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Effective Techniques for Working with the Tongue Twister in the Elementary Level of Training Russian as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

The selection of material for teaching phonetics is a topical problem in the practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language. In this article the tongue twister, as the material for the development of phonetic skills at the elementary level of teaching Russian to foreigners, will be discussed. It is proposed to work only with one tongue twister during daily phonetic exercises. It is also important to organize the work with different types of activities. This paper presents a set of tasks (about 20 exercises) and builds on the principle "from syllable to phrases and sentences", which can be done in a short time. In addition, this paper describes the tasks employing tongue twisters by studying grammatical material. These methods can be called effective because they develop different skills, introduce diversity, dynamism in the learning process and help to combat fatigue.

Keywords: Russian as a foreign language; tongue twister; phonetics; phonetic skills.

1. Introduction

The development of phonetic skills (the distinction of sounds and letters, pronunciation of every sound, listening, conjunct pronunciation of words and phrases and intonation) is one of the important tasks at the elementary level of

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learning Russian as a foreign language. At the Tomsk Polytechnic University at the pre-university department these problems within the propaedeutic phonetic course (24 hours) are aimed to be solved.

The teacher of the discipline "General Russian" has another task. The students should bring into use the knowledge of the phonetic system of the Russian language, which is why it is recommended to do phonetic exercises at the elementary level. This part of the lesson usually lasts 15-30 minutes and aims to prepare the speech apparatus and to involve foreign students into the situation of communication in Russian.

During the selection of the material for phonetic exercises, it is important to keep in mind several points. Firstly, to avoid the monotony that appears when working with a long list of words, it is better to use a limited number of words and different types of tasks. Secondly, it is useful to focus on not more than 3-4 difficult to pronounce sounds while training hard skills. Finally, students should see the qualitative result of their work at the end of each lesson because it increases motivation. Tongue twister is a material that meets the mentioned criteria because of its form: the sounds that are difficult to pronounce are maximally concentrated in a short sentence.

The importance of tongue twisters in the development of pronunciation skills, especially at the elementary level, is consistently noted in scientific domestic and foreign articles (Sergeeva, 2013; Masfirotul Uyun, & Kumalarini, 2014). However, the variety of techniques for working with the tongue twister are not described.

Russian textbooks for Russian as a foreign language, intended for elementary level, invariably include exercises for the development of listening and pronunciation skills. But there is only one task "Read the tongue twister" (Raspopova, 2004) or tongue twisters are not represented as well (Belikova et al., 2014; Antonova et al., 2010).

The textbook "Не фонетика – песня!" can be separately mentioned. It consists of 11 songs for foreigners, which are written on the material of Russian tongue twisters. Working with the separate words of these songs may be preceded by listening and singing. The author proposes the following tasks that take place before reading:
1. Listen to the words given in the table.
2. Listen and repeat after the teacher.
3. Listen to and read the words one by one.
4. Listen and repeat a couple of words (Fedotova, 2009).

In 2015, at the Department of Russian as a foreign language at Tomsk Polytechnic University a survey was conducted among 20 teachers who work at the elementary level. The questionnaire included the following: "Do you use tongue twisters on your lessons?" "If so, why? / If not, why not?", "Which tasks do you use?"

According to the results, 30% of teachers do not use tongue twisters because they do not know how to use them interestingly and effectively. About 18% of respondents do not have time for this. About 52% of the teachers include tongue twisters in phonetic exercises to relieve fatigue and make a change. They use the following tasks:"Listen and repeat the words", "Listen and repeat the phrase", "Read tongue twister slow/fast", "Read tongue twister in the name of the character (a bear/fox/mouse/robot and so on)."

Different exercises that were mentioned, did not provide complex work directed on developing phonetics skills, listening, reading aloud and silent reading, although this opportunity is potentially put in a tongue twister as in any text.

