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THE IMPORTANCE OF SPEECH PROSODY IN TEACHER'S WORK WITH PUPILS

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The article defines the concept of prosody, the essential condition of effective speech perception, and the most significant prosodic traits of Polish. It identifies and analyses the specific peculiarities of a child's speech—formation process at different stages of child development. It focuses on the teacher's high communication competence in the conscious use of speech prosody skills, the connection of speech with non-verbal communication in the form of a parallel conversation.

Key words: speech, prosody, phonetics and phonology, supra-segmental characteristics of a language, speech-development process, communication competence, non-verbal communication.

The ability to speak fluently is one of the conditions of participating in the life of an adult community. It has been observed that the development of speech requires constant improvement in the use of speech as a means of communication, which people acquire in the course of their individual lives through contact with other speaking people [1]. An important element of a correct perception of each individual person is his or her way of communicating, particularly, the correctness of their utterances.

The perception of speech is influenced by a number of factors, including, inter alia, the prosodic features and the articulatory correctness, the rhythmic pattern of the utterance, phonic gestures. Each of these factors affects, directly or indirectly, the perception of speech.

Prosody is a branch of phonetics and phonology which describes the supra-segmental characteristics of a language (among other things, the stress, intonation, quantity, pace, strength, pitch and timbre of voice, etc.), characterizing a syllable (as a whole) in contrast to other syllables in a given utterance [2, s. 814].

The essential condition of effective speech perception and, above all, of its correct division and comprehension, is correct organisation of the rhythmic and dynamic and rhythmic and melodic structures of each oral utterance. The prosodic traits are signals of such organisation – i.e., phonic factors of a supra-segmental nature which are the attributes of not just individual sounds, but of syllables, or sequences of syllables, and which provide a correct segmentation and rhythmization

of the uttered statement. In an utterance, they are usually arranged in such a way that its certain part is particularly distinguished [2, s, 813].

The most significant prosodic characteristic traits of Polish include, above all, the stress, intonation, quantity as well as other traits important for communication competence and the emotional climate of the act of speech, such as the pace, strength, pitch and timbre of voice. The condition for correct perception of speech by a recipient is in large the correct rhythmic and dynamic speech organisation, based on coexistence of the prosodic features and their mutual complementation.

Conscious and intentional influence of the surrounding people serves enhancing development of a child's speech. The condition for full communication is not only the appropriate selection of the content, but also the way of its transmission both on the segmental level (related to the speech sounds) as well as on the supra-segmental level (accomplished through the melody, stress, rhythm). Correct use of prosodic elements conditions the achievement of a speaker's desired goal. Thus, correct accentuation helps the recipient grasp the sense of the utterance. The logical stress indicates which segments are particularly important for the meaning and hence the speaker is trying to emphasise them. The rhythmic and melodic structure, characteristic of each utterance, provides information on its syntactic segmentation, i.e., informs about the number and type of sentences, clauses and phrases included in it and indicates limits of the utterance by signalling its end or continuation. Changes in intonation, that is the pitch of the basic tone, show also which parts of the text are particularly important. The intonation allows the listener to figure out the intentions of the speaker. It allows establishing whether he or she is expected to continue the utterance or whether some kind of action is expected of them.

The expressive function of language, that is the expression of the speaker's mental states, such as anger, joy, sorrow and the attitude towards their own utterance is accomplished through prosody. Such moods are indicated by changing the pace of speaking, strengthening or lowering one's voice, introducing pauses, prolongation of sounds and melodic modulation. The emotionally charged texts include significantly more distinct melodic changes than neutral utterances [3].

The strength of the voice ought to be adjusted to the place and the audience. A monotonous voice strength (quiet – loud) does not add any appeal to a teacher's speech. The pace of a teacher's speech ought to be slow as children will not be able to decode the cascades of phonic sequences. Instruction overload, a flood of prohibitions and orders cause the children to stop paying attention to the utterance as they are unable to grasp and remember its meaning.

The supra-segmental characteristics trigger off, indirectly, emotional reactions of the listeners, stimulate their imagination, therefore, through them, the impressive function of language is also realised. Consequently, the ability of aural

perception of phonetic phenomena and their correct accomplishment are extremely important in the process of communication. A well-developed phonetic hearing considerably affects sensitivity to phonetic phenomena [4]. It not only conditions full understanding, but also favours pronunciation in conformity with the principles of the culture of the spoken word. In order for the child to be able to reproduce correctly the melody of the utterance, they must first hear it several times and remember it. Improvement of the phonetic hearing makes us sensitive to the beauty of speech and it makes the utterances more expressive and full in terms of the timbre of voice. This is the reason why teachers, besides improving their speech organs, ought to dedicate time to develop their abilities of linguistic communication within the scope of uttering and receiving verbal statements.

The ability to perceive and react to speech sounds already appears during the prenatal period and is accompanied by acquisition of the speech prosody of the surrounding people. Therefore, the beginnings of mastering the supra-segmental sphere of texts coincide with the period just before birth.

Gradually, children develop their language skills in both spheres. They use the prosodic features not only to gain better understanding, but also to improve their own utterances.

The work aimed at formation of prosody in oral texts is preceded by exercises in the sensitivity of hearing based on recognition of phonetic phenomena. This is the reason why musical and ortho-phonetic exercises, as well as those involving recognition of the intonation line of speech, are so important for the development of a child.

