

The Cultivation of Russian Phonetic Communication Competence

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Abstract—The successful mastery of oral Russian largely depends on the audio-phonetic competence. To master a foreign language is to have such 5 competences as listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. This paper only deals with the relationship between the former 4 competences and phonetic study. The relationship between listening and speaking and phonetics is very close, and reading is also based on audio-phonetic competence. Reading-based teaching method can promote the coherence of phonetic organs and improve reading speed. Even if grammar is correct, incorrect pronunciation and stress will directly hinder the interpretation of language. Besides, the degree to which one masters pronunciation directly influences writing. Phonetic errors are often reflected in writing. Thus, pronunciation is very important in mastering a foreign language.

Index Terms—communication competence, Russian phonetic, stress, intonation

Linguistic phonetic system is the base of phoneme. Phonetic system determines the correlations between different sounds in a language (Xiujin A.N., 2003). For instance, the consonant can be divided into hard consonant and soft consonant in Russian, whereas there is no the partition in English and Chinese. To pronounce угол and уголь accurately, Russians will correct their own articulation consciously. Otherwise, the lexical meaning will change. If we pronounce the 'L' in English harder or softer, the words just sound strange while the meanings do not change. It will be very difficult for students to study the articulation between phonetic systems of Russian and first language. The phonetic places of articulation seem coincident, but they are different actually. When we study the articulation of Russian, the knowledge of phonetic system can help overcome the difficulties (Liangtuoweiqi O. A., 2007). Teachers explain theoretical knowledge at the same time; they select appropriate data and organize exercises. So the students can understand the essentials of articulation of each sound gradually.

When teaching the articulation, the best way is to depend on its native language. The articulation proficiency which everyone masters has become a self-conscious behavior when he was young. Therefore, when learning the Russian articulation, students will go with the features of their first language naturally. At present, the majority of Chinese students don't major in Russian until they attend universities. Besides, they begin to learn Russian after learning English for six to ten years. As a result, the articulation students learn will be influenced by their native language (Chinese) and English. For 'Zero-based' Russian learning students, the phonetic learning and phonetic drills seem very important at the beginning of Russian learning. Phonetic learning is the base in cultivating the ability of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

In order to achieve the state of conscious pronunciation, teachers should first let students drill monophonic, make up syllables and then read the whole words. Students do the articulation training repeatedly like this until they could use words in sentences in communication. At the same time, they should focus on 'speaking' and make the verbal phonetic aspects to be a conscious behavior. Therefore, the important thing is to make students begin communicative activities as soon as possible (after learning articulation) in teaching initial stage.

Generally speaking, phonetic teaching can be organized in initial stage according to the following two phases: phonetic introduction course and phonetic accompanying course.

I. PHONETIC INTRODUCTION COURSE

The task of phonetic introduction is to cultivate students' listening and pronunciation skills and facilitate students' mastery of basic characteristics of Russian phonetic system. In general, it takes about six weeks (in the non-Russian environment) to teach the course with the content as follows:

1. The contrast between monophonic and basic phonemes (vowel-consonant, voiceless sound-voiced sound, hard sound-soft sound)
2. The stress rhythm pattern of monosyllable, two-syllables and three-syllables.
3. The four Intonation types used in distinguishing communication types of sentences: contour-1 used for declarative sentence; contour-2 used for interrogative sentences with interrogative; contour-3 used for interrogative sentences without interrogative; contour-4 used for interrogative sentences with contrast significance.

Phonetic introduction course can be divided into two types: taking the native language into account and taking no account of native language. The phonetic learning will be more effective if the consideration is given on systematic characteristics in Russian and native language phonetics. This kind of contrast will make Chinese students know which

sound can be mastered easily and which sound will be difficult to master. Monophonic learning varies in sequence from easy to hard. At the first few lessons, teachers let students observe the different position of lips and tongue and experience the muscle feeling. And then comes to the vocal organs just like lips and tongue.

From the observation of physiological aspects, we can find that Russian and Chinese differ dramatically in phonetics since both of them have no completely same monophonic.

First, in vowel respect:

1. There are monophonic alone just like [a], [o], [y]. But there are not only monophonic just like <a>, <o>, <u> but also diphthong like <ia>, <ou>, <iao> in Chinese.
2. The tongue position will be lower to pronounce Russian vowels than pronounce homologous vowels in Chinese.
3. When pronouncing [o], [y] in Russian, the degree of the overhanging and rounding will be more obvious in the articulation of Russian than in the homologous Chinese vowels.
4. The central high non lip vowel [ы] in Russian has no homologous phoneme in Chinese.

