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Received Pronunciation (RP) development through teaching professionally focused English in interdisciplinary context

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Abstract

The research aims to demonstrate that mastering RP by law-students contributes to their advance in English-language interaction in international environment. The relevance and novelty of the study lie in teaching (based on the interdisciplinary approach) RP skills to Law Institute nonimmigrant students immersed in the nonlinguistic intercultural environment. The data revealed that for 25% of respondents, specific difficulties were caused by poly-stressed words having no accentuation coincidence in Russian and English, in particular, verbs with postpositive elements typical for the English language. The research conclusions highlight the necessity for the law students to master Received Pronunciation in using multisyllabic words.

Keywords: Interdisciplinary approach, Multi syllabics, Nonimmigrant students, Poly-stressed, Received pronunciation.

Desarrollo de la Pronunciación Recibida (RP) a través de la enseñanza del inglés profesionalmente enfocado en el contexto interdisciplinario

Resumen

La investigación tiene como objetivo demostrar que el dominio de la RP por los estudiantes de derecho contribuye a su avance en la interacción del idioma inglés en el entorno internacional. La relevancia y novedad del estudio radica en la enseñanza (basada en el enfoque interdisciplinario) de habilidades de RP para estudiantes no

inmigrantes del Instituto de Derecho inmersos en el entorno intercultural no lingüístico. Los datos revelaron que para el 25% de los encuestados, las dificultades específicas fueron causadas por palabras poli-estresadas que no tenían coincidencia de acentuación en ruso e inglés, en particular, verbos con elementos postpositivos típicos del idioma inglés. Las conclusiones de la investigación resaltan la necesidad de que los estudiantes de derecho dominen la pronunciación recibida al usar palabras multisilábicas.

Palabras clave: Enfoque interdisciplinario, Sílabas múltiples, Estudiantes no inmigrantes, Poliester, Pronunciación recibida.

1. INTRODUCTION

The present research gives valuable insight into the importance of mastering adequate pronunciation when using a wide range of multisyllabic words and terms in various fields of law throughout professionally focused English-language training of bachelors and masters of Arts. A new attempt on studying RP as an important aspect of teaching professionally-focused English based on the interdisciplinary approach to nonimmigrant students immersed in an intercultural environment of a non-linguistic University is described. Most nonimmigrant students use both English and Russian as foreign languages, and do not use the first language (L1).

For law students, English-language interaction is a multifaceted course of action where proper articulation of multisyllabic lexemes and terms is of great importance for the mutual understanding. It becomes indispensable to eliminate the difficulty of putting the stress in multisyllabic poly morphemic or polyphonic words and terms in both

languages, thus eradicating phonetic illiteracy and ensuring successful intercultural English-Russian-language communication. The explanation of the main factors – rhythmic, stylistic and semantic – determining the pronunciation of English or Russian words can be of help here. Qualitative research of teaching professionally focused English to non-linguistic nonimmigrant law students of the University is the applied instrument in selecting the interdisciplinary approach to teaching RP based on a variety of authentic texts and audio-visual materials covering professional issues. The crucial principle of selection is lexical importance – multisyllabic poly-accented terms and terminological phrases.

The relevance and novelty of the study lie in the fact that teaching RP skills to Law Institute nonimmigrant students immersed in the nonlinguistic intercultural environment of the University is based on the interdisciplinary approach. The methodological basis of the paper is the conceptual provisions of many Russian and foreign academicians, practitioners and scientists (CRYSTAL et al., 2008; EMELIANOVA, 2018a & b; Krupchenco & Kuznetsov, 2017; LADEFOGED, 1993, 1998; MADDIESON & GANDOUR, 1977; MADDIESON & EMMOREY, 1985; MARKS JONATHAN, 2007; etc.). In their long-term global research, they focus on the issues of practical phonetics as an integral part of complex communication, theoretical phonetics in linguistics, higher education in professional context, theory and methodology of teaching foreign languages, professional linguodidactics, etc. The requirement for accurate pronunciation as competency of language users is extensively defined

in the materials published by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2002).

The present study aims to determine that helping master RP skills when teaching professionally focused English to future nonimmigrant lawyers in intercultural environment contributes to the advance of their specialized English-language interaction with counterparts both in Russia and abroad. To achieve this, several texts of broad professionally relevant content (reflecting modern realities of law branches in Russia, Great Britain, and the USA) were selected and studied – civil, criminal, administrative, constitutional, case law, texts on law variances in different States of the USA, etc. The poly-accented words and terms were selected from these texts and analyzed for coincidences and differences in stress location: single-stressed or poly-stressed words in the Russian and English languages.

The polysyllabic words - compound, closed, open and hyphenated nouns, words with prefixes, compound and complex numerals, verbs with post positives and polysyllabic words with the termination manner of derivation were revealed. Some methods to eliminate the difficulty of stress placement in these multi syllabics in both languages while teaching nonimmigrant law students were identified. Descriptive analysis is suggested as a means of presenting key concepts in the present research; comparative analysis of some English and Russian multisyllabic poly-accented lexemes, word forms and terms mentioned above is given. The bottom line of the research is

as follows: mastering the proper articulation of vowels and consonants in multi syllabics prevents slurred pronunciation.

2. METHODOLOGY

The basis for the present research is the material collected by the author. Descriptive and comparative analyses were implemented to present the key concepts. Professionally directed English-Russian-language interaction requires good articulation, a sufficient rate of speech, the ability to adequately pronounce poly morphemic or polyphonic words and terminology – thus, the mastering of RP by law students guarantees mutual understanding in future communication.

A key point in this research is the methodology of the experiment; thus, a detailed description of its processes is important. First, the nonimmigrant students were informed of the three main factors in English and Russian, which normally impact the accentuation of multisyllabic poly morphemic or polyphonic words. These factors are:

1. Rhythmic –Means convenience of pronunciation,
2. Stylistic –Characteristics of sphere and frequency of use,
3. Semantic –Relating to meaning or arising from the differences between the meanings of words or symbols.

Next, it was explained that poly-accentualism is mostly a characteristic feature of the English language, and words with two, three and more syllabic stresses make up a less significant part of the Russian vocabulary; nevertheless, in both languages among the polysyllabic multi-accented words there are compound words, words with prefixes, complex and compound numerals, yet verbs with post positives and polysyllabic suffixal words can be only found in the English language. Accordingly, in 2017-2018 at the Law Institute, RUDN University a questionnaire was developed to assess knowledge about the rules of accentuation in multisyllabic poly morphemic or polyphonic words in both the English and Russian languages. Twenty-one bachelors and nineteen masters of Arts (forty in total) were asked the following questions:

1. What do you know about Received Pronunciation?
2. Do you know the stress placement rules in multisyllabic words?
3. Do you experience difficulties when you come across an unfamiliar multisyllabic word (4 or more syllables)?
4. What language causes more difficulties for you – English or Russian?
5. How do you overcome the difficulties with stress placement in multisyllabic words?, and other questions.

The answers to the first question showed that both bachelors and masters of Arts understood the phenomenon of RP as the necessity

to pronounce the words correctly; almost all of them were not aware of stress placement rules in multisyllabic words. The distribution of answers is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of answers

Questions	University level		Per cent
	Bachelors – 21	Masters – 19	
	Answers	Answers	100%
Do you know the stress placement rules in multisyllabic words?	No – 21	No – 16	92.5%
Do you experience difficulties when you come across an unfamiliar multisyllabic word (4 or more syllables)?	Yes – 21	Yes – 16	92.5%
What language causes more difficulties for you – English or Russian?	English – 19	English – 16	87.5%
How do you overcome the difficulties with stress placement in multisyllabic words?	Consult dictionaries – 21	Consult dictionaries – 19	100%

The data analysis revealed that for twenty five percent of respondents, poly-stressed words that have no accentuation coincidence in Russian and English (verbs with postpositive elements, which are found only in the English language) caused the most difficulty. The questionnaire was to investigate the difficulties of bachelors and masters of Arts with RP to choose the proper means of improving pronunciation in interdisciplinary context.