According to L. Pawelec, intensive vocal and physical exercises influence quick acquisition of correct articulation, correct accentuation [5]. Perfection within this scope allows for better understanding of speech, including the speaker's intentions, and one's own increasingly effective use of means of expressing oneself.

The process of a child's speech development has various stages and lasts several years. Being possible solely through contact with other members of a child's family and community, it is genetically conditioned and depends on individual predispositions of a given child and its organism. It is a process of harmonisation of biological, psychological and social factors. In the specialist literature, the authors identify four stages of a child's speech-formation process [6]. Each of the stages is distinguished by its characteristic achievement which substantially changes the way of communication between the child and the people it is in contact with. The speech-development process is not identical for all the children, it is rather a result of individual pace and rhythm of development of a child. The sequence of acquiring individual sounds by the child is also different. Therefore, the degree of speech development depends on the influence of the environment and on the psychophysical development of an individual child.

Therefore, the development of speech is a spontaneous process related to different everyday-life situations. It is important to provide the child with appropriate examples of linguistic behaviours and with the knowledge about their use in different communication circumstances [7]. It should, therefore, be noted that an utterance is not merely the way of producing sounds and prosodic features, but also the content and linguistic form. A child acquires the communication skills gradually, as they involve mastering not only competence in the linguistic system, but also the linguistic social, situational and pragmatic competence [8].

The supra-segmental correctness is equally important for correct pronunciation as the segmental correctness. Contravening the supra-segmental standards makes the utterance not only unpleasant to hear, but it may also disturb the linguistic communication process as the statement might be misunderstood.

A correct, conscious use of the prosodic features of speech and their skilful and effective use by the speaker of an oral statement, both spontaneous and previously prepared, shows their high communication competence and definitely contributes to an effective realisation of the desired linguistic function and achievement of the intended goal of the statement.

Undertaking to work on the development, improvement and correction of a child's speech one should, first of all, speak correctly oneself. One of the most essential traits is high speaking competence, which involves correct articulation, rhythm and intonation of the utterance, clear expression of one's thoughts, extensive vocabulary, application of communication rules. While addressing his or her pupils, the teacher ought to stand facing them, so that they can observe the correct articulatory positions of the sounds, facial expression, etc. Working on one's own pronunciation becomes not only the teacher's private matter, but also his or her moral and professional obligation [9]. The language a teacher uses when addressing his or her pupils should be natural. It teaches the pupils spontaneity in speaking, in expressing emotions, thoughts, ideas, attitudes. Correct, clear pronunciation is a basic requirement demanded from teachers. It should also be remembered that a child in the stage of resonance (this is how the specialists call the age between birth and adolescence) adopts the phonetic features of the environment. A teacher ought to know the traits of his or her own pronunciation. His or her own personal phonetic assessment will help the teacher notice, for example, retardation elements, appearing in a continuous utterance, which destroy its fluency [10].

In the teaching profession, good manners, pedagogical tact and high self-control always pay off. Objectivity of assessment is a highly delicate issue when working with children. Encouraging a child to speak and ask questions which are adequate to their abilities enables them to gain confidence. For a teacher who has such features it is easier to satisfy a child's basic psychological needs, such as the need for security, for love, recognition and success.

According to L. Pawelec, great significance is also attached to non-verbal communication which may take the form of a parallel conversation. The eye movement, facial expression, posture, gestures, intonation and voice volume, coming nearer to or walking away from other participants in the situation are only a few of the methods of maintaining contact and expressing mutual assessments and intentions [11].

For children, especially those in the early years of their education, the teacher's appearance is also of great importance.

The claim that the language spoken by the adults is a model, an example, for the children does not raise any doubt nowadays. This obliges the teachers to self-observation and reflection on their own language. Improving the linguistic culture, mainly of the nursery school and early education pedagogues, contributes to the improvement of the teaching efficacy [12], while correct and careful use of the language by the teacher facilitates understanding the meaning and encourages the child to listen attentively.

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ЗНАЧЕННЯ МОВНОЇ ПРОСОДІЇ У ДІЯЛЬНОСТІ ПЕДАГОГА

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Визначено поняття просодії, вагомі умови ефективного сприймання мовлення, а також найважливіші просодичні характерні ознаки польської мови. Уточнено й проаналізовано своєрідні особливості процесу формування мовлення дитини на різних етапах її розвитку. Зосереджено увагу на комунікативній компетентності педагога високого рівня у свідомому

застосуванні мовних просодичних умінь, взаємозв'язку мовлення з невербальним спілкуванням у формі паралельної бесіди.

Ключові слова: мовлення, просодія, фонетика й фонологія, супрасегментальні характеристики мови, процес мовленнєвого розвитку, комунікативна компетентність, невербальне спілкування.

ЗНАЧЕНИЕ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ ПРОСОДИИ В ДЕЯТЕЛЬНОСТИ ПЕДАГОГА

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Определено понятие просодии, значительные условия эффективного восприятия речи, а также важные просодические характерные признаки польского языка. Уточнены и проанализированы своеобразные особенности процесса формирования речи ребенка на разных этапах его развития. Сосредоточено внимание на коммуникативной компетентности педагога высокого уровня в сознательном использовании языковых просодических умений, на взаимосвязи речи с невербальным общением в форме параллельной беседы.

Ключевые слова: речь, просодия, фонетика и фонология, супрасегментальные характеристики языка, процесс речевого развития, коммуникативная компетентность, невербальное общение.

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