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**LINGUISTIC INTERFERENCE DYNAMICS: WILL THE
FOREIGN ACCENT DISAPPEAR BY ITSELF?**

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Abstract

The study of the impact of "alien's" speech on a partner in communication is one of the most important problems of intercultural communication. Language is closely related to the structure and system of values of society, different accents are evaluated differently. They are connected with stereotypes about the speaker's nationality and the mechanism of stereotyping gives a distorted picture. The stereotypical perception reinforces the lack of understanding, interferes with business and personal relationships. The study of speech interference nature and the search for ways to reduce them are urgent tasks of economic importance. The subject of this study is the interference pattern due to the interaction of the systems of Russian and Tajik languages. Bilingualism among representatives of the peoples of Tajikistan is a mass and rather complex phenomenon. The study was conducted on the material of spontaneous speech and reading. The material of the study was the recordings of spontaneous speech and reading of ten students (7 boys and 3 girls) aged 19 to 23 years from Tajikistan living in Russia from six months to 7 years. An auditory analysis, instrumental acoustic analysis and perceptive experiment were conducted to answer the question: will the foreign accent disappear as time goes by or a person needs to make a special effort to get rid of it?

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Keywords: Foreign accent, linguistic interference, phonetics, Russian language, Tajik language.



1. Introduction

The term «interference» is used in the works of the Prague school. Weinreich (1972, p.29) called interference “cases of deviation from the norms of any of the languages resulting from the possession of two or more languages due to language contact”. According to Haugen (1972, p.61), interference is “cases of deviations from the norms of the language, appearing in the speech of bilingual speakers as a result of acquaintance with other languages”. The main source of phonetic interference is differences in the systems of interacting languages: different phonemic systems, different rules of phonemes positional realization, their compatibility, different intonation. The combination of phonetic characteristics of speech, reflecting the linguistic, territorial or social identity of the speaker, creates a phenomenon, called accent.

Deviations in pronunciation are noted both at the segment and at the prosodic levels of speech. Deviations from the codified norm are presented in bilingual's speech in the most concentrated form at the initial stage of studying a foreign language. Bilingual's speech goes through several stages of development - from a strong accent to a barely noticeable one. The tasks of the linguistic description of a foreign accent include the description of a set of features that make up a specific accent, as well as the degree of it (Vishnevskaya, 1997; Chernyavskaya, 2016).

Intonation of a foreign language is extremely difficult to master (Zinder, 1979; Almazova, Eremin, & Rubtsova, 2016). In the literature it is noted that "the more extended (linearly) segment of speech we consider" the stronger effect of native language influence we may notice (Interference of sound systems, 1987). That is why the most vivid foreign language accent is manifested in the intonation, which is an integral characteristic of speech.

Intonation errors in the speech don't interfere with the general understanding of the text, but they reduce the degree of communicative impact on the native speaker. It was found that such errors can be considered as communicatively significant. In some cases, these errors lead to changes in the communicative type of the statement, as well as its emphatic characteristics. Moreover, language interference at the level of intonation prevents the correct personal and social assessment of the speaker. A speaker who is fluent in the language at the lexical and grammatical levels, making intonational mistakes, risks destroying the correctness of the perception of his/her level of language training (Kryukovskaya & Shpakovskaya, 2011; Chernyavskaya 2017).

The study of phonetic interference is especially important from the point of view of its communicative effect. The pronouncing side of speech communication plays a leading role in the formation of judgment about the personality of the interlocutor. The native speaker discovers bilingual belonging to another linguistic community primarily by the nature of his pronunciation. Accent as a speech characteristic is the most important indicator of the speaker identification in the process of speech communication. A native speaker creates a phonetic portrait of a person, which reflects the individual, social, territorial, class, national characteristics of his/her speech culture. In the situation of bilingualism the formation of the phonetic side of bilingual speech is not only at the level of speech production. Speech communication is a two-way process that involves not only speaking, but also listening. The development of conversation between communicants depends on the degree of mutual understanding between them, on their ability to perceive messages adequately. In terms of interference, bilingual speech activity is usually significantly reduced compared to the natural conditions of communication in the native language and is characterized

by the slowness of the mechanisms of perception and speech generation. Bilingual's attention during the communication with a native speaker is more directed to the search for the direct meaning of the statement, rather than to its hidden meaning and the relationship of the interlocutor to the communication partner and other extralinguistic factors. Adequate bilingual response to the native speaker phrase is a necessary condition for the process of communication. At the same time, the inability to assess the linguistic situation leads to a decrease in the ability to perceive the individual originality of speech and to evaluate its expressiveness. The lack of bilingual fluent speech perception skills leads his communication with a native speaker to a dead end and, accordingly, creates a negative communicative effect (Vishnevskaya, 1997).