To master RP skills and at the same time to follow the demands of academic programs, some authentic texts were selected and studied, for

instance: “Test your professional English: Law” (BRIEGER, 2002), “Professional English in use. Law” (GILLIAN & SALLY, 2009), “Introduction into International Legal English” (KROIS-LINDER, FIRTH, & TRANSLEGAL®, 2009), as well as texts from various authentic feature materials, academic and non-fiction texts, legal documents, CNN and BBC news, The Moscow Times, covering professional issues. These materials reflect the modern realities of law branches in Russia, Great Britain, and the USA – administrative, civil, criminal, constitutional, case law, texts on laws variances in different States of the USA, etc. The material was carefully chosen according to the aim of the present study.

The nonimmigrant law students were encouraged to compile their own mini vocabularies of polysyllabic words. Of the above-mentioned texts, they selected poly-accented words, terms and terminology; then they were taught to examine them for coincidences and differences in the location of the stress: single- or poly-stressed words in the Russian and English languages. The polysyllabic words (namely, compound words, closed, open and hyphenated nouns, words with prefixes, compound and complex numerals, verbs with post positives and polysyllabic words with termination manner of derivation) were revealed. The nonimmigrant law students were explained how to eliminate the difficulty of stressing the correct syllable in these multi syllabics in both languages.

The practical value of this method lied in bachelors and masters of Arts using various dictionaries, for example, Cambridge Dictionary online (2019), Collins Russian Dictionary & Grammar (OZIEVA et al., 2013), Collins English Dictionary & Thesaurus (O’NEILL & SUMMERS, 2015),

English-Russian Comprehensive Law Dictionary (Mamulyan & KASHKIN, 2008), Explanatory dictionary of the Russian language (OZHEGOV & SHVEDOVA, 2006), Legal Dictionary for Businessmen (BASKAKOVA, 1994), Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003). Having consulted these dictionaries, the students implemented the new multi syllabics in projects and game-based classroom activities.

The second stage of the current research was devoted to verifying the results of mastering RP skills when teaching professionally focused English to future nonimmigrant lawyers in intercultural environment. The students continued to work with the selected authentic texts, video and audio materials, they compiled their own mini vocabularies of polysyllabic words in English and Russian and translated these words into their native languages. These nonimmigrant students presented their triple sets of multisyllabic words, for example, English - Russian - Armenian, English - Russian - Tadzhik, English - Russian - Lezghian/ Vietnamese/ Mongolian, etc.

These mini vocabularies were key criteria of assessing the proficiency of bachelors and masters of Arts in accentuating words or in RP skills throughout the research process. One more criterion of their RP evaluation was the intonation of their utterances in dialogues, role-plays, case studies, projects and game-based classroom activities. The questionnaire was developed aimed at determining the level of understanding and the ability to apply the rules of accentuation of multi syllabics. The nonimmigrant students were asked several questions, such as:

- Do you have a clear understanding of stress placement in multisyllabic poly morphemic words?

- Do you have difficulties in stress placement in compound words, words with prefixes, complex and compound numerals both in English and in Russian languages? If so, explain;

- Do the verbs with post positives and polysyllabic suffixal words found mostly in English cause any difficulties in accentuation? If so, explain;

- Did compiling mini-vocabularies help you in mastering RP skills? If so, explain;

- Was it helpful to compile vocabularies with the triple sets of polysyllabic words using your mother tongue? If so, explain.