Chinese often confuse the vowels in Russian and Chinese, such as [a]-<a>, [o]-<o>, [y]-<u>, [и]-<i>, [ы]-<ei>, [э]-<ai>, [б]-, [к]-<k>, [л]-<l> and so on (Zhao Aiguo, Jiang Yaming, 2003). Actually, in the process of pronouncing the similar sounds, we use different vocal organs and vocal positions both in Russian and Chinese. Thus, we should distinguish them particularly in initial learning stage and teachers should explain their distinction with demonstration, or they can let students imitate the acoustic recording.

Secondly, in consonant respect:

1. One important feature of Russian consonant is to have corresponding relation with voiceless consonant and voiced consonant, such as [п-б], [т-д], [ш-ж] and so on while no such kind of relation exists in Chinese but the corresponding relation with aspirated and inspirited just like <b-p>, <q-j>, <c-z> and so on.
2. There is the corresponding relation with soft and hard in Russian just like [б-б'], [д-д'], [х-х'] and so on whereas there isn't in Chinese.
3. There are their own particular sounds respectively in Russian and Chinese, such as [р], [ы] in Russian and <z>, <ch>, <eng> in Chinese and so on.
4. The number and position of consonants as well as the combination of vowels are relatively free in Russian: one consonant in one syllable or two or more consonant clusters such as (звонок, английский, общежитие); Consonants can be put before vowels or after vowels; The syllables can be open syllables or closed syllables. Moreover, most consonants can be used at the end of closed syllables. But in Chinese syllables, the number and position are regular: [1] one syllable only has one consonant and at most two syllables. If one syllable has two consonants, the vowel must be placed between the two consonants; [2] most consonants only can be positioned before vowels, or prior to syllables with the exception of the consonants <n>, <ng>, <r>, which can be put after vowels, say, at the end of syllables. [3] They do not have consonant clusters. [4] Syllables are almost open syllables, and closed syllables are less. [5] The closed syllables can only be ended with the consonants <n>, <ng>, <r> etc (Zhao Aiguo Jiang Yaming, 2003).

The physiological differences between Chinese (or English) and Russian will lead to the mistakes in phonetic. Therefore we should put more attention on the distinction at the primary stage.

Students are required to listen to letters materials (syllables or words) in the previous lessons of phonetic introduction in order to train their audition and build the auditory standard of phonetic phenomena that have been learned. Gradually, students will be cultivated to read the phonetic materials on one side and listen to the recording and read the syllables, words and short verses after it on the other side. With the gradually increased difficulties of the practice, it train students' audition as well as build up their pronunciation foundation. Several types of practice can be involved such as : «Слушайте слова и предложения», «Определите место ударения», «Опознайте тренируемый звук», «Определите тип ИК» и т. д. The practice training the speech speed may include: «Читайте текст вместе с диктором», «Читайте текст в паузу» (Xiujin A.N., 2003). Compared to audition, the articulate chart, articulate methods pictures and palate bitmap also have great advantages owing to their intuitive visual effects. When practicing individual sound, students can checkout their own place of articulation by a mirror, paying attention to the rounded lips, openness when pronounce vowels, the closure of lips and the features of tongue dorsum etc.

II. PHONETIC ACCOMPANYING TRAINING

In order to foster our listening, speaking, reading and writing capability, we start to go further study on lexical and grammar materials after phonetic introduction course. At present, the students can't fully possess listening and pronunciation skills. Therefore, it is necessary to have basic Russian class accompanied by phonetic training.

The task of phonetic accompanying training is to improve students' pronunciation skillfully and the corresponding training are as follows:

1. Collocation of consonants and vowels in different phonemes, consonant collocation and vowel collocation and word pronunciation of various grammatical forms.
2. Rhythm modes of polysyllabic words and the words of stress changed and unchanged
3. Words continuity in utterance, unstressed words and weak stress words
4. The combination regularity in context, distribution and transference of the contour central

The phonetic accompanying training is usually arranged about five to ten minutes at the beginning of the class. So it

can effectively shift the students' hearing and speech organs to the Russian articulation. If there are not corresponding exercises in textbooks, teachers should prepare practice materials before classes. The forms and types of phonetic training are various: Reading samples (The more difficult phonetic phenomena occur in teachers' dictation should be read several more times. And teachers can remind students to notice the difficulties, then carry on drills.); for some difficult sounds, students can practice by reading idioms, mottos and tongue twisters and recite short poems and songs. They can also play games to memorize the sounds: to speak out the words with particular phonemes as requirement. An experienced teacher will shift to phonetic training more than once and correct students' mistakes in practice in order to remind students of their attention to articulation.

