**Lecture 3**

**HOW TO TEACH ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION SKILLS**

1. The content of teaching pronunciation
2. How to teach pronunciation
3. **THE CONTENT OF TEACHING PRONUNCIATION**

Pupils should study English literary pronunciation which constitutes received pronunciation. This is the language of radio, TV, theatres, universities and schools. In our schools we teach pupils literary pronunciation which is characterized by: (a) clear stress in all the rhythmic groups, (b) clear pronunciation of the sounds, for example, give me and not gimme admitted by colloquial English; (c) typical abbreviations in auxiliary words: it’s, won’t, doesn’t, can’t, shouldn’t, etc.

Proceeding from the aims and objectives the foreign language syllabus sets out, pupils must assimilate:

1. The sounds of the English language, its vowels and consonants. They should be able to articulate these sounds both separately and in different phonetic contexts. 2. Some peculiarities of the English language in com parison with those of the Russian language, such as: English vowels differ in quality and in length, whereas in the Russian language the length of vowels is of no importance; there are no palatal consonants, and if some consonants may be pro nounced slightly palatalized, this does not change the meaning of the word- For instance, we may pronounce the word like with dark [1] and light [1], i. e., slightly palatalized, the meaning of the word remains the same. In the Russian language there are palatalized and nonpalatalized consonants and palatalization changes the meaning of the word: e. g., был – быль; кон – конь; банка – банька.

3. Stress in a word and in a sentence, and melody (fall and rise). Pupils must be able to divide a sentence into groups and intone it properly.

*I ‘don’t ‘know what his ‘native language is. ‘Do you ‘speak ‘English?*

Only when pronunciation is correct, when all main phonic rules are strictly followed, can one understand what one hears and clearly express one’s thoughts in English.

The teacher, therefore, faces the following problems in teaching pupils English pronunciation:

(1) the problem of discrimination; i. e., hearing the differences between phonemes which are not distinguished or used in the Russian language and between falling, rising, and level tones;

(2) the problem of articulation, i. e., learning to make the motor movements adequate to proper production of English sounds;

(3) the problem of intonation, i. e., learning to make right stresses, pauses and use appropriate patterns;

(4) the problem of integration, i.e., learning to assemble the phonemes of a connected discourse (talk) with the proper allophonic variations (members of a phoneme) in the, months, hard times;

(5) the problem of automaticy, 1 i. e., making correct production so habitual that it does not need to be attended to in the process of speaking.

Consequently, discrimination, articulation, intonation, integration, automaticy are the items that should constitute the content of the teaching of pronunciation, i. e., pupils should be taught to discriminate or to distinguish English sounds from Russian sounds, long sounds from short ones; falling tone from rising tone; to articulate English sounds correctly, to use appropriate tone patterns; to integrate or to combine sounds into a whole and, finally, they should be taught to use all these while hearing and speaking the English language. Of course absolute correctness is impossible. We cannot expect more than approximate correctness, the correctness that ensures communication between people speaking the same language.

1. **HOW TO TEACH PRONUNCIATION**

In teaching pronunciation there are at least two methodological problems the teacher faces: (1) to determine the cases where conscious manipulation of the speech organs is required, and the cases where simple imitation can or must be used; (2) to decide on types of exercises and the techniques of using them.

Teaching English pronunciation in schools should be based on methodological principles. This means to instruct pupils in a way that would lead them to conscious assimilation of the phonic aspect of a foreign language. The teacher instructs his pupils to pronounce sounds, words, word combinations, phrases and sentences in the English language. Pupils must become conscious of the differences between English sounds and those of the native language. This is possible provided the foreign sound is contrasted with the native phoneme which is substituted for it, e.g.: E. [t]-R. [T]; E. [n] - R. [H]; E. [h] -R. [X].

Each sound is also contrasted with the foreign phonemes which come close to it and with which it is often confused. The contrast is brought out through such minimal pairs as: it — eat;

spot — sport; wide — white, cut — cart, full — fool, boat — bought. The experience of the sound contrast is reinforced audio-visually:

1. By showing the objects which the contrasting words represent. For example, ship — sheep. The teacher makes quick simple drawings of a ship and a sheep on the blackboard or shows pictures of these objects.