2. Methodology

The research of the problem was conducted among groups of foreign students who are studying at the pre-university department of Tomsk Polytechnic University, and included several stages:
1. identification and analysis of the main phonetic difficulties;
2. analysis of the existing techniques that are directed to elimination of these difficulties and the development of listening and phonetics skills;
3. selection of the language material and tasks development;
4. evaluation of results;
5. survey of students, which helped to reveal short comings in the tasks;
6. correction of tasks.

3. Results and discussion

A list of tasks that can be applied to any tongue twisters is developed.

Only one tongue twister should be selected by teachers for the phonetic exercises for a lesson. It should contain 3-4 hard to pronounce sounds. All assignments prepare students to read the tongue twister for distinct difficult-to-pronounce sounds. The tasks include words of tongue twisters and vocabulary (no more than 6-8 words) with the same sounds which are already familiar to students. Tasks are based on the principle "from simple to complex": the syllables – words – phrases – sentence.

As an example, we work with the tongue twister *Четыре чёрненьких чумазеньких чертёнка чертили чёрными чернилами чертёж*. The pronunciation of sounds [р]/[р'], [ч], [т'] will be taught in this material.

The examples of some exercises are presented below. Their main aim is the development of phonetic skills. Doing these tasks, two closely connected skills are developed – phonetics and reading aloud skills.

Task 1. The aim – the preparation of the speech apparatus, presenting the sounds chosen for phonetic exercises. Listen, read and repeat syllables.

1. ча, чу, чё, чи;

2. та, то, ту, тэ, ты, те, ти;

3. ра, ро, ру, рэ, ре, ри;

4. ар, ор, ур, эр, ер, ир.

Task 2. The aim – to differentiate by ear.
Listen syllables, write 1 (if the same syllables) or 2 (if different syllables).
Sounding material: *ра – ра; та – тя; чи – чи; ер – ир; ту – то*.

Task 3. The aim – the correlation of sound and syllables and lettering.
Listen to syllables and number them.

ти ……..	*ты ……..*	*та ……..*
те ……..	*чи ……..*	*чу ……..*
ча ……..	*ту ……..*	*чё ……..*

Task 4. The aim – the ability to isolate the necessary information from the stream of words (sounds), the presentation of the tongue twister, discussion of possible difficulties.
Listen to the tongue twister. Calculate how many times it sounds:

[ч'] …

[т]/[т'] …

[р]/[р'] …

Task 5. The aim – the correlation of sound and the letter shape of a word.
Listen to the tongue twister; mark the words that you hear.

четыре □	*чертёж □*
чертили □	*чернилами □*
часто □	*четверг □*
чёрненьких □	*почти □*

Task 6. The aim – using phonetic laws (reduction, sonorization, devocalization and so forth).
Write the transcription of the words:

1. четы́ре – [……………………………]

2. чёрненьких – [……………………]

3. чума́зеньких – [……………………]

4. чертёнка – [………………………….]

5. черти́ли – [………………………….]

6. чертёж – […………………………….]

Read the words above.

Task 7. The aim – correct stress of words.
Listen and read the words according to rhythmic models.

tatá: *чертёж*

tátata: *чёрными, чёрненьких*

tatáta: *четыре, чертёнка, чертили*

tatátata: *чумазеньких, чернилами*

Task 8. The aim – conjoin reading of phrases.

Listen, read, and repeat words and phrases.

1. четыре, четыре чертёнка, четыре чёрненьких чертёнка, четыре чёрненьких чумазеньких чертёнка;

2. чертили, чертили чертёж, чертили чернилами чертёж, чертили чёрными чернилами чертёж;

3. чертёж, чертили чертёж, чертили чернилами чертёж, четыре чертёнка чертили чернилами чертёж.

Task 9. The aim – the development of phonetic skills.

Listen, read, repeat a tongue twister.

Четы́ре чёрненьких чума́зеньких чертёнка черти́ли чёрными черни́лами чертёж.

Task 10. The aim – the development of phonetic skills.

Read a tongue twister with different intonations: interrogative, exclamatory, with a shift of a logical accent.