The subject of this study is the interference pattern due to the interaction of the systems of Russian and Tajik languages. The interaction of the two languages is undeniable: thus, the Russian speech of the bilinguals acquires certain phonetic properties related to the phonetic and phonological characteristics of their native language. As a result of such interaction, there is a specific variant of the Russian language (at least its oral version) (Olson, 1994). One of the objectives of this study is to identify speech features of bilingual Tajiks who speak Russian.

Bilingualism among representatives of the peoples of Tajikistan is a mass and rather complex, multi-level phenomenon. The linguistic situation of Tajikistan is characterized by the presence of a large number of dialects and sub-dialects (more on this in the relevant section) that generates internal interference of the system (Mammadova, 1972).

The speakers, whose speech recordings were used in this study, were not born in Russia, but at the time of the experiment lived in St. Petersburg and had to speak Russian. Some of them studied Russian while living in Tajikistan. In Tajikistan Russian is widely used in science, business and media, it is taught in schools and universities. But it is important to note that during the Soviet period the Russian-speaking population was about 10% of the population, now it's no more than 1%. With rare exception, the Russian language is taught by Tajiks. According to experts, Russian is well taught in schools in Dushanbe (the capital of the country) and a number of other cities, but in many villages it is taught quite formally. At present, there is a considerable flow of resettlement from rural areas to cities and the inhabitants of villages significantly change the language continuum of cities (Pogodaev, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

The study of the impact of "alien's" speech on a partner in communication is one of the most important problems of intercultural communication. Most often, the accent is evaluated by a native speaker negatively, because the perception of bilingual speech is difficult and leads to a decrease in the interest of the native speaker in the act of communication. It is no accident that Bernstein (1975) considered the rejection of a foreign accent as an unconscious form of "protest against coercion to an unproductive expenditure of mental energy" (p. 18). On the other hand, there are also cases of positive impact of a foreign accent on a native speaker, when small deviations from the norm in bilingual's speech did not complicate the perception of his speech, and therefore the process of communication. With a small degree of emphasis, some originality of the speaker's speech can contribute to improving communication (Vishnevskaya, 1997).

Foreign language accent has a certain communicative effect on the native speaker; the degree of influence of foreign language accent depends not only on linguistic, but also on sociolinguistic. Linguistic

features of the accent are the speaker's language passport, indicate his / her national, territorial and social affiliation. The reaction of a native speaker to the bilingual accent speech can be conventionally placed on a scale, the extreme points of which are characterized in terms of: "strong/weak accent", "unpleasant/pleasant accent". This or that characteristic of the accent given by a native speaker is based on his or her language and social experience and is therefore quite subjective. However, the accent can give a person certain qualities in the eyes of the listener. There are complex relations between language and society, which are manifested in the social marking of linguistic phenomena. Language is closely related to the structure and system of values of society, different accents are evaluated differentially (Abramova, 2008; Nikiforova 2017). They are connected with stereotypes about the speaker's nationality. The mechanism of stereotyping gives a distorted picture, as old psychological patterns are used to strangers and new circumstances. This leads to mistrust. The stereotypical perception reinforces the lack of understanding interferes with business and personal relationships.

3. Research Questions

The accent in the speech of a foreigner is easily perceived by a native speaker and is reflected in his / her linguistic consciousness as a complex of systemic and stable deviations from the pronouncing norm. In creating this effect a special place belongs to the intonation. Bilingual's intonation marks his/her speech, on the one hand, as non-native, and on the other hand, manifests the specific sounding of bilingual's native speech. Analysis of prosodic errors in the speech of bilinguals shows that deviations from the norm are most often associated with implementation of the melodic component of intonation: phrase accents and choice of nuclear tone. Intonation errors in bilingual speech are caused, on the one hand, by the influence of the intonation system and intonation skills of the native language, and on the other hand, by the insufficient level of foreign language proficiency and other extralinguistic reasons generated by the situation of artificial bilingualism. The accent in intonation is manifested as a complex characteristic of the speaker's pronunciation behaviour in a non-native language, as a whole hierarchy of signs of intonation disorders, which are in close unity with the signs of interference at the segment level and at the level of the accent structure of the word (Vishnevskaya, 1993). Apparently, this aspect deserves careful study, since it is directly related to the issues of the success of human communication.