2. By showing actions. For example, He is riding. — He is writing. Situational pictures may be helpful if the teacher cannot make a sketch on the blackboard.

3. By using sound symbols [æ] — [e]; [ð] — [θ]. Phonetic symbols do not teach the foreign sounds. They emphasize the difference in sounds and in this respect they are a valuable help. To teach pupils how to pronounce a new language correctly in a conscious way means to ensure that the pupil learns to put his organs of speech into definite positions required for the production of the speech sounds of this language.

A person learning a foreign language unconsciously continues to use his muscles in the old ways and substitutes the phonemes and the intonation of his native tongue, e. g., he pronounces zis instead of this, or veal instead of wheel; Do ‘you ‘speak ‘English? instead of ‘Do you ‘speak English? He does not even notice his mistake.

In learning pronunciation great use should also be made of imitation. Pupils learn to pronounce a new language by imitating the pronunciation of the teacher. Since young people’s ability to imitate is rather good it should be used in teaching pronunciation as well. Indeed, there are sounds in the English language which are difficult to explain, for example, vowels. The teacher is often at a loss how to show his pupils the pronunciation of this or that vowel, because he cannot show them the position of the organs of speech while producing the sound.

The description of a vowel requires the use of such words as “the back (the front) of the tongue”, “the soft (hard) palate” and others which, in their turn, present a lot of trouble to pupils to understand. It is easier for them to pronounce a sound, a word, or a sentence in imitation of the teacher than to assimilate “what is what” in the mouth and apply the “knowledge” to producing sounds or sound sequences.

Therefore pupils merely imitate the teacher. It should be said that the correct pronunciation of some vowels often depends on the correct pronunciation of consonants. For example, if a pupil pronounces did as Russian WA it means he mispronounces [d], and not [i] because one cannot pronounce дид with the correct position of the tongue for producing the English [d].

As to intonation it should be taught mainly through imitation, though some explanations and gestures in particular are helpful. For example, the teacher can show the rise of the voice by moving his hand up and the fall by moving it down. He can also use the following symbols: ‘for stress, ‘for pause, ‘for falling tone, ‘for rising tone, and teach pupils how to use them while listening to a text and reading it. Consequently, teaching pronunciation in school must be carried out through conscious approach to the problem and imitation of the teacher and speakers when tape-recordings and records are used. Neither the first nor the second should be underestimated.

Since imitation can and must take place in foreign language teaching, the teacher’s pronunciation should set the standard for the class, and the use of native speakers whose voices are recorded on records or tapes is quite indispensable. Teaching a foreign language in schools begins with teaching pupils to hear and to speak it, that is, with the oral introductory course or the oral approach. Since the aural-oral and the oral approach should be used, the unit of teaching is the sentence. We speak with sentences. Therefore pupils hear a long chain of sounds or a sound sequence from the very beginning. The teacher’s task is to determine which sounds the pupils will find hard to pronounce, which sounds they can assimilate through imitation, and which sounds require explanations of the position of the organs of speech while producing them.

The following procedure in teaching pronunciation should be observed: Pupils hear a sentence, then they hear a word or words in which a new sound or new sounds occur and, finally, they hear a sound and the teacher’s explanation of how to produce it.

E. g. My name is ... name [n]

Pupils are invited to find the correct position of the tip of the tongue for pronouncing [n].

After they have found the position of the tongue for [n] they pronounce it as a single unit or as an isolated element. Then they pronounce the sound in the word name and in the sentence.

My name is...

The sequence in the teacher’s work with the sound and in that of pupils’ differs:

T e a c h e r:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a sentence – My name is  … a word – name  a sound – [n] | The book is thick.  thick  [θ] |

Pupil:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| a sound – [n]  a word – name  a sentence – My name is … | [θ]  thick  The book is thick. |

Pupils pronounce first in unison, then individually, then in unison again until the teacher sees that they can pronounce the sound, the word with the sound, and the whole sentence correctly. When asking individuals to pronounce a sound, a word, and a sentence the teacher first tells bright, then average, and finally slow pupils to pronounce what is required for the latter to have an opportunity to listen to the sound, the word, and the sentence pronounced again and again. The secret of success is neither in theory (explanation) nor in practice alone, but in practice informed by theory.