III. IMITATION METHODS AND ANALYSIS OF IMITATION METHODS

There are two ways of learning phonetics: imitation method and analysis of imitation method (conscious method) (Xiujin A.N., 2003).

Imitation method refers to the way of students' imitation after listening to the phonetic samples. The role of teachers is to read by themselves or to play the recording samples while the students need to hear the phonetic samples accurately (Wang Dechun, 2001). In fact, because of their early formed native language system, usually it is hard for adults to recognize foreign pronunciation exactly. The disadvantage of imitation is that students' learning achievement totally depends on their phonetic competence. Since children's imitation ability is the best, with the age increasing, a great majority of people's imitation gradually slow down. Therefore, when undergraduates practice pronunciation, imitation method only functions as a supplement.

Analysis of imitation method is the main means of phonetic study. What the students should do is to analyze phonetic acoustic attribute, imitate the position and methods of articulation and compare each sound in phonetics. Students' imitation is based on their research on the phonetic phenomena, hence, teachers may make use of the articulator table, graph and diagram showing the changes in various types of tone to show as a pronunciation model. Moreover, it is better to notice that the analysis should come before the imitation, thus the result will be better.

IV. PRONUNCIATION SKILLS OF SEVERAL DIFFICULT SOUNDS IN RUSSIAN

In Russia, the pronunciation of [ы] is a difficult sound for all foreign learners. When you pronounce this sound, you should pay attention to the means. The sound is produced by raising the middle of the tongue, moving tongue backward forcefully, opening lips sideward with about 1 cm between upper and lower teeth. The practice of the three dorso-velar sounds (р), (к), (х) plays a auxiliary role in mastering the pronunciation of (ы).

The most difficult sounds in consonants are rustlings and affricates. When pronouncing (ж) (ш), we should move the tongue backward forcefully, curve the tip of the tongue and raise it, make lips rounded in order to make the powerful and fluent airstream go through the palate. When pronouncing (ж), make sure the vocal cords vibrate. Meanwhile, the mastery of the three sounds (о), (у), (г) will be a help to the pronunciation of (ж).

The gist of pronouncing the consonants ш is: We should move tongue forward with both sides of the tongue contacting the side of teeth. Besides, the tongue tip pushes against the bottom of teeth and two lips move forward and get rounded. When the lips get closer to teeth, keep your upper and lower teeth open, then strong airstream can flow to the alveolar. If students can pronounce (ш), they only need to lower their tongue tips and move tongues forward. The Auxiliary sound (и) and sound group т и, д и, ищи, тищи, дищи will perfect your pronunciation of the consonants ш.

Soft affricates (ч) has block and slit, so this sound is produced when tongue moves forward, the tip and front of the tongue adjoin to the alveolar ridge with round lips, tight lip side and close teeth. With it, strong airstream may flow to the alveolar. The supplementary exercises include the sound (и) and sound groups, т и, течь, течение, пить чай.

Consonant (ц) is also blocked, but it is different from (ч). Tongue moves backward forcefully with tongue tip reaching the lower teeth; lips open slightly and move toward the side with the front of the tongue close to hard palate and upper teeth and closed teeth. The narrow airstream squeezed goes through the front of the teeth. Auxiliary pronunciation practices are д and т: отцы, молодцы (stop extended), and sound group аци, ацу, ацо consisting of four sounds (а), (о), (у), (ы).

Learning the consonant (л), foreign learners may also encounter some kind of difficulties. The hard consonants (л) are produced by observing following gist: the tongue should be positioned forward with the front part of the tongue raising and getting close to the teeth. Moreover, keep the tip of the tongue tense, upper and lower teeth slightly open, lips slightly forward as well as the vocal cords vibrated. Auxiliary practice of sounds are: (о), (у), (к), (г), and (х). The soft sound (л) is made by moving the tongue forward, raising the middle of the tongue. As the front of the tongue is slightly tense, it is easy for airstream to go through the upper of the teeth. At that moment, lips open and vocal cords vibrate. Auxiliary practice of sound is (и) and sound group ч и, щ и, д и, т и, чили, тили, etc.

Among the sounds of the back of the tongue, the most difficult is (х). The sound is produced by opening mouth until it is rounded and moving the tongue backward with non-vibration and weak airstream. Auxiliary sounds are (к), (о), (у) and the sound group: кхо, кху.

The most difficult sound in Russian is the pronunciation of vibrato (р). In order to master this pronunciation, you should pay attention to the means: tip of the tongue vibrates at the upper teeth. The most difficult position of

pronunciation is that (p) locates between the end of the word and soft consonants. Auxiliary sounds are (ж), (з), (т), (д), and vowels (а), (о), (у): тра, дра, тро, тру, дру. The auxiliary sound (и): жри, зри is a help to practice the soft consonant (p).