The analysis of this survey results revealed the adequacy of the chosen methodology for mastering RP skills when teaching professionally focused English to law students. More detailed information is presented below.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As the result of the research of these aspects, authentic texts, audio and video materials were selected; assignments and exercises were developed to expand the professionally focused vocabulary of bachelors

and masters of Arts with multisyllabic poly morphemic and polymorphic terminology, to advance their abilities to correctly place the stress and implement the rules of accentuation both in the English and the Russian languages, thus mastering their RP skills. This contributes to their efficiency in professionally directed English-language interaction with colleagues in Russia and abroad.

The abovementioned questionnaire demonstrated that the majority of the nonimmigrant students surveyed at the first stage of the study experienced difficulties with the correct accentuation of multi syllabics both in English and Russian (37 out of 40 respondents). The students did not have structured or systematic knowledge about accentuation in polysyllabic poly morphemic words and would place the stress commonly using their intuition or on the basis of information from dictionaries.

A perfect result of the present study was demonstrated when, following the teacher’s recommendations, 37 out of 40 surveyed nonimmigrant students eliminated the difficulties they had; the remaining 3 respondents, who did not experience problems with RP, improved their skills and expanded their vocabulary being involved into this study.

Table 2: Results of mastering RP skills through teaching professionally-focused English in interdisciplinary context

Questions	University level						Per cent
	Bachelors – 21			Masters – 19			
	Answers			Answers			
	Never	Seldom	Often	Never	Seldom	Often	
Do you have a clear understanding of stress			21			19	100%

placement in multisyllabic polymorphemic words?							
Do you have difficulties in stress placement in compound words, words with prefixes, complex and compound numerals both in English and in Russian languages?	21			19			100%
Do the verbs with postpositives and polysyllabic suffixal words found mostly in English cause any difficulties in accentuation?	20	1		19			97.5%
Did compiling mini-vocabularies help you in mastering RP skills?			21			19	100%
Was it helpful to compile vocabularies with the triple sets of polysyllabic words using your mother tongue?			21			19	100%

Thus, after the students were explained that multisyllabic words with two or more stresses can be found more often in English rather than in Russian and were provided with the examples (империалистический – imperialistic), they easily found other examples in the selected texts:

- *экспроприация* (*expropriation* [ɪk,sprəʊ.pri'ei.ʃn]) – in the Russian word there is only one stressed syllable and 5 unstressed syllables (3 pre-stressed and 2 post-stressed);
- *законопослушание* (*law-abiding* ['lɔ.ə.baɪ.dɪŋ]) – one stressed syllable and 7 unstressed syllables (5 pre-stressed and 2 post-stressed);

The obvious success of this research lies in the fact that all the 40 students involved very quickly understood that in the speech of both Brits and Russians words with unequal accents are broadly presented – *participation* [pɑː,tɪs.ɪ'peɪ.ʃn] (*участие*), *interference* [ɪntə'fɪə(ə)nʃ] (*вмешательство*), *organization* [ɔːgənai'zeɪʃn] (*организация*); parts of the poly-stressed words formed by the primary and the secondary stress are equally influenced by the rules of reduction, including the qualitative one, for example, *ceremony* ['ser.ɪ.mə.ni] (*церемония*), *ceremonial* [ˌser ə'məʊ.ni.əl] (*церемониальный*).

The compilation of mini-vocabularies helped students understand and clearly describe the following similarities in multisyllabic words accentuation in English and Russian:

- The secondary stress in multi syllabics is normally weaker than the primary,
- The vowel marked with a secondary stress retains its main features,
- The qualitative reduction of vowels can be observed in syllables dependent on the secondary-stressed one.

The students succeeded in identifying distinct differences in the Russian/ English rules of accentuation giving examples of multisyllabic words and law terms:

- The order of parts of a Russian word is stable, formed by the main and secondary stress where the secondary-stressed part is always in the preposition and the main stress marks the final part of the word (*взаимосвязь – interconnection*); the order of the parts of words in English is not necessarily stable with lots of poly-stressed words where the primary stress is on the first part of the word, a weak stress is on the second (*painkiller* [*ˈpeɪn,kɪl.əɹ*] *болеутоляющее; probation* [prəˈbeɪ.ʃən] *испытательный срок*);

- The words with three stresses - two primary and one secondary or one primary and two secondary - are more common in English than in Russian, for example:

,mis,ap'pre'hension – недоразумение;

,in,consti'tutional – неконституционный;

re,sponsi'bility – обязанность;

,inter'national – международный;

,juris'prudence – правоведение;

частноземлевладельческий – 'private 'land,owning.

These significant results are also demonstrated in the fact the 25% of respondents who at the first stage of this research often had difficulties pronouncing poly-stressed words that have no accentuation coincidence in Russian and English eliminated their mistakes. Only one student seldom experienced difficulties with the verbs with post positives found mostly in the English language.

The way to avoid difficulty in articulating post positives was instructing the students to activate their knowledge of grammar; for example: pronouncing post positives as the specific components of the verbal lexemes, close in their sound composition to adverbs and

prepositions – *wipe out* (стереть), *sort out* (улаживать (проблемы), рассортировать). Being significant from the point of view of semantics, postpositive elements can change the verbs meaning – *laugh with* (смеяться вместе с кем-либо) – *laugh at* (смеяться над кем-либо); *give* (давать) – *give back* (возвращать). The students also learnt how to expand their vocabulary using the same verbs with different postpositive elements turning them into antonyms – *stay in* (оставаться (в помещении или дома)) vs. *stay out* (отсутствовать (в помещении или дома)); *put in* (вставить) vs. *put out* (извлечь).

Since English post positives give additional meanings to the verbs, nonimmigrant students tried to compare them with Russian verbal prefixes, e.g., *внести - вынести* (*bring in – take out*), *вбежать - выбежать* (*run in – run out*). Though this comparison also meant good results of the students' overall performance in this study, they were explained that in the Russian language a prefix is a morpheme which is not stressed while an English postpositive is a specific linguistic unit with an intermediate position (between the word and its part); thus, it has an independent stress.

The other important result of mastering RP skills and working with dictionaries was the nonimmigrant students' observation there are words similar to post positives yet translated like nouns, for example: *let down* (опускать) – *let-down* (упадок); *let off* (процануть) – *let-off* (процение). They were explained that these nouns with two stresses are formed in conversion on the basis of verbs with post positives.

Nevertheless, the second stress on the postpositive is lost throughout the verb's nominalization, for example, *lock-out* (локаут), *get-up* (успро́йство), *run-about* (бро́дьяга), and so on. Thus, the students were taught that two accents of verbs with post positives and the ones that have undergone nominalization have nothing in common with the rules of accentuation in the Russian language but exist mostly as a specific feature of English.

4. CONCLUSION

Implementation of new pedagogical and linguistic solutions – not just mastering the professionally focused English language in interdisciplinary context but mastering such real-life skills as RP and proper accentuation in English, Russian and mother tongues – helped the nonimmigrant students to progress in the classroom and outside it. They moved beyond the walls of the classroom, shared their thoughts and opinions on what else (besides RP) ensures that professionally focused English-language interaction with the counterparts from all over the world is successful.

The law students got better understanding of the complex processes they went through while learning the rules of accentuation and improving skills of professional communication, applying their critical thinking, discussing relevant authentic professionally focused information, collecting new ideas, good legal practices and principles,

being able to experience what they were learning and to use it in real-life context.

Professional communication training is extremely multidimensional and needs continuous professional development and research involving technology, integration, trustable accountable values that bring us to the improvement of the impossible. Sharing this range of insights, content and results presented in this research is a kind of collaboration with different teachers and educators across the world; it is an attempt to make a contribution to the scientific society with the hope that this knowledge and experience is of value for practitioners, researchers and academic personnel.

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