

PHONETIC COMPETENCE OF FUTURE INTERPRETERS: FEATURES OF FORMATION

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Resume:

The article considers teaching translation in the light of the competence approach. The concept of «professional translation competence», including its socio-cultural and linguistic components, is defined. The necessity to form phonetic competence of future interpreters is proved. Difficulties of formation of the specified competence, in particular the interference of the native language, are found out. The differences between native and foreign languages at all levels of phonological system, namely at the level of sound, accent and intonation are characterized. The ways of overcoming the interference of the native language are proposed.

Key words:

professional translation competence; phonetic competence; native language interference; consecutive interpretation.

Анотація:

Гурова Тетяна, Рябуха Тетяна, Зіненко Наталія, Гостіщева Наталія. Фонетична компетенція майбутніх перекладачів: особливості формування.

У статті порушено питання навчання перекладу у світлі компетентнісного підходу. Розкрито зміст поняття «професійна перекладацька компетенція», її соціокультурний і лінгвістичний складники. Доведено необхідність цілеспрямованого формування фонетичної компетенції майбутніх перекладачів у процесі навчання усного послідовного перекладу. Схарактеризовано відмінності між рідною та іноземною мовами на всіх рівнях фонологічної системи, а саме – на рівні звуку, наголосу та інтонації. З'ясовано труднощі формування фонетичної компетенції (зокрема звернено увагу на інтерференційні впливи рідної мови) і окреслено шляхи їх подолання.

Ключові слова:

професійна перекладацька компетенція; фонетична компетенція; інтерференція рідної мови; усний послідовний переклад.

Аннотация:

Гурова Татьяна, Рябуха Татьяна, Зиненко Наталья, Гостищева Наталья. Фонетическая компетенция будущих переводчиков: особенности формирования.

В статье рассмотрен вопрос обучения переводу в свете компетентностного подхода. Раскрыто содержание понятия «профессиональная переводческая компетенция», ее социокультурная и лингвистическая составляющие. Доказана необходимость целенаправленного формирования фонетической компетенции будущих переводчиков в процессе обучения устному последовательному переводу. Охарактеризованы различия между родным и иностранным языками на всех уровнях фонологической системы, а именно – на уровне звука, ударения и интонации. Выявлены трудности формирования указанной компетенции (в частности обращено внимание на интерферирующее влияние родного языка) и предложены пути их преодоления.

Ключевые слова:

профессиональная переводческая компетенция; фонетическая компетенция; интерференция родного языка; устный последовательный перевод.

Introduction. The market economy and the globalization of communication have generated a lot of political, economic, technological, scientific and cultural exchange which is often mediated by translators and interpreters. Therefore, the need for well trained specialists who are able to convey a message effectively, be it written or spoken, from one language to another has also arisen. Besides, universities have been challenged by the new competence requirements. Translation and interpretation studies are meant to develop students' professional competences to a level that equips them to their future work, forms a basis for lifelong learning and helps update professional competences throughout training practice.

The competences and skills are defined by the EMT group (European Commission, 2009) and selected in the European Framework (European Parliament, Council, 2008).

Skill is a learnt capacity to carry out pre-determined results often with the minimum outlay of time, energy, or both; the ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to complete tasks and solve problems.

Competence is a general ability to perform a specific task, action or function successfully on the grounds of the existing knowledge, skills and attitude system; a combination of knowledge, skills

and attitudes appropriate to the context; the proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development.

Key competences are competences that all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment.

Professional competence is capability to perform the duties of one's profession generally, or to perform a particular professional task, with skill of an acceptable quality.

The European Reference Framework (European Commission, Recommendation, 2006) set out eight key competences: 1) Communication in the mother tongue; 2) Communication in foreign languages; 3) Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; 4) Digital competence; 5) Learning to learn; 6) Social and civic competences; 7) Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; 8) Cultural awareness and expression.

Communication in the mother tongue (1) and communication in foreign languages (2) are probably the most important competences in translators'/interpreters' work.

The analysis of literature on the problem (I. Alekseeva [1], R. Bell [14], J. Stuart Campbell

[15], O. Cherednychenko [12], L. Chernovatyj [13], N. Gavrilenko [2], V. Karaban [5], V. Komissarov [6], L. Latyshev [7], M. Orozco [17], A. Pym [18], I. Zimnyaya [4], etc.) demonstrates that translator's and interpreter's competence is a complex phenomenon formed on the basis of both sociocultural and linguistic knowledge and skills.

As T. Tarasenko claims, one should overcome both linguistic and sociocultural differences so that intercultural communication could be a success [11, p. 45].

Culture is a complex unity, which includes knowledge, belief, art, moral laws, customs, and other capabilities or habits acquired by individual as a member of the society. People of a particular culture perceive different things from their own point of view and way of thinking. Cultural characteristics of a particular nation are reflected in its language by various language elements such as interjections, sayings, proverbs, idioms, jokes, etc. The knowledge of a culture and such elements is crucial for successful translation.

Translators/interpreters should become aware of such elements reflecting the cultural peculiarities and choose an adequate analogue in the target language. Therefore, most translation theorists agree with the fact that a translator/an interpreter is a cultural mediator. O. Cherednychenko suggests that translator's/interpreter's bilingualism should be accompanied by biculturalism [12, p. 232]. For that reason, translators and interpreters ought to develop sociocultural knowledge and encyclopedic knowledge concerning the world in general. Besides, one acting in a particular domain needs to possess professional knowledge in a particular sphere (arts, history, politics, economy, law, medicine, etc).

Linguistic component of translator's/interpreter's competence implies good knowledge of both the source and the target language. As O. Cherednychenko claims, an excellent knowledge of two languages facilitates the ability to switch from one language to another in written and oral form. Furthermore, according to the author's opinion, linguistic competence develops linguistic skills which allow to avoid the native (the source) language interference while translating into the foreign (the target) one [12, p. 233].

Being an interpreter requires high intelligibility of a foreign language in order to fulfill the task of communicating a message properly. The usual working environment would include the situations when you cannot ask for repetition or clarification of the information you hear. Consequently, students aiming at this specialty should also aim at developing both their productive and, even more important, receptive skills in language learning. Most writers in the field emphasize that knowledge of phonemic system of a foreign language as well as

awareness of the processes in connected speech help learners to improve ability to listen actively and produce accurate and correct speech, i.e. enhance intelligibility of the language they are learning (Kenworthy [16], Roach [19], Underwood [21], etc). In our previous paper we also discussed the necessity and strategies of forming the auditory competence of future interpreters [9].

The aim of this paper is to identify the difficulties in forming phonetic competence of future interpreters and find ways to overcome them. To achieve these goals we use the method of hypothesis as well as the methods of description, analysis and synthesis.

Discussion. An ideal interpreter understands everyone and is understood by everyone. On the perception side, this means that interpreters can cope with the enormous variability in pronunciations they encounter. For their own speech production, then, this means not being marked by noticeable regional or foreign features. Accent contributes a great deal to how a speaker is perceived, and a strong foreign accent may draw attention away from what is being said as well as generate attitudinal reactions on the part of the listeners. Good interpreters do not draw attention to themselves.

Many scholars (N. D. Galskova [3], N. I. Gez [3], S. Nikolayeva [8], Ye. N. Solovova [10], etc.) claim that one of the main difficulties in learning a new language is the interference of the native language and/or previously learned foreign languages.

The term «interference» is understood by the majority of authors as a process when one language (usually the native one) has a negative impact on another language (usually the foreign one), while the term «transfer» (or «positive transfer») means the coincidence of the norms of both languages. To identify a combination of these two phenomena, the term «interaction between the languages» is used.

Interference is manifested at all levels of the phonological system of the languages. Therefore, the student should master the articulation of sounds and syllables, as well as the word stress and intonation. To do this, the student should first learn the differences between the articulation bases of the languages, that is «the general tendencies the native speakers have in the way they move and hold their lips and the tongue both in speech and in silence» [20].

The articulation basis of the English language is characterized by the following factors: the lips are «flat» (close to the teeth), spread (resemble a smile) and tense; the tip of the tongue is against the alveoli, not touching them; the middle and the back parts of the tongue are flat and low. The Ukrainian articulation basis is as follows: lips are slightly rounded and not very close to the teeth; the tip and

the blade of the tongue rest on the teeth; the front and the middle part of the tongue are raised to the palate. The native articulation basis prevents a learner from mastering the English one as a new starting position of the speech organs seems to be uncomfortable and unnatural. This results in interference, which is impossible to overcome without comparative analysis of the sounds of the English and Ukrainian languages.

The systems of English and Ukrainian vowels differ in many points.

1. The number of vowels is not the same in the two languages. There are 20 vowels in English (/i:, ɪ, e, æ, ɑ:, ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:, ʌ, ɜ:, ə, eɪ, aɪ, oɪ, aʊ, əʊ, ɪə, eə, oʊ/) and only 6 vowels in Ukrainian (/i, и, е, а, о, y/).

2. According to the stability of articulation, English vowels are divided into monophthongs and diphthongs. All the Ukrainian vowels are monophthongs, there are no diphthongs in Ukrainian.

3. English vowels differ both in quality and quantity (length), that is there are long and short vowels in English, while in Ukrainian long vowels do not exist.

4. The division of vowels into different groups according to the position of the tongue is not the same in the English and Ukrainian languages. In the English language there are front, back, and mixed vowels. In Ukrainian there are no mixed vowels at all. The English front and back vowel groups include a considerably greater number of vowels than those of the Ukrainian language.

5. The English and Ukrainian languages differ also in the articulation of vowels within the same group. Thus, the English front vowels /i:, ɪ, e/ are closer and more front than the corresponding Ukrainian (/i, и, е/. The English back vowels /ɒ, ɔ:, u:/ are more retracted than the Ukrainian back vowels /o/ and /y/.

6. The position of the lips is not the same in forming English and Ukrainian labialized vowels. In forming Ukrainian labialized sounds the lips are considerably protruded. The position of the lips is not the same in forming non-labialized vowels either. In pronouncing English non-labialized vowels the lips are «flat» (close to the teeth), while in pronouncing Ukrainian non-labialized vowels the lips move noticeably forward from the teeth.

Thus, in articulating English vowels Ukrainian students are apt to make the following mistakes:

1) they do not observe the quantitative character of the long vowels: *The sheep arrived at the port* (*The ship arrived at the port*);

2) they do not observe the qualitative difference in the articulation of such vowels as /i: – ɪ/, /u: – ʊ/, /ɔ: – ɒ/;

3) they replace 10 English vowels /i:, ɪ, ɔ:, ɒ, u:, ʊ, e, æ, ɑ:, ʌ/ by 6 Ukrainian vowels /i, и, о, у, е, а/;

4) they pronounce /i:, ɪ, e, eɪ/ without the «flat» position of the lips;

5) they soften consonants followed by front vowels /i:, ɪ, e, æ, eɪ/ and, as a result, the vowels become narrower and the consonants are palatalized;

6) they articulate back vowels /ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/ with the lips too much rounded and protruded;

7) they make the sounds /æ, ɒ/ narrower because they don't open the mouth properly, like Ukrainian /e, o/;

8) they do not observe the positional length of vowels (*we* /wi:/ – *weed* /wi:d/ – *wheat* /wit/);

9) they make both elements of the diphthongs equally distinct;

10) they pronounce initial vowels with a glottal stop.

The systems of English and Ukrainian consonants differ in many points, too.

1. The number of consonants is not the same in the two languages. There are 24 consonants in English, and only 32 consonants in Ukrainian.

2. In Ukrainian there are short and long consonants: *жити* /т/ – *життя* /тт/, etc. There are no long consonants in English.

3. In Ukrainian consonants can be non-palatalized and palatalized. There are pairs of consonants in Ukrainian which differ only in the degree of palatalization and yet are different phonemes: *кінь* /н'/ – *кін* /н/, *знати* /н/ – *зняти* /н'/, etc. Palatalized consonants do not exist in English. The English /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ are slightly palatalized but there are no corresponding non-palatalized consonants.

4. English voiceless plosives /p, t, k/ are aspirated, while there are no aspirated consonants in Ukrainian.

5. The English glottal fricative /h/ is voiceless, while the Ukrainian glottal fricative /г/ is voiced.

6. The Ukrainian group of forelingual consonants includes /ц/ and /дз/ which do not exist in English. In its turn the English group of forelingual consonants includes /θ/ and /ð/ which do not exist in Ukrainian.

7. The group of English backlingual consonants includes /k, g, ŋ/, while in Ukrainian /ŋ/ does not exist. At the same time there are two additional Ukrainian backlingual consonants /x/ and /г/.

8. There is no correspondence to English bilabial sonorant /w/ in Ukrainian.

9. The place of obstruction in production of Ukrainian forelingual consonants is generally nearer to the front upper teeth than in the corresponding English consonants. The Ukrainian /t, д, с, з, н/ are dental, while the English /t, d, s, z, n/ are alveolar; the Ukrainian /p/ is alveolar, while the English /t/ is post-alveolar.

10. The shape of the tongue in production of English and Ukrainian forelingual consonants is

different. English forelingual consonants are usually apical, while the Ukrainian ones are cacuminal.

11. The English voiced consonants /b, d, g, v, ð, z, ʒ, dʒ/ are not replaced by the corresponding voiceless sounds in word-final positions and before voiceless consonants, e.g. /bɪg teɪbl/.

The most common mistakes that may result from the differences in the articulation bases of the English and Ukrainian languages are the following:

1) dorsal articulation of the English forelingual apical /t, d, s, z, n/;

2) the use of the Ukrainian alveolar rolled /p/ instead of the English post-alveolar constrictive /r/;

3) the use of the Ukrainian backlingual /x/ instead of the English glottal /h/;

4) mispronunciation of the English interdental /θ/ and /ð/: the use of /s, t/ for /θ/ and /z, d/ for /ð/: e.g. *think* - *sink*;

5) the use of the labio-dental /v/ instead of the bilabial /w/: e.g. *wery vell*;

6) the use of the forelingual /n/ instead of the backlingual velar /ŋ/: e.g. *thing* /θɪŋ/;

7) the use of the Ukrainian dark /ш, ж/ instead of the soft English /ʃ, ʒ/;

8) absence of aspiration in /p, t, k/ when they occur initially;

9) lenis (weak) pronunciation of voiceless fortis /p, t, k, f, s, ʃ, ʒ/;

10) devoicing of voiced /b, d, g, v, ʒ, z, ʒ, dʒ/ in the terminal position: *said* /seɪ/.

Dynamic aspect of the articulation basis is manifested through the minimal unit of articulation – the syllable. The syllable is an utterance consisting of one or more syllabic sounds. In Ukrainian only vowels can be syllabic, while in English sonorants /l, m, n/ become syllabic if they occur in an unstressed final position preceded by a noise consonant: *little* /'lɪ.tl/, *blossom* /'blɒ.sm/, *garden* /'gɑ:.dn/. The commonest types of the syllable in English are closed ones VC and CVC: *Mum*. In Ukrainian more than half of all structural types constitute open CV syllabic types: *ма-ма*. It is important to pay attention to the juncture of consonants and vowels, which in the English language can be characterized as «not close», unlike the Ukrainian language where this juncture is defined as «close». Compare: *no* – *ні*, etc.

The singling out of one or more syllables in a word is known as «word stress». In English three degrees of word stress are usually distinguished: «primary» (stressed syllables), «secondary» (half-stressed syllables) and «weak» (unstressed syllables). A large group of polysyllabic words have both the primary and the secondary stresses: e.g. *conver'sation*.

In Ukrainian there are only two degrees of word stress: «primary» (stressed syllables) and «weak» (unstressed syllables). That is why Ukrainian learners of English must be particularly careful not

to omit secondary stress in English words since the interference of Ukrainian pronunciation habits is very strong in this case. Compare: *організація* – *ˌorganiˈzation*.

As for intonation patterns of the English and Ukrainian languages, they are also very different. The intonation of English utterances is marked by greater intensity and stronger energy with which the stressed and the unstressed syllables are pronounced. The intonation of Ukrainian utterances is marked by almost four times longer duration of their syllables. Consequently, Ukrainian utterances of the same number of syllables take more time to be pronounced than the English utterances. That is why the Ukrainian speech is fluent and the English speech is slightly harsh. Compare: *'Once upon a 'time there was a 'man who had an 'old 'cat.* – *'Жив собі ко'лись чоло'вік і 'був у нього ста'рпий 'кіт.* Though the total number of syllables is almost the same – 14 in English and 16 in Ukrainian, the duration of the Ukrainian utterance exceeds that in the English version. It is due to rhythmic organization of the intonation groups. The rhythmic structure of the intonation groups of the Ukrainian sentence does not display the regularity of the stressed and the unstressed syllables characteristic of the English version of the same sentence.

One more difference concerns the pitch range. The Ukrainian intonemes, no matter whether their nuclear tones are falling or rising, have a narrower pitch range than the English ones, and the concluding stressed or unstressed syllable is never pitched as low in Ukrainian as it is in English.

In English, General questions are usually pronounced with the Descending Stepping Scale up to the last syllable which, whether stressed or unstressed, has a rising nuclear tone: *'Is he at 'home now? 'Must I 'read the passage?* In Ukrainian this tone concludes on the last stressed syllable of the communicative unit only. The unstressed syllables, following the last stressed syllable, are pronounced with the falling tone: *Він сьогодні вдома? У середу ви прийдете?* This is especially felt when the polite request *Will you give it to me, please?* uttered by the Ukrainian student with Rise-Fall sounds impolite and even a bit rude.

Conclusion. This study was primarily motivated by the need to make the pronunciation training of Ukrainian interpreters into English at Bohdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University more efficient. We have focused on the problem of forming phonetic competence of future interpreters. The comparative analysis of the articulation bases of the English and Ukrainian languages, as well as the analysis of typical errors of Ukrainian students, has shown that in the interaction of the languages on the phonological level negative interference prevails; cases of positive transfer are limited.

The knowledge of the above mentioned differences in the pronunciation habits of English and Ukrainian speakers is highly important for intercultural communication in general and interpreting practice in particular. It helps clarify the interaction of English and Ukrainian pronunciation bases and enhances mutual intelligibility between

the speakers who use English as a lingua franca. In teaching practice, the teacher's awareness of typical violations of English pronunciation norms by Ukrainian learners will help devise efficient teaching techniques and direct the learners' efforts at the acquisition of accurate English pronunciation habits.

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