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ПОДОЛАННЯ ФОНЕТИЧНОГО БАР'ЄРУ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ НАВЧАННЯ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ БІЖЕНЦІВ)

Внаслідок війни українці роз'їхалися по багатьох країнах, переважно Європи. Однак проживання за кордоном може бути складним, особливо з огляду на проблеми комунікації. Мовний бар'єр може не лише перешкоджати працевлаштуванню, але й ускладнювати виконання повсякденних справ. Саме тому для українських біженців оволодіння англійською мовою є одним із головних пріоритетів.

Життєво важливо визначити виклики у вивченні англійської мови як іноземної за раптової необхідності її вивчення, враховуючи відсутність мовної підготовки або її недостатність, вікові особливості та різний освітній рівень українських біженців. Мета статті – описати проблеми, пов'язані з вивченням фонетики на початковому етапі вивчення англійської мови як іноземної (A1, A2, відповідно до Європейського мовного стандарту) для успішного оволодіння мовою в контексті європейської інтеграції.

Основними методами збору даних дослідження були фокус-групи, інтерв'ю та спостереження за українськими біженцями, які проживали в Польщі впродовж року, з січня по грудень 2023 року і проходили курс англійської мови (A1-A2) "English Up Your Life" у Варшавському Університеті (Варшава, Польща). Зазначимо, що Варшавський університет організував різні ініціативи підтримки українців після вторгнення Росії в Україну 24 лютого 2022 року. Різноманітні форми допомоги в університеті були об'єднані, скоординовані та включені до комплексної програми підтримки «Варшавський університет для України».

Після оцінки даних було визначено основні проблеми у фонетичному вивченні англійської мови українцями та розроблено серію вправ, спрямованих на подолання виявлених труднощів. У запропонованих вправах основна увага приділялася таким трьома аспектам: 1) слух – фізична демонстрація, вправи на розрізнення і т.д.; 2) відтворення – власне відтворення звуків; і 3) ширші контексти. У статті наводяться детальні, але стислі пояснення відмінностей між фонетичними явищами англійської та української мов.

Ключові слова: засвоєння фонетики англійської мови, навчання фонетиці, фонетичні помилки, українські студенти.

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OVERCOMING ENGLISH PHONETIC BARRIER (ON THE EXAMPLE OF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES' LEARNING)

Ukrainian refugees have dispersed over several nations, mostly in Europe, as a result of the war. However, residing abroad might be difficult, particularly when considering communication problems. Not only can language barriers hinder an individual's ability to obtain employment, but they can also increase the difficulty of daily chores. For Ukrainian refugees, mastering English is therefore one of their top priorities.

It is seen to be vital to identify challenges in learning EFL in light of the suddenness of setting goals for learning English, the absence or inadequate language preparation, and the varying age and educational backgrounds of Ukrainian refugees. The article aims to describe the challenges associated with learning phonetics at the beginning of EFL (A1, A2) in keeping with the European Language Standard's level requirements for successful language acquisition in the context of EU integration.

The primary methods used to collect the data were focus groups, interviews, and observations of Ukrainian refugees living in Poland over a year, from January to December 2023, attending the English language classes (A1–A2) “English Up Your Life” in Warsaw University (Warsaw, Poland). It should be noted that the University of Warsaw organised different support initiatives, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The various forms of assistance at the university were brought together, coordinated and included in the comprehensive support programme “Warsaw University for Ukraine”.

After the data was evaluated, the primary challenges in Ukrainian learners' phonetic learning of English were identified. Then, a series of exercises targeting the disclosed complexity were carried out. The three main areas of emphasis for the suggested practical instruction were: 1) hearing – physical demonstration, discriminating exercises, etc.); 2) production – actually producing sounds; and 3) broader contexts. Additionally, detailed yet succinct explanations were provided to highlight the distinctions between phonetic phenomena in English and Ukrainian.

Key words: *English phonetic acquisition, phonetic learning, phonetic errors, Ukrainian learners.*

Formulation of the focus problem. Due to Russia's war in Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees have spread across various countries in Europe. But staying in a foreign country is a challenge, especially regarding the communicative issues. According to data from multiple OECD countries, language barriers are among the most common hurdles Ukrainians face when fleeing to a new country (Kasu, 2022). This matter affects not only their access to the labour market but also their handling of day-to-day tasks, including visiting stores, consulting doctors, studying at school, and much more. Undoubtedly,

learning the English language is in the interests of refugees.

The issue of Ukrainian refugees' adaptation potential has become topical since the beginning of the Russian war. Under the term of Ukrainian refugees in Poland we mean those Ukrainians who are seeking asylum in Poland fled the war from 24.02.2022 till now. Since the beginning of full-scale war, Europe has experienced consistent refugee migration and intake caused by the growing instability (Jaroszewicz et al., 2022). Due to this the academic community has explored different large-scale aspects of refugee

migration, resettlement, and support, situating education and research as the main drivers of Europe's sustainable growth in the present and future (Latoszek et al., 2015). In contrast, micro-level, alternative solutions, aspects, and concerns of refugee migration have remained seemingly imperceptible in academic conversations. One of the areas that remain extremely under-researched and inconspicuous at the intersection of modern refugee studies and civil society in Europe is the role of communication as a European integration factor and the complexities in EFL acquisition

Taking into consideration the abruptness of setting goals for learning English, lack of or minimal linguistic preparation, different age and educational background of Ukrainian refugees, it is considered important to identify difficulties in learning EFL, and its phonetics in particular, as it is impossible to cover all aspects of studying the language in one article.

Setting objectives. The article aims to outline the difficulties in learning phonetics at the initial stage of learning EFL. It contains examples of difficulties in learning English phonetics.

Presenting main material. The data was gathered through interviews, focus groups, and observations of Ukrainian refugees in Poland within a year period from January 2023 till December 2023 during the courses of the English language "English Up Your Life". The courses were conducted in terms of "Warsaw University for Ukraine", a component of the project of the Third Mission of the Faculty of Modern Languages of the University of Warsaw, aimed at supporting refugees from Ukraine who arrived in Poland after February 24.

Participants. Ukrainian refugees in Poland (12 groups with approximately 20 students in each) from different regions of Ukraine, 21–72 aged, female and male, with different educational backgrounds, and a low level of command of English or even without it in some exceptions. The findings revealed examples of difficulties in learning and acquisition of English phonetics. Besides, most of the refugees were simultaneously learning English and Polish and sometimes another L2/Ln that deepened the complexity of EFL acquisition and affected students' motivation.

To cope with this task the university teachers and the authors of the article had to conduct preliminary work and to look through various strategies. In this case "New Generation School Teacher", a joint project of the British Council Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine should be mentioned as it helped academic staff look at the problem of teaching English methodology from a new

perspective. This project has proved that the course of methodology is effective, innovative, stimulating and thought-provoking. As professional project evaluator Alan S. Mackenzie emphasised in his final report, students' needs as student teachers were taken into account more and that the course prepared them well for teaching. What is more, one of the recommendations is to use the experience of implementing this course for developing all other courses for training future teachers (Mackenzie, 2019).

Now, due to the challenging circumstances, university teachers should think how to implement their knowledge and experience not only for preparing future teachers for children but how to teach trainee teachers to work with adults and even traumatised ones. According to Bill No. 9432, English is designated as one of the official languages of international communication in Ukraine, approved by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine at its first reading. Taking into account these requirements, the formation of the phonetic competencies in students was valid and reliable.

So, professors need to consider how to apply their expertise to train future teachers not just for the classroom but also for working with individuals of all ages and variable backgrounds.

Findings. Learners of English frequently regard phonetics as secondary to mastering grammar and acquiring a large vocabulary of useful phrases. However, they impart their English expertise to the listener through their phonetics. EFL learners may make a number of mistakes without learning phonetics or ignoring it, which can hinder communication, causing barriers. But it is the teacher who should explain the role of phonetics and its necessity in learning English.

For teachers it will be useful to know that these errors can be divided, according to scientists B. Collins and I. M. Mees, into three groups. The first group contains errors that lead to the breakdown of intelligibility, such as crucial phonemic contrasts both in consonant system and vowel system, consonant clusters etc. The second group includes errors which can lead to irritation or amusement, for instance different problems with "th" sound, inappropriate "r" articulation and so on. And the problems with intonation, compound stress etc. the authors refer to the third group which is not so important (Collins & Mees, 2013).

It is obvious that teachers should pay attention to all the groups but the first group of errors is prioritised.

Having analysed the data we found out that the main complexities in English phonetic acquisition for Ukrainian learners are:

1. Phonemic contrasts in vowel system, such as /æ – e/, /i: – ɪ/, /ɜ: – e/, /ʊ – u: /;

2. Phonemic contrasts in consonant system, such as /v – w/, /s – z/, /θ – ð/ and /n – ŋ/;

3. Pronunciation of /h/, /r/, /θ/, /ð/;

4. Contrasts in diphthongs;

5. Palatalisation.

The importance of proper English phonetics study is highlighted by the fact, that for many non-native English speakers a number of English vowels and even some consonants tend to sound the same – the qualities in 'bit' and 'beat', 'bid' and 'bead', and groups like 'bad', 'bed', 'bud' and 'barred' are notoriously problematic. Phonetics facilitates the ability to understand, hear and reproduce different sound qualities. Unfortunately, the pronunciation aspect of EFL learning is very often overlooked, leaving the students almost deaf to the sounds from their additional, non-native language.

Suggested practical training is mainly centred on:

1) hearing: physical demonstration, discrimination exercises. For example:

/i: – ɪ/

Listen and underline the word you hear.

1. Sheep or ship? Do you like this *sheep* / *ship*?

2. Chicks or cheeks? Look! Her *chicks* / *cheeks* are so plump!

3. Neat or knit? Her dress is *neat* / *knit*.

4. Live or leave? Do you want to *live* / *leave*?

5. Heels or hills? She likes high *heels* / *hills*.

/s-z/

Listen to the sentences. Look at the words in *italic*. Underline the words in *italic* which contain the sound /s/ and circle the ones with the sound /z/.

1. You may take my German dictionary – I don't *use* it. This dictionary is no *use* to me.

2. I won't *advise* you anything because you never listen to any *advice*.

3. This ring is too *loose*. You may *lose* it if you aren't careful.

4. Let's go for a pizza. The café is *close* to us and it doesn't *close* till midnight.

5. No, I won't *excuse* you – there isn't any *excuse* for your behaviour.

2) production – physically making sounds. For example:

Read as quickly as possible:

/θ/

Martha, Martha's birthday, Martha's birthday was on Thursday, Martha's birthday was on Thursday last month, Martha's birthday was on Thursday on the thirteenth of last month

/ð/

Mother, mother and father, mother and father like weather, mother and father like this weather, their mother and father like this weather, their mother and father like this weather and not that weather

/θ – ð/

the – thin, this – thick, think – these, third – that, teeth – those, brother – thorn, northern – thousand, thieves – mother, another – anything.

/v – w/

In winter; a vest in winter; a woollen vest in winter; a white woollen vest in winter; a very warm white woollen vest in winter; wears a very warm white woollen vest in winter; often wears a very warm white woollen vest in winter; Vicky often wears a very warm white woollen vest in winter; Vicky Wise often wears a very warm white woollen vest in winter.

3) expanded contexts. For example:

1. Is the -r- in the following words in British English silent or not:

learn, carrot, story, carry, four, butter, careful, cry, here, drink. (Mykhalchuk, et al., 2015).

2. Choose correctly: *happy* / ʌ / - /æ / - /ɑ: /; *delivered* / t / - / d / - / ɪ d /; *who* / ʊ / - / u: / - / ɒ /; *dance* / e / - / ɒ / - / æ /; *finishes* / s / - / z / - / ɪ z /; *wished* / t / - / d / - / ɪ d /; *runs* / ɪ z / - / z / - / s /; *tooth* / z / - / ð / - / θ /; *stop* / ɒ / - / ʌ / - / ɔ: /; *juice* / ʊ / - / u: / - / ʌ /; *head* / ə / - / e / . (Mykhalchuk, et al., 2015).

3. Read each of the sentences below twice, using word (a) in the first reading and word (b) in the second. Then read again and use either (a) or (b), while your fellow student tries to identify in each case the word you have pronounced.

(a. *back*; b. *pack*) 1. Now I must ...

(a. *bear*; b. *pear*) 2. You can't eat a whole...

(a. *mob*; b. *mop*) 3. The leader kept the ... well in hand.

(a. *gold*; b. *cold*) 4. Are you getting ...?

(a. *cave*; b. *gave*) 5. Under great pressure they ... in.

(a. *back*; b. *bag*) 6. Put your coat on your...

(a. *bed*; b. *bet*) 7. When he moved he lost his...

(a. *let*; b. *led*) 8. A traitor ... the enemy in.

(a. *thought*; b. *taught*) 9. I would never...that.

(a. *booth*; b. *boot*) 10. That ... is too small.

(a. *thinking*; b. *sinking*) 11. Are you... or just lying there? (Mykhalchuk, et al., 2015).

4. Underline the correct transcription of the word.

a) *pay* / peɪ / / peə / e) *dear* / dɪə / / deə /

b) *write* / raɪt / / rəʊt / f) *boy* / bɔɪ / / bæʊ /

c) *phone* / fəʊn / / fəʊm / g) *tour* / tʊə / / təʊ /

d) *round* / reɪnd / / raʊnd / h) *fair* / fɪə / / feə / (Mykhalchuk, et al., 2015).

Ukrainian students of English sometimes replace the English /t, d/ by the corresponding Ukrainian sounds. For the English consonants /t, d/ the tip (not

the blade) of the tongue should be pressed against the alveolar ridge (not the upper teeth). When they are pronounced the students should be careful to make them strong and aspirated.

Ukrainian learners of English may carelessly pronounce /w/ instead of /v/. This mistake is a phonological one. To avoid it the mirror should be used to make sure that the upper lip is out of the way.

Learners of English sometimes pronounce /f, v/ instead of /θ, ð/ because there are no similar sounds in Ukrainian. To avoid this, the lower lip should be kept out of the way. Sometimes /t, d/ may be heard instead of /θ, ð/. To get rid of the mistake the tip or the blade of the tongue should not be pressed either against the teeth ridge or the teeth. If /s, z/ are heard, remember that the tip should be against the edge of the upper teeth.

Ukrainian learners of English sometimes pronounce the English sound /h/ as a very strong sound. They should remember that it occurs only before vowels and is a pure sound of breath, so they must prepare the organs of speech for the articulation of the vowel and breathe the air weakly out of the mouth.

Very often Ukrainian EFL learners replace English /ŋ/ by /n/ because there is no similar sound in Ukrainian. To avoid this mistake, teachers should explain how to raise the back of the tongue to the soft palate. The tip of the tongue should not rise at all being kept at the lower teeth. A mirror may help to check the position of the tongue.

Some Ukrainian speakers tend to replace the bilabial sonorant /w/ by the English labio-dental, fricative /v/. Not to make the mistake of keeping the lips well rounded when /w/ is pronounced; there should be a glide towards the following vowel.

Ukrainian learners often replace the English post-alveolar sonorant /r/ by the Ukrainian alveolar rolled /p/. To get rid of this mistake they should move the tip of the tongue to the back of the alveolar ridge and keep it tense at some distance from it so that no tapping of the tongue could be made when the air goes through the passage.

Also typical mistakes of Ukrainian learners lie in devoicing voiced consonants before voiceless ones and voicing voiceless consonants before voiced ones.

The Ukrainian consonants /п, б/ are mainly pronounced in the same way, but the lips are not so tense as for the English /p, b/.

The Ukrainian consonants /т, д/ are produced with the blade of the tongue against the back of the upper teeth. They are dental, while the corresponding English sounds are apical alveolar and the Ukrainian consonant /т/ is not aspirated.

The Ukrainian consonants /к, т/ are produced in a similar way as English corresponding sounds, but the breath effort for the Ukrainian /к/ is not so strong as for the English /k/ which is aspirated.

Palatalisation is softening consonants due to raising of the front part of the tongue to the hard palate. In Ukrainian palatalisation is an essential feature as it helps distinguish words (e.g. *пис – рись, тин – тинь, бік – бик*) whereas in English all consonants (except for /ʃ/ and /ʒ/) are hard and do not have palatalized oppositions. Although palatalisation in English is a phonetic mistake, Ukrainian EFL students almost always palatalise consonants before front and mixed vowels because of the habit of doing so in the native language. To avoid this mistake, it is worth reminding learners that they should start to articulate the preceding vowel only after completing the articulation of the consonant.

For instance, fill the difference, making clear distinction between the Ukrainian-English counterparts in the following sets of words. Pay attention to the palatalised consonants: *нік – peak, колонія – colony, фільм – film, фініш – finish, ризик – risk, руль – rule, буй – bay, тайм – time.*

Differences in the articulation basis of languages including those of English and Ukrainian have not been sufficiently investigated. But the most general and characteristic points of difference between the articulation basis of English and that of Ukrainian in the matter of lip and tongue positions is the general tendency toward retracted position in Ukrainian.

In English the tongue in neutral position lies somewhat farther back than in Ukrainian while the tongue tip has a general tendency to move towards the teeth-ridge, whereas in Ukrainian it tends to move towards the upper front teeth. The result is that most forelingual consonants are alveolar in English and dental in Ukrainian.

English classification of vowels differs from those of Ukrainian. All English vowels (with the exception of diphthongs) are generally divided into long and short. The length of vowels influences the meaning of the word.

Ukrainian consonants in word final position mostly are partially devoiced and weak. In English the final consonants are strong in order to prevent phonological mistakes.

Conclusions. The process of integration within social communication is ensured by awareness, comprehension, and EFL learning. The article lists the main obstacles to phonetic learning and underlines how crucial it is to overcome them to acquire English within the framework of EU integration. As a result, the problem of English language phonetic learning is urgent and calls for appropriate solutions.

Developing phonemic awareness is essential for word identification abilities that aid in integration, communication, and adaption.

Ukrainian refugees are facing challenges in learning EFL, accounting language barriers,

lack of preparation, varying age and educational backgrounds. The paper identifies primary challenges in phonetic learning and emphasises the importance of addressing them for successful language acquisition in the context of EU integration.

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