V. STUDY ON WORD STRESS IN RUSSIAN

When you've mastered word pronunciation, it comes to the learning of word spelling. If you want to read out Russian words precisely, first of all, the attribute of stressed words should be figured out clearly. Russian stress can be divided into non-located stress (stress can be placed on any syllables of a word: e.g. комната, дорога, голова), shifted stress (stress can be shifted from one syllable to another within one word of different forms) and forceful stress (stress can be made through tightening the articulation organs to make the stressed syllable clearly) (Xiujin A.N., 2003). Russian pronunciation of stressed words is characterized by extending the time of pronouncing the stressed syllables. Phonetic introduction course is to learn the attribute of stressed words, vowel weakening, the comparison between stressed syllables and unstressed syllables, besides, monosyllabic, two-syllable and three - syllable word exercises are involved. Then the practices of four syllables, five syllables and even more syllables word followed. In addition to vowels weakening and words rhythm, the students also need to learn consonantal pronunciation, the shift in articulation from hard consonants to soft consonants, back dentals to front dentals, the shift from voiceless consonants to voiced consonants as well as the pronunciation of consonant clusters etc.

The failure of pronouncing the stressed words in Russian may be associated with the following factors: the articulation organ is not tense enough which leads to lengthen the pronouncing time of stressed vowels; the damage of quantity weakening lengthens the unstressed vowels or changes the quantity of unstressed vowels. In this case, we need phonetic practice by shifting between the first or second vowels before or after the stress continuously. Meanwhile, more practice should be implemented in the continuity of words and preposition such as на столе, о нас, до дома, перед домами, не буду, не видел. A common mistake is to entrainment vowels between the consonants. They usually occur between voiceless consonants (e.g. встреча). For teachers, it is preferable to explain a few difficult sounds initially, and then compare the words with consonant clusters in practice.

For foreigners, the hardest part of the pronunciation is the shift from hard consonants to soft consonants (e.g. математика, переписывать), back labial sounds to front labial sounds, affricate [ч] to [ц] as well as fricatives to affricates and soft front dentals(e.g. щ-ч-ть)

VI. LEARNING ON RUSSIAN INTONATION

In addition to stress, it is an important part to learn intonation in Russian pronunciation. Intonation is the change of sentence strength, length and basic tone. Without intonation, there will be no sentences, neither will utterances. Intonation is the logical basis of audible utterances in emotion, which makes words, sentences, utterances, contextual meaning and semantics as a whole. On the one hand, intonation and syntax (formal logic structure of utterances) are closely related. On the other hand, intonation and addresser's attitudes are connected with each other (for their modal logic purposes as communicative acts). To learn intonation, we should make full use of real communication context and integrate intonation meaning and modality.

The following methods will help grasp Russian intonation:

- 1) Reading among three students (the first person reads the front contour, the second person reads the central contour and the third person reads the back contour)
- 2) Sentence reading with different sonorities (read the front of contour with normal sonority, the central of contour with the highest sonority, and the back of contour with very soft sonority).
- 3) The usage of gesture (the teacher points out the changes of voices while the students repeat the teacher's gesture).
- 4) Psychological methods (read loudly at the front of contour and turn to low pitch in the central contour. Then lower the voice in the back of contour.) (Xiujin A.N., 2003).

After learning the basic contour, it is necessary to practice it in real utterance communication. Contour-1 will be drilled in declarative sentences by being placed at the end of it with special attention to the comparison of complete and incomplete intonation meaning (seldom use contour-2). Contour-3, contour-4 and contour-6 will be employed in unfinished meaning sentence of non-end segment.

Some errors to be avoided when learning intonation are as follows:

1. If the intonation of the central contour and back contour aren't lowered, it sounds the discourse doesn't end. Hence we need to make a distinction between contour-1 and contour-3, contour-2 and contour-4.
2. When learning contour-3, we need to sharply improve the intonation in the central contour, otherwise, the sentence will be changed into interrogative sentence or exclamatory sentence: Это твоя ручка? Это твоя ручка! What we should notice is to distinguish between interrogative sentences and declarative sentences (contour-3 and contour-4), interrogative sentences and exclamatory sentences (contour-3 and contour-2).
3. False judgement on contours center. Contours center is usually placed on the unknown information to interlocutors. We should practice the shift of the contour center in the same sentence due to the fact that different contour centers make the logic centers different within one sentence.

The effects of phonetic learning depend on teachers' creativity, patience as well as their occupational skills. Meanwhile, the extend of teaching method, classroom approaches to phonetic training and strategic treating students methods will also be a great boost in students' phonetic learning.

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