwarf	earn
2	firm	learn	born	work	stern	burn	world
3	lawn	swirl	perk	birth	bought	saw	form
4	call	fern	board	worst	mirth	err	shirt
5	four	bird	warm	form	turn	lurk	curl
6	word	earl	serve	twirl	torn	ward	earth
7	short	walk	perm	pork	worth	worn	surge

Sample test (final). **Critical listening**

Read: [e] or [æ]?

1	add	peck	than	pack	get	frank	gas
2	badge	lap	trap	act	bad	gat	set
3	pal	sad	sag	plaid	men	Jack	bat
4	strand	kettle	jam	bag	sat	then	beg
5	get	tan	man	hen	back	bet	flesh
6	had	bed	lend	land	bend	hand	lag
7	sack	cattle	head	ant	fat	ash	men

Read: [ɜ:] or [ɔ:]?

1	fir	berth	were	sir	blur	dwarf	earn
2	firm	learn	born	work	stern	burn	world
3	lawn	swirl	perk	birth	bought	saw	were
4	call	fern	board	worst	mirth	stir	oar
5	four	bird	warm	form	turn	lurk	curl
6	word	earl	serve	twirl	torn	ward	earth
7	purr	walk	perm	turf	worth	worn	surge

APPENDIX 4. Sample exercises

1. Listen and repeat. Estonian pairs of words.

[a] / [ä] Estonian-Estonian	[ɔ:]/ [ö:] Estonian-Estonian	[ɪ] / [i:] Estonian-Estonian	[ɒ] / [ɔ:] Estonian-Estonian	[u]/ [u:] Estonian-Estonian
kare – käre rand – ränd vars – värss	oo!- öö loo-löö tool-tööl roov-rööv soo-söö rookima-röökima	pilu-piilu linn-liin ligi-liigi	pole-poole koll-kool toll-tool ropp-roop	kus- kuus mull-muul pudel- puudel tull- tuul nutt-nuut puder-puuder musa-muusa kumma-kuuma

2. Listen and repeat Estonian-English pairs of words.

[ä] / [æ] Estonian-English	[ɔ:]/[ɔ:] Estonian-English	[i:] / [i:] Estonian-English	[u:] / [u:] Estonian-English	[ö:] / [ɜ:] Estonian-English
mänd–man händ-hand päkk-pack läte-latter säde-sadder ränk-rank	hool-hall lood-lord kood-cord noot-naught	liiv-leave niit-neet tiik-teak siin-seen riid-read	muud-mood muud-mood luuk-luke truu-true puud-pood	vööd- word föön-fern löök-lurk söö-sir pöök-perk tööd-third

3. Drilling English minimal pairs.

[e] / [æ]

bed –bad   pet-pat   peck-pack   beg-bag   men-man   bend-band

merry-marry   lend-land   mess-mass   lend-land   ten-tan   send –sand

said –sad   pen-pan   send-sand   bet-bat

[ɔ:] / [ɜ:]

walk- work   Paul- pearl   ward-word   cord-curd   lawn-learn   torn-turn

[i:] / [ɪ]

seed – Cid   peat -pit   read-rid   leak -lick   seen-sin   peak -pick   teak – tick

leap -lip   rich -reach   bit- beat   knit – neat   live – leave   seat- sit   feel - fill

[ɔ:] / [ɒ]

cord - cod   naught -not   caught – cot   roared - rod   calk –cock

[u:] / [u]

food-foot   luke - look   pood-put   pool-pull

APPENDIX 5. **Recommended online sources of pronunciation activities**

www. uiowa.edu. The comparison of the sounds. Video and animated pictures.

international.ouc.bc.ca. Dictations. Tongue twisters.

www.learnenglish.de. Poems

www.shiporsheep.com Pair of words with illustrations.

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

Irina Art

IMPROVEMENT OF ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION OF A RUSSIAN LEARNER IN A

RUSSIAN SCHOOL WITH THE ESTONIAN LANGUAGE IMMERSION

(Vene õpilaste inglise keele hääldamise parandamine eesti keele kümblusega vene koolis)
Magistritöö
2014
Lehekülgede arv: 85

Annotatsioon:

’Kuulaja-sõbraliku’ (st. kuulajale kergesti arusaadavat) hääldamise omandamine on üks võimalustest olla arusaadav ja see eeldab edukat suhtlemist. Käesolev töö pakub hääldamise õpetamise meetodite ajaloolist ülevaate. Käesoleva töö peamine eesmärk on välja selgitada, kuidas venelaste inglise keele hääldamist parandada eesti keele hääldamise kaudu eesti keele kümblusega koolis.

Magistri töö peamine eesmärk on teada saada, kas on mõttekas kasutada eesti keele vokaalide omadusi vene õpilaste inglise keele vokaalide hääldamise parandamiseks, kuna eesti ja inglise keele vokaalidel on palju ühiseid jooni. Kuulamisel tehtud diktaatide ja kriitilise kuulamise (õpilased ise loevad sõnu, teksti) testide alusel kogutakse vastavad andmed ja tehakse järeldused.

Töö esimene osa annab ülevaate eesti, vene ja inglise keele vokaalide süsteemidest. Samuti on antud põhjused, miks on pööratud tähelepanu ainult teatud vokaalide hääldamise parandamisele.

Töö eine osa tutvustab uuringu küsimusi, meetodeid, osavõtvate õpilaste arvu ja uuringu toiminguid, mida kasutatakse käesolevas töös. 22-liikmeline grupp 8. klassi õpilastest eesti keele kümblusega Tartu Annelinna gümnaasiumist jaotatakse kahte rühma ja mõlemad rühmad võtavad osa katsetest (diktaadid) nii alg- kui ka lõppstaadiumis, mis korraldatakse septembris 2013 ja märtsis 2014. Vahepealseid harjutusi teeb aga ainult üks rühm.

Viidete osa sisaldab 53 allikat ja 5 lisa esitavad näitematerjali ja linke.

Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja lõputöö üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks

Mina _____Irina Art_____

isikukood: _____46608032713_____

1. annan Tartu Ülikoolile tasuta loa (lihtlitsentsi) enda loodud teose
____Improvement Of English Pronunciation Of Russian Learners In A Russian School With The Estonian Language Immersion._____,

mille juhendaja on _____Natalja Zagura_____,

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Tartus __16.05.2014_____ (*kuupäev*)

_____Irina Art_____

(*allkiri*)