The next group of tasks promotes the development of attention and memory and also skills of reading. The set of tasks include visually big ranks of words though actually they include words from only one tongue twister. Students are compelled to be guided quickly (for a time) in letters of the nonnative alphabet that is especially difficult for those who uses Latin or the hieroglyphic letter.

Variants of tasks:

Task 1. Find the extra word.

чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка
чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка
чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чёрточка	чертёнка
чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка
чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка	чертёнка

Task 2. Find the word, which is in every column.

чертёнка	чертёж	чертёнка	четыре	чертёнка
четыре	чертили	четыре	чертёж	чертили
чертёж	чернила	чёрный	чернила	чёрный
чертили	четыре	чертёнка	четыре	чертёж
чернила	чертили	чертёж	чертили	чертили

Task 3. Find the word, which is in the column on the left but not on the right.

чертёж		чумазеньких	четыре		чумазеньких
	четыре			чертёж	
чертёнка		чертили	чертёнка		чёрненьких
	чёрненьких			четыре	
чёрными		чернилами	чернилами		чёрными

Task 4. Find quickly:

1. the words with 2/3/4 syllables in column 1.

2. the words where there is no letter А / Ё / И / Ы in column 2.

3. words with 2/4 vowels in column 3.

4. words with 6/8/11 letters in column 4.

Task 4.

чертёнка	чумазеньких	чёрненьких	чёрными
четыре	чертёж	четыре	чертёж
чёрными	чертили	чернилами	чумазеньких
чертёж	чёрненьких	чёрными	чернилами
чумазеньких	чернилами	чертёнка	чёрненьких
чертили	четыре	чертёж	четыре
чернилами	чертёнка	чумазеньких	чертёнка
чёрненьких	чёрными	чертили	чертили

In each case the teacher can choose some options of tasks depending on the purposes of the phonetic exercise or level of students. In this case it is necessary to observe a sequence "syllables – words – phrases – the sentence".

While teaching the pronunciation of sounds which cause the greatest difficulties it is recommended to read different tongue twisters with these sounds within several days during phonetic warming-up stage. The home task can be listening and preparation for fast and good reading of the already known tongue twister.

Teaching pronunciation is a long process, so it is recommended to return to familiar tongue twisters after a while and to offer students not only to read them, but also to analyze their grammatical structure. It is important to select tongue twisters with the necessary grammatical constructions or lexical items. For example, the tongue twister "*Четы́ре чёрненьких чума́зеньких чертёнка черти́ли чёрными черни́лами чертёж*" can be used by studying the theme "Genitive Case of Adjectives and Nouns after Numerals".

Variants of tasks:

- Find the subject and predicate. Define the cases of nouns and their meanings.
- Find the cognate words:

чёрный, четырежды, четверг, чёрненький, четвёртый, четыре, чертёнок, чёрт.

- Write the adjectives using the model:

чёрный – чёрненький, белый – ..., синий – ..., красный – ..., жёлтый – ..., зелёный – ..., оранжевый – ... .

- Match all possible phrases:

	чертёж
чертить	*карандаш*
четыре	*ручка*
чёрный	*брюки*
	мел
	схема

- Write the correct word in the necessary form.

Чёрный, чумазый, чертить/ начертить, чернила, чертёж.

1. *На Мише ... костюм.*
2. *Я не люблю писать ...*
3. *Почему ты такой ...? Ты ел шоколад?*
4. *Вчера студенты 2 часа рисовали ...*
5. *Ты уже ... схему?*

The choice of tasks also depends on the aim of the lesson and structure of a concrete tongue twister.

4. Conclusion

At the questioning stage students noted advantages of the work as variety, dynamism and the element of competition. Variety is achieved due to the change of activity forms, dynamism – due to simultaneous work of all students and using short and various tasks. The element of competition arises at the final stage of the work, when students read the tongue twisters fast, correctly and expressively.

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