The questions of this research are:

- What are the characteristics of intonation in the Russian speech of Tajiks?
- Is there a dynamic of Tajik – Russian interference in the speech of bilingual speakers at the suprasegmental level?

In terms of dynamics, are these characteristics always significant for native speakers to mark them "alien's"? At what stage do they turn into «barely noticeable one»?

4. Purpose of the Study

Foreign language acquisition requires mastering not only the minimum, but also the maximum of phonetic means in speech. The main task of learning a foreign language is to ensure the effectiveness of communication in the situation of dialogue with a native speaker. This task may be feasible if the language training focuses on development of professional skills in the field of pronunciation and especially in the

intonation of speech. The problem is not to achieve an accent-free pronunciation (this task is unattainable in the situation of artificial bilingualism), but to ensure that the speech of a bilingual in a non - native language meets the basic requirement – «acceptability» from the point of view of a native speaker. Hence, understanding and correcting the phonetic errors in the speech is important for effectiveness of speech communication. The study of speech interference nature and the search for ways to reduce them are urgent tasks of economic importance.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Speakers and data

The study was conducted on the material of spontaneous speech and reading. The material of the study was the recording of spontaneous speech and reading of ten students (7 boys and 3 girls) aged 19 to 23 years living in Russia from six months to 7 years:

- Irdas, 20 years old, six months in Russia, Samarkand (Uzbekistan)
- Akmal, 20 years old, 1 year in Russia, Khujand
- Avazbek, 23 years old, 2 years in Russia, Samarkand (Uzbekistan)
- Mehrangez, 20 years, 2 years in Russia, Khujand
- Mukhammadali, 20 years old, 2 years in Russia, Khujand
- Shatnam, 19 years old, 2 years in Russia, Kanibadam
- Eziz, 19 years old, 3 years in Russia, Ashgabat (Turkmenistan)
- Ali Akbar, 19 years old, 4 years in Russia, Dushanbe
- Safina, 21 years old, 4 years old in Russia, Dushanbe
- Behzod, 21 years old, 7 years in Russia, Dushanbe

Most of the speakers lived in Tajikistan (Dushanbe, Khujand, Kanibadam), two of them lived in Uzbekistan (they speak Tajik language with their families and friends), one speaker was born in Turkmenistan (speaks Turkmen and Tajik languages). All the speakers went to «Russian schools», where some subjects were taught in Russian, which allowed them to enter educational institutions in Russia. Only for one of them (Eziz, 19 years) Russian was the main language spoken in the family. Two speakers (Akmal, 20 years, and Mehrangez, 20 years) used the Russian language to communicate in the family. For the remaining speakers of the Russian language – the language they studied in school. For the experiment, the speakers were asked to read the text, which reflects the most typical implementation and combination of Russian phonemes. Most of them also answered the interview questions, with the help of which a spontaneous speech was received. The topics of the interview were family, studies, plans for the future. The duration of the dialogues was not limited. The answers of the speaker to the questions of his/her interlocutor were recorded. Thus, the records of spontaneous speech were received, the genre of which can be defined as a monologue (as spontaneous monologues include interviews, in which replicas of the second communicant are minimized). The recording was carried out in 2016-2017.

5.2. Methodology

The subject of this research was melodic intonation contours. In the course of the work, primary auditory analysis and instrumental acoustic analysis were carried out. Wave Assistant (version for students,

Copyright 2001-2005, the Center for Speech technology) was used for plotting the main tone. The basic tone marks were set automatically and corrected manually (the marks on noisy consonants were removed and the errors affecting the quality and informativeness of the graphs were corrected). For each syntagma the type of intonation model was determined by Cecilia Ode classification (Ode, 2007).

In the vast majority of cases for this task, both types of analysis were used simultaneously – auditory and instrumental, since this method of research was the most appropriate. For further analysis, we selected 490 the phrase from spontaneous speech and 1214 from the reading. For each syntagma, a melodic contour was analyzed. The symbols used in this article: * - tonal accent; % - start or end of a statement; to indicate the tone level: H (high), M (middle), L (low). The data was statistically processed. For each informant, the percentage of marked deviations from the pronouncing norm in relation to the theoretically possible was calculated. Comparison of the results obtained from informants allows to reveal those elements of the Russian pronunciation norm, the distortion of which is the most stable.

For the perceptive experiment, 17 phrases with implementations in the speech of bilinguals were selected with the intonation center shift to the stressed syllable. Phrases in which the result of auditory and instrumental analysis revealed minimal deviations from the norm at the segment level were chosen. In addition, 8 phrases were selected from the corpus of spontaneous speech reading (Skrelin, 2009), in which native Russian speakers also implemented phrases with incompleteness. For this work, from the described corpus were selected speech recordings of 1 male and 2 females from the age categories "20-30 years" and "30-40 years" (symbols here and further: male, age category "over 20 years" – M>20, female, age category "over 20 years" - F>20, female, age category "over 30 years" - F>30). All of them are native speakers of Russian. These phrases were offered to listen twice and for each case auditors had to answer the question "Is Russian the native language for the speaker?". The auditors were students (from 17 to 19 years old). The experiment involved 100 people.

6. Findings

Analysis of Tajik-Russian interference in the speech of bilinguals

6.1. Accent units implementation in syntagma.

It is worth noting that in the Tajik language syntagma consists of several accent units (Sadat-Tehrani, 2007; Soltani, 2007). Each unit has a peak frequency of the main tone. The center of the syntagma is the last accent unit, followed by a low level of tone in the post-center. Each accent phrase is implemented at a level below the previous one due to declination (gradual lowering of the pitch throughout the statement). The usual accent unit consists of one significant word and possible clitics. Compound nouns, for example, and nouns with reduplication, are considered as a one word and are always one accentuated unit. An accent unit can also consist of more than one word due to several factors. At a fast pace of speech, the number of accent units in a statement may be less than at the usual pace. The duration of the proposal and the presence of subordinating sentences also affect the structure of accentual phrase. The semantic component is another factor interacting with prosodics. If the phrase contains new information, the speaker implements it with two accent units, if the information is already known to the interlocutor, then with one accent unit. There is also a variation in the structure of the accent unit, which does not affect semantic and pragmatic factors.

One of the features of all the bilinguals - the implementation of several accent units in syntagma with H*M peaks.

6.2. The inventory of intonation patterns in the speech of Tajiks.

It is worth paying attention to the inventory of intonation structures in Tajik: completeness is realized with the fall of the basic tone (several accent units in the syntagma in this study were considered as separate syntagmas), which coincides with the L% in the Russian language. Prominence is realized with the fall of tone and increase of intensity, which coincides with H*L in the Russian language. Incompleteness, general and special questions are realized with prosodic structure, reminiscent of H*L, the incompleteness is also often implemented with a smooth tone (the norm in the Russian language). However, in the Tajik language, no intonation patterns that are similar to the H*H, H*M, L*H, HL* (Ode, 2007; Soltani, 2007). For each of the speakers were obtained diagrams illustrating the proportion of intonation models in his/her speech.

In the speech of Eziz, Akmal, Ali Akbar there are H*H and L*H implementations for the realization of incompleteness, their repertoire of intonation constructions is the largest among all the speakers. In the data from other speakers there is only the implementation of those structures, such as those in the Tajik language (L*, H*L and smooth tone). Most speakers implemented a limited inventory of intonation designs in their speech. All these intonation contours are in the Russian language, however, speakers did not use those Russian intonation structures which can't be found in Tajik. For example, instead of H*M speakers, who have lived less than two years in Russia, use H*L (in the Tajik language H*M is absent).

6.3. Intonation center shift

The frequent feature, revealed in the speech of the bilinguals, is the shift of the intonation center to the next syllable (the syllable is not necessarily the last in the word), or to the sonant, if such a consonant follows the stressed vowel. The example of a melodic contour with a shift to the next syllable is shown in the figure 1. This characteristic is realized in syntagmas with the intonation of incompleteness and in the general question.

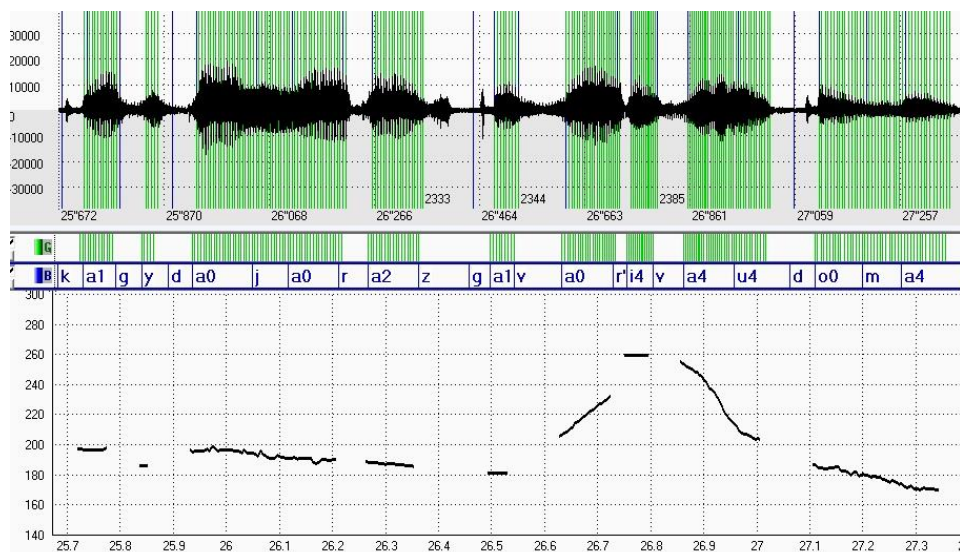


Figure 1. Melodic contour of the realization of the phrase «Когда я разговариваю дома» («When I talk at home») by the speaker Shatnam.

Thus, there are different ways to implement H*L and H*M: the norm, if the last syllable is stressed; the shift of the center to the next syllable or a sonant; the norm where any shift is possible). For each of the speakers, the percentage of different types of implementations in spontaneous speech and reading was calculated.

In the speech of Eziz (according to the speaker, Russian language – the main language he speaks) half of the realizations in spontaneous speech and in reading realized without a shift of the intonation center in cases where it was possible (48% of the realizations in spontaneous speech and 51% of implementations in the reading). Shift to a sonant or to the next syllable in his speech is much less common (6% and 9% of realizations in spontaneous speech).

However, in the speech of bilinguals living in Russia less than 5 years, the implementation of syntagms with the intonation center shift to the next syllable, has become more frequent than the implementation of syntagmas with the norm (for example, in Safina's speech 44% of implementations in spontaneous speech and 43% of realizations in reading, in speech Shatnam 62% of realizations in spontaneous speech and 70% in reading). The minimum number of syntagmas with the norm was recorded in the speech of Irdaz living in Russia for six months (8% in spontaneous speech and 17% in reading).

- **Perceptive experiment**

The auditors (100 people) had to answer the question «Is Russian the native language for the speaker?». Their answers are presented in the table (figure 2). The phrases, which were used for the experiment, are written in the first column. If they were said by a bilingual, his/her name is written after the sentence. If it was said by a native speaker, symbol for him/her is used after the text (for example, M>20). The number of responses of speakers in percentage is presented in the rest of the columns. The correct answer is highlighted in bold.

Table 01. The results of the perceptive experiment, the number of responses of speakers in percentage.

Phrase	The number of answers «Russian is native language for this speaker», %	The number of answers «Russian is foreign language for this speaker», %
1. «Буду лежать, читать Набокова» - M>20	96	4
2. «Было видно, что она очень любит своего сына» - Akmal	1	99
3. «Вариантов было много» - Eziz	95	5
4. «Нет, я помню единственное лето, когда я хотел поехать на дачу» - M>20	97	3
5. «Когда сессию закрываю» - Aliakbar	7	93
6. «Кто его нарисовал, художник?» - Mehrangez	86	14
7. «Мой брат администратором работает в ресторане» - Behzod	19	81
8. «На каникулах я планирую работать» - F>20	56	44
9. «Начинаем уже?» - Aliakbar	33	67
10. «Наша лаборатория семь лет отдала эксперименту по проверке этой формулы» - Mehrangez	78	22
11. «Ну вообще на самом деле не знаю, что мне не понравилось» - Safina	96	4
12. «Потом вспомнил об учебе в вузе» - Akmal	40	60
13. «Просто я когда еще в школе учился» - Aliakbar	15	85
14. «Сестре 28, а брату 26» - Behzod	63	37
15. «Сложности какие-то бывают» - Safina	32	68
16. «Сосед-моряк ни раз бывавший за границей рассказывал о различных странах о музеях, о газетах» - Mehrangez	89	11
17. «Ты знаешь, это только так звучит, потому что я ничего не понимаю в картах» - F>30	99	1
18. «У меня было три школы» - Eziz	57	43
19. «Уже четыре года назад» - Safina	37	63
20. «Что вот у меня была мечта» - M>20	99	1
21. «Я выключил лампочку дневного света» - Muhammadali	1	99
22. «Я даже не знаю, я конечно хотела работать по специальности» - F>20	82	12
23. «Я отыскал в дорожной сумке книгу о животных» - Akmal	20	80
24. «Я плохо понимаю, что такое покрышки, у меня как бы есть четыре колеса» - F>30	96	4
25. «Я поступила на филологический факультет и сейчас заканчиваю второй курс» - F>20	83	17

Most auditors unmistakably marked phrases pronounced by native speakers as phrases of people for whom Russian is a native language. 10 out of 17 phrases of bilinguals were recognized correctly by auditors and marked as a foreigner's speech, even in the absence of interference features at the segmental level. All phrases by Eziz and Mehrangez, Russian speaking since childhood, the auditors considered the phrases spoken by people for whom Russian language is native. Phrases of speakers Ali Akbar, Behzod, Muhammadali with more pronounced interference features of speech were recognized as phrases of speakers for whom Russian is a foreign language. The auditors marked Safina's and Akmal's phrases both as phrases in a foreign language and as phrases in their native language. Eziz, Akmal and Mehrangez used the Russian language to communicate in the family. For the remaining speakers of the Russian language – the language they studied in school. Only one phrase by Safina, who studied Russian only at school and spent 4 years in Russia, was mistakenly labelled as a phrase by a native speaker.

7. Conclusion

The questions of this research were:

7.1. What are the characteristics of intonation in the Russian speech of Tajiks?

According to this research, several accent units, limited inventory of intonation constructions in speech (L*, H*L and smooth tone) and intonation center shift are the main features of Russian speech of Tajiks.

7.2. Is there a dynamic of Tajik – Russian interference in the speech of bilingual speakers at the suprasegmental level?

The speakers living less than 2 years in Russia implemented a limited inventory of intonation constructions in their speech (L*, H*L and smooth tone) and more syntagmas with intonation center shift. All the speakers, except those who speak Russian since childhood, realized several accent units. In the speech of those who have been speaking Russian since childhood in the family, and in the speech of those who live more than 2 years in Russia there are more different intonation constructions (due to the influence of their knowledge of Russian) and more normative implementations of incompleteness.

7.3. In terms of dynamics, are these characteristics always significant for native speakers to mark them "alien's"? At what stage do they turn into «barely noticeable one»?

Of course, further research of the speakers with other age groups will be needed to answer this question accurately. But according to the perceptive experiment, these characteristics are almost always significant for native speakers to mark them "alien's". Only phrases by those bilinguals who speak Russian since childhood were considered the phrases spoken by people for whom Russian language is native. This study shows that a foreign language accent is a permanent feature of the speech of a person who does not speak this language as a native since childhood. It is the "litmus test" that instantly marks the speaker and causes a certain emotional and psychological reaction of the native speaker. Bilingual's speech goes through several stages of development, from a strong accent to a barely noticeable one, but it is still an accent if a person does not study intonation on purpose.

As it was mentioned by Vishnevskaya (1993), one of the real ways to overcome the shortcomings in teaching foreign pronunciation is to analyse the signs of foreign language accent in the person's speech from the perspective of real speech communication, taking into account the reaction of the native speaker to the quality of non-native speech bilingual. Work on intonation begins with mastering the technique of intonation, that is, with the practical assimilation of the main intonation types a language. This initial stage is the most important of all because it determines the ability of a person to understand the semantic features of the acquired intonation types and to use them correctly in speech. Learning to perceive and analyse the intonation of foreign language speech is an important condition for the formation of speech understanding and generation.

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