Exercises used for developing pronunciation skills may be of two groups: recognition exercises and reproduction exercises.

R e c o g n i t i o n e x e r c i s e s are designed for developing pupils’ ability to discriminate sounds and sound sequences. Indeed the assimilation of correct English pronunciation by Russian-speaking pupils depends to a great extent on their ability to aud. In auding the reference is solely to language perception. The ability to aud is developed if the teacher uses the aural-oral method and the oral approach method in teaching the language. In our schools we use both the aural-oral method when the oral introductory course is conducted and pupils are taught only hearing and speaking, and the oral approach and oral presentation mainly in the eight-year school when pupils get acquainted with linguistic material first by ear. Pupils should have sample practice in listening to be able to acquire the phonic aspect of the language. It can be done:

(a) by listening to the teacher pronouncing a sound, a sound combination and sensible sound sequences, i. e., words, phrases, and sentences with comprehension of what they hear (visual perception of the teacher when he produces English sounds and sound sequences facilitates auding);

(b) by listening to the speaker from a tape-recording or a record without seeing the speaker. This exercise is more difficult for pupils as their auding is not reinforced by visual perception.

The following techniques may be recommended to check pupils’ ability to discriminate sounds, stress and melody.

The teacher pronounces a number of English words and asks his pupils to recognize the new sound. For example, the new sound is [æ]. The teacher pronounces the words: a desk, a nest, a pen, a pan, a bed, bad. When a pupil hears the new sound he raises his hand and in this way the teacher sees whether the pupil can recognize the new sound among other sounds already learned or not. If most of the pupils raise their hands, the teacher can offer exercises for the pupils to perform. Or the teacher asks the pupils to say whether there is any difference in the words he pronounces, and he pronounces [ju:z] — [ju:s]. If pupils are familiar with the meaning of both words the teacher can ask them which one is a verb. He pronounces the words again and pupils raise/their hands when they hear [ju:z]. If most of the pupils raise their hands it shows they can discriminate sound sequences and know the word. One more example: the teacher pronounces a pair of words [liv] — [li:v] (pupils are familiar with the words) and asks a pupil to say which is used in where-questions and which one in when-questions. If the child says he will use [liv] in where-questions and [li:v] in when-questions it shows that he can recognize the words.

The teacher pronounces the sentence: They left for Kiev yesterday and asks his pupils to say which words are stressed. If they say left, Kiev, yesterday (or the second, the fourth and the fifth) they hear the stressed words.

The teacher pronounces English phrases with a rising or falling tone and asks pupils to raise their hands when they hear a falling tone, e. g., on the ,table — on the “table; with my “friend — with my friend; in his “hand — in his ,hand; to the ,South — to the “South. If pupils raise their hands in the right place then it shows that they can hear fall and rise in the voice, therefore, they can recognize the melody.

R e p r o d u c t i o n e x e r c i s e s are designed for developing pupils’ pronunciation habits, i. e., their ability to articulate English sounds correctly and to combine sounds into words, phrases and sentences easily enough to be able to speak English and to read aloud in this language. A few minutes at each lesson must be devoted to drilling the sounds which are most difficult for Russian-speaking pupils.

In studying English pupils usually make mistakes in pronunciation, often repeating the same mistakes again and again. The teacher should bear this in mind and either began the lesson with pronunciation drill or use pupils’ errors as the point of departure for the drill. For example, pupils have made mistakes m interdental sounds while reading aloud. After the text has been read the teacher asks them to pronounce both individually and in unison the following words: this, that, with, without, other, another ..., thing, think, thin, thick, thought …

Of course the teacher takes those words pupils are familiar with. More often than not the teacher should begin a lesson with pronunciation drill. This does not mean, however, that its place should be strictly fixed. The teacher may turn to pronunciation drill whenever he wants to draw his pupils’ attention to the phonic aspect of the material they deal with and in this way teach pupils correct English pronunciation.

The material used for pronunciation drill should be connected with the lesson pupils study. These may be sounds, words, word combinations, phrases, sentences, rhymes, poems, and dialogues. The material for a particular lesson depends on the stage of teaching, pupils’ progress in the language, their age, the objectives of the lesson, and other factors. For example, pupils mispronounce words with lou]. The teacher selects words with the sound and includes them in pronunciation drill: no, go, home, alone, don’t. Don’t go home alone.

If pupils mispronounce words with [ə:], the following words and sentences could be suggested for pronunciation drill: first, girl, word, work, worker, birthday, Thursday, thirteen, thirteenth. My birthday is on Thursday, the thirteenth of May.

Pupils are taught how to pronounce [æ] using the following sentence: A fat black cat sat on a matIf pupils mispronounce words with [ə:], the following words and sentences could be suggested for pronunciation drill: first, girl, word, work, worker, birthday, Thursday, thirteen, thirteenth. My birthday is on Thursday, the thirteenth of May.

Pupils are taught how to pronounce [æ] using the following sentence: A fat black cat sat on a mat.

To teach pupils the correct pronunciation of [w] the following rhyme can be used:

Why do you cry, Willy?

Why do you cry, Willy?

Why Willy? Why Willy?

Why Willy?

Why?

If the teacher is going to introduce the Present Continuous, pupils should be taught how to pronounce [ŋ]. The sound is difficult for Russian-speaking pupils so it requires special work on the part of the teacher.

The pronunciation drill may include the following words: English, song, sing, drink, think, thing and pairs of words: write — writing; read — reading; sit — sitting; open — opening; study — studying; play — playing.

The teacher includes all the words ending in [iŋ] his pupils need at the lesson and works at them most thoroughly while conducting pronunciation drill. The same should be done with the regular verbs in the Past Indefinite when pupils study this tense.

The words are arranged into three groups in accordance with the sound each one ends in:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| [t]  wash — washed  thank — thanked  work —worked  stop — stopped | [d]  open — opened  close — closed  live— lived  smile — smiled | [d]  want — wanted  skate — skated  recite — recited  rest — rested |

Pupils need the irregular verbs for speaking and reading aloud. The teacher arranges the verbs according to the sound which all of them have in the Past Indefinite, for example [o:], [æ]:

buy – brought sit – sat

think – thought sing – sang

bring – brought begin – began

teach– taught run – ran

The teacher may select words difficult for pronunciation, such as: [juə] Sure.

I am sure. I am sure he will come. I am sure he will come soon. We are sure. He is sure. He was sure they would help him. [‘juərəp] Europe. There are many countries in Europe. One part of our country is in Europe.

England is also in Europe. France is in Europe, too.

The teacher may take poems for pronunciation drill to help pupils to achieve good pronunciation of English sounds, [w], [ð]:

When the weather is wet, we must not fret.

When the weather is cold, we must not scold.

When the weather is warm, we must not storm.

But be thankful together whatever the weather.

[εə]:

Once two little brown bears

Found a pear-tree full of pears.

But they could not climb up there

For the trunk was smooth and bare.

If I only had a chair,

Said the elder brown bear,

I would get the biggest pear

That is hanging in the air.

Proverbs and some useful expressions can be used as material for pronunciation drills:

A friend in need is a friend indeed.

Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

After dinner sit a while, after supper walk a mile.

International words, proper names, geographical names, etc., can also be used for pronunciation drill. Though these words are not difficult for pupils’ comprehension, they require special attention on the part of the learners since phonetically they differ widely from the corresponding words of the mother tongue of the pupils, for example, culture, cosmic, cosmos, style, type, machine, pint, nerve; William Shakespeare, George Gordon Byron, Edinburgh, the Atlantic Ocean, the English Channel, Australia, Asia.

The material pupils get for reproduction can be presented in two possible ways: (1) through auditory perception only; (2) through auditory perception reinforced by visual perception of a sound, a word, a phrase, a sentence, and a text.

The techniques the teacher uses may be as follows:

- pupils aud (they listen either to the teacher or to a speaker);

- pupils show they understand what they listen to (the teacher checks their comprehension);

- pupils listen to the sound, the word, etc. again;

- they pronounce in imitation of the teacher (or speaker) in unison and individually, first bright, then average, and finally slow pupils.

The teacher’s principal concern is to make sure that every pupil can articulate English sounds correctly and pronounce words, phrases and sentences as close to the pattern as possible; hence pupils’ learning by heart the material included in a phonetic drill (rhymes, proverbs, poems, songs, dialogues) is not the main aim. The main aim is pupils’ correct pronunciation with regard to sounds, stress, rhythm, and melody. If tape-recording is used, the material should be recorded so that pupils can first listen to the speaker, then repeat in imitation of the speaker during the pauses long enough for pupils to reproduce it. When recording the material for classwork, therefore, it is necessary to take into account not only the time for producing sounds or sound sequences, but for organizing the class to pronounce it during the pause. So pauses should not be too short.

It is impossible to underestimate the role that can be played by sound film loops, records, tape playback devices in teaching pronunciation. Each of these aids: (1) allows speech to be reproduced with correct pronunciation and intonation in particular; (2) permits the same text to be repeated several times for pupils to have an opportunity to listen to it again and again; (3) makes it possible for the teacher to develop his pupils’ abilities to understand English spoken at various speeds; (4) helps the teacher in developing his pupils’ ability to speak; (5) gives pupils an opportunity to listen to texts read by native speakers.

When working with these aids in the classroom the teacher must be well prepared for the work. He must listen to the material himself several times in order to know the text from all points of view and, first of all, from the point of view of its phonic aspect. He studies the text and marks the difficulties for pupils’ listening comprehension, namely, sounds, sound combinations, stress, or melody. Then he writes out the difficult points from the text to draw pupils’ attention to them and, in this way, to help pupils to overcome the difficulties they may have in auding the text.

Pronunciation is a skill that should be developed and perfected throughout the whole course of learning the language, that is why we insist that the teacher should use pronunciation drill during the lesson, irrespective of the stage of instruction.

No matter how pronunciation is taught pupils will make mistakes in pronunciation of sounds, stress, and tones in the target language. The problem arises as to who should correct the mistakes and how they should be corrected. In the junior stage it is the teacher who corrects pupils’ mistakes in pronunciation because pupils’ ability to hear is not developed yet; besides they need good examples to follow which can be given either by the teacher or by the speaker. Moreover, the teacher can explain the mistake to the pupil and show him what should be done to avoid it. The ability to hear the difference in pronunciation of people should be developed from the very first steps. At the intermediate and senior stages pronunciation errors must be corrected both by the teacher and by the pupils themselves, though it becomes possible provided that sound producing aids are widely used since listening to tape-recordings and records develops the pupil’s ability to hear erroneous pronunciation when comparing the pattern pronunciation of the speaker with that of his own.

As to how mistakes must be corrected the following may be suggested:

(1) the teacher explains to the pupil his mistake and asks him to pronounce the sound, the word, or the sentence again, paying attention to the proper position of the organs of speech for producing the sound, for example, [6] (he should bite the tongue between the teeth and blow air out at the same time), or the word ‘development’ with the stress on the second syllable, or the sentence with the rising tone;

(2) the teacher corrects the mistake by pronouncing the sound, the word, the phrase, or the sentence in which the mistake has been made and the pupil imitates the teacher’s pronunciation;

(3) the teacher asks the pupilto listen to the tape-recording or the record again and pronounce the word or the sentence in the way the speaker does it; thus through comparison the pupil should find the mistake and correct it.

There are, of course, some other techniques of correcting pupils’ phonetic mistakes. Those mentioned above, however, can ensure the development of self-control in the pupil which is indispensable to language learning.

Constant attention to pupils’ pronunciation on the part of the teacher, whatever the stage of teaching is, results, as a rule, in good pronunciation habits and skills of pupils.

Young teachers are inclined to expect immediate results and soon they stop teaching pupils correct pronunciation as a hopeless task. No doubt they forget their own imperfections and do not know that pronunciation can be taught only by a long, patient, and persistent effort throughout the whole course of study.