

LISTENING TO ACCENTS

Мақаланың мақсаты – оқушыларды тындай отырып, сөйлеудегі ерекшелік проблемаларын анықтау, оларға осы проблемаларды түсіндіру және оны түзеу. Осындай проблемаларды шешудің бірнеше кезеңдері ұсынылады.

Identifying elements of foreign pronunciation

Stage 1: Preparing materials

Using audio cassettes, prepare recordings, two to three minutes in length, of foreign accents; this can be done individually or in pairs or groups. The recordings should consist of short interviews with speakers who are not very proficient in the target language. In a country where the target language is not locally spoken, it makes sense to use as interviewees natives of this country, but other accents may be used in addition.

It is, of course, much easier just to ask people to read aloud in order to make the recording, but resist the temptation! There are various reasons for this: someone reading aloud has time to think consciously about how they are speaking, and we are looking for 'intuitive' pronunciation; the reading passage may include words the interviewee does not know; and perception of spelling affects pronunciation. Improvised speech produces much better samples, which may later, incidentally, be used to examine lexical and grammatical errors. If you find it difficult to think of questions for an interview, the interviewee can be asked to describe a picture, or retell a well-known story.

If you have not made such recordings before, make a brief trial recording of a few seconds and play it back in order to check that you have the distance, volume, microphone and so on properly adjusted. Begin the actual interview only when you are sure you are getting a clear recording.

Stage 2: Analysis

Listen to the recordings and try to analyse what it is about the accents which makes them 'foreign'. This is quite difficult; you will find you need to listen to the recording more than once. It is easier if you note the words and phrases which sound generally foreign while listening the first time, and then during later listenings try to define what precisely is wrong with them. If you know the phonetic alphabet and symbols of intonation and stress, this can help, but a rough description of what is wrong in 'lay' language can be quite adequate.

Stage 3: Pooling and comparing

If several such recordings have been made by a group of teachers studying together, then the next stage is to share findings. In small groups, each recording is listened to, and participants try to identify the errors and how and why they think these occur.

Stage 4: Drawing conclusions

Discuss your findings, and draw conclusions. Questions that can usefully be investigated here are the following (some possible answers regarding English appear in the Notes).

1. (If only one type of accent was recorded) What seem to be the most common errors?
2. (If there were different accents) Were there foreign-sounding pronunciations that were common to most or all of the speakers, and can you make some generalizations about the kinds of errors?
3. Which errors do you think are the most important to try to correct?
4. Are there any you would not bother to try to correct? Why not?
5. With regard to the errors you want to correct: how would you explain these to the learner?

What further ideas do you have for getting learners to improve their pronunciation of the items you have found?