

CHAPTER III

TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES : CONCEPTS AND METHODS

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TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES — CONCEPTS AND METHODS (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE METHODS OF TEACHING THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE AND THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE

III.1 INTRODUCTION

It is widely believed that there is no single "best" way of training in a foreign language. There are quite a few methods of language teaching, viz. grammar - translation method, direct method, linguistic approach, and the most recent ways of using audio - visual aids, and with the help of culture and civilisation courses. Our task here is neither to compare methods in terms of efficacy, nor is it to estimate as to which of them has more drawbacks. "Language teaching is a pragmatic business and we should judge it accordingly. What works is good, what does not work is bad" (Willins, D.A., Second language learning and teaching, ELBS, G.B., 1981 p. IX).

It is upto the teacher of the target language to choose and decide which method should be adopted, or when a method has to be changed or even combined with another to explain certain target language categories, and extract the best possible results. We may say here that a multiplicity of factors, such as linguistic, psychological and environmental ones act upon the process of language acquisition. What is important to note here is the fact that at times the teachers fail to differentiate between objectives and methods, which may not prove to be in the interest of the students. However, it is not correct to think that no methodological decisions can be arrived at. Here the question of "Language Minimum" and "Language Maximum" is relevant, for that can be considered as objectives, and a

suitable method may be chosen to reach such objectives most efficiently and quickly. However it must include 'clearly defined objectives'.

It has already been established that spoken language should be the principal objective in language teaching, for, the linguistic concept of looking at a language renders primacy to speech over writing.

The fact, that in spite of individual differences, all methods of foreign languages teaching (FLT) may be termed as 'oral' methods. Hence, for a considerable period of time more attention has to be paid to "Speech activities" (Serba, L. V., op.cit. p.24) even when the objectives are no less to write than to speak the language. The linguistic argument is that writing is derived from speech. Writing in fact can be developed only after some knowledge of speaking has been developed. From the empirical data it is found that speech is intrinsically more difficult than writing. If the objective is to attain equal competence in both speech and writing, it would simply mean that more efforts are to be made for speech. However, effective results can be obtained by simultaneous practice of reading, writing and speaking, where one reiterates the fact that more efforts have to be put for speech.

Language learning can be more effective and accurate if the specific models of the language can be framed in such a way that it is easy for the learner to produce further instances of the same type, and one should be able to make random generalisations of the models, and the goal should be to learn and construct and create on the given models.

In the process of learning a foreign language, at whatever stage the learner may be, one learns the language in terms of equivalents, in terms of meanings, i.e. having equated the same 'unit' of the TL with another, with which one is familiar. There could be phonemic equivalents, grammatical or communicative meanings, or for that matter lexical equivalents. So, while teaching a foreign language, it often is the training in meanings and equivalents. This very process can be quite hazardous because the learner often tends to draw parallels with those in the L1. In the process the TL may become just a variation of the MT of the learners. As we know the lexical representation even of the very common aspects of our everyday life varies from language to language. Though this tendency of drawing parallels may at times help in the process, they should be avoided simply because the memory of the learner does not always help rationalise the parallel to be 'X' or 'Y'. This can be avoided by presenting the language as it is spoken by the native users in different contexts and multiplicity of the context.

When the question is that of the very basics of the language, i.e. at the stage of introducing the sounds and segments, or for that matter the suprasegments of the foreign language, this question of drawing parallels with the MT (L1) becomes more important. This is where the learner can find logic in it, and that in drawing the parallels the learner finds the same label in both of them. In this process the learner is quite prone to drawing wrong parallels and use the TL units not as they are used by the native users, but the same may be used in the mold of the MT (or for that matter OTs) of the learners.

A possible solution to the above problem can be that of presenting the material only as it should be or ought to be and certainly not by drawing parallels. If at all a contrastive approach is needed, and only when it is unavoidable the TL units may be illustrated in terms of how they are different from those in the MT by constantly repeating the TL units in a variety of combinations and repeating them at various occasions. There, ofcourse, is no need of a total banishment of the MT from the classroom (Willins, D.A., Second Language Learning and Teaching, ELBS, G.B., 1981 p.82). It is important to make a positive use of the MT in the process of language acquisition, for we must remember that time spent in using the MT is time not spent in using the TL (Ibid. p.83). It is very important to teach 'in' a language than that of teaching 'about' the language in contrast with that of the MT, when the goal is that of learning a foreign language, especially at the initial stages.

From the above discussion the following major assumptions emerge:

- a. that, foreign language learning basically is a mechanical process of habit formation. In this process the MT constantly interferes with its own habits and it can be avoided by strengthening the TL habits: by reinforcement or ample scope of repetition; and also that, since, language is behavioral, the learners must be taught to behave;
- b. that, language abilities and skills would be better shaped, since the supremacy of speech has already been established over writing by more effectively introducing the 'speech activity' before the written forms; by means of drills, repetitions etc., and;

c. that, an analogical outlook would prove to be better in providing a strong foundation than analysis in the process of TL learning, otherwise one would again try to draw corollaries in the MT.

111.2 METHODS OF TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN VIEW OF THE INTERFERENCE OF THE MOTHER TONGUE.

The differences in an authentic pronunciation in the TL by non-users of it have very peculiar and important characteristics of being influenced by the peculiarities of the sound system of the MT (L1) of the learners. While speaking in the TL, the users of the OT's most unwillingly and without noticing carry into their speech: characteristics of the L1, which are quite habitual for them to use in the utterances of a given set of segments and their combinations. These differences can be of a varied nature due to the fact that some segments of the TL may be absent in the L1, while others may be similar or the same. So difficulties arise not only due to the fact that one has to learn a whole set of new segments, but also the similar and closely same segments, which pose much greater problems. In fact to learn a set of new sounds in isolation becomes much easier compared to those, when a slight variation in them from that of the L1 has to be undertaken. It becomes more difficult when they are to be combined in words in initial, middle, and final positions. In such cases one tends to replace the original and correct sound of the TL by that of nearly the same sound of the MT, and in combinations, it is quite possible that one may use a totally different segment for the simple reason that such a combination is random in the MT. This may be illustrated with an example. Say in the TL the sound required is [x] in isolation, and the learner's articulation is more or less close to [x] in isolation, but in the combination with say [z] it

becomes [yz], instead of [xz]. However, it should be borne in mind that it can not be expected of the teacher of the TL always to have a very sound knowledge of the L1, its intricacies and characteristic features and that of its (L1) dialects and their interrelationship with each other. Even a passive knowledge of the L1 of the learners by the teachers or grouping the learners on the basis of the L1, (especially in the context of the multilingual Indian classroom) will certainly be of great advantage in the process of eliminating interfering effects of the L1.

While teaching the TL it is very important to bear the following in mind:

I PSYCHO - AND - SOCIO- LINGUISTIC FACTORS	II METHODOLOGY	III LINGUISTIC FACTORS
a) Goal or purpose, duration, conditions of learning, type of learners, aptitude, incentives.	a) What is to be taught:e.g. segmentals, sequentials, supra-segmentals, phone to graph conversion etc.*	a) Systems of the target language and the L1 and their correlations.
b) Psychological factors governing the process of learning the TL.	b) How it is to be taught.	b) Language minimum.
c) Environmental factors, including the composition of the class in terms of age, sex, educational background, etc.	c) Is any grouping necessary.	c) Inter language correlations and differences in the L1 and OTs of the learners

* Note: Each of these goes to explain the nature of difficulties faced by a learner at different stages of training in a foreign language.

Among the problems faced by the students while learning a foreign language, an important place is occupied by the explanations / demonstrations required to hear and reproduce correctly. As we know each segment is preconditioned by a set of articulatory and acoustic rules, different acoustic signals, emanating in the articulation of one or the other segment in different syllables is referred by a person to one and the same form, because in the production of these signals the same forms of articulatory movements are employed. (cistovic,L.A., 1 dr., r.ec, ar.tikul.jatsija i vospr.jatije, Moskva, Leningrad, Nauka, 1965, str. 188)

In other words a user of a given language, while hearing one or the other sound of the TL may even be able to feel the very structure of the articulation needed to produce the same. This very factor helps him in reproducing a given sound.

In the study of a foreign language, the only task before the learner is to work out the necessary ways and means to reproduce the sounds and their combinations suited for the given TL. In this process one learns the specific movements of the organs of speech, characteristic for the TL and only by doing so that one can use the TL in its correct and authentic speech forms. Without articulation such a process cannot take place, "articulation is primary" (Bondar,ko, L. V., Zvukovo, str.oj sovr.jemennogo r.ussskogo jazyka, Pr.osvjedjenije, 1977 -- str. 8), and the very acquisition of the articulation of a foreign tongue is an important aspect of the methodological sciences.

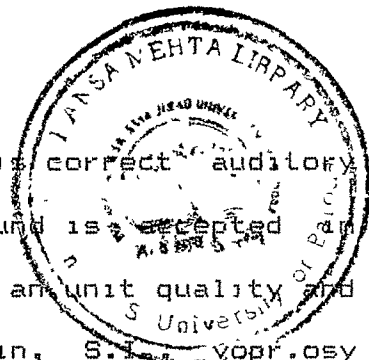
At the same time it has been established that in acquiring the foreign articulation the learners try to avoid the difficult situations. "Articulation is a complex of movements "(Tomson,

A.I., General Linguistics, 2nd edition, Odessa, Tjexnil, 1918, pp. 219--220.) performed by the organs of speech with a view to producing the sounds of the TL. One may think that it is just enough to explain to the learner the task and how it is to be solved in order to articulate the necessary sound. But in practice it has been noticed that all these means, such as explanations, demonstrations, charts, schemes of articulation etc. appear to be rather inadequate for a proper understanding of the TL and its segments. As a result the task of the reproduction of the foreign sounds is solved, at times more effectively, by tracing one's own pronunciations after hearing and rehearing the original and authentic sound.

Taking the above into consideration, many a methodologist have from the very beginning of training in a FL, put a lot of emphasis on forced/induced phonetic training of the learners. There is a large literature on this subject:

1. Ber.nStjein, S.I., vopr.osy obucjenija r.uslomu pr.oiznosjeniju / pr.jmenit'el.'no i pr.oiznosjeniju r.uslogo jazyka inostr.antsam. Moskva, izdatjel.'stvo MGU, 1975, pp. 5--61.
2. Mr.ol.jubov, A.A., jevl.jeva, Z.N., nacal.'nyj etap obucjenija njer.odnomu jazyku i puti ego vydjel.jenija, v knigje: vopr.osy obucjenija r.uslomu jazyku inostr.antsjev na nacal.'nom etapie. Moskva, r.usl. jazyk, 1976, pp. 5--22.
3. R.jefor.matsl.ij, A.A., o nje.kotor.yx tr.udnost.jax obucjenija pr.oiznosjeniju, v knigje R.usk. jazyk dl.ja studentov, inostr.antsev, Moskva, vysšaja škola, 1961, pp. 21--39.

The above literature clearly indicates that during the auditory training of the learners, the apprehensive background in the process of the production of the sound distorts the acoustic data, and "the learner incorrectly judges it" (Tr.ubjelsk'aja, N.S., Osnovy fonologii. Moskva, izd. inostr.anno j. literatur.y, 1960, str. 62). It is quite clear that developing



the hearing of the learner and working out his correct auditory capabilities are quite complicated for "sound is accepted by the student's consciousness as undivided, as an unit quality and at the same time spontaneous". (Bernstein, S.I., Vopr.osy obuceniia r.usskomu pr.oiznosieniu / pr.ieminitiel'no i pr.iepodavaniiu r.odnogo iazyka inostr.antsam. Moskva, MGU, 1975, str.13).

It may be emphasised that quite often the sounds of speech have disadvantageous characteristics: mostly length being short; quality of sound inapprehensible, depending upon a large number of external factors; loudness also changes in very strong positions. (Bondar, K.L.V., zvukovo, str.oi sovr.iemennogo r.usskogo iazyka, Moskva, Pr.osvjetlenije, 1977, str.9). All the more that traditionally 'hearing' has been accepted as one of the most important media of the formation of acceptable skills of pronunciation.

In order to solve the cases of interference, and to foretell the inhibiting factors (Mach, Vladimir., "Comparative analysis of English and Czech phonology and prediction of errors in learning", Papers in contrastive linguistics, Cambridge, 1971 pp.103 - 106) of the native language and internalising the new system in the learner's mind, "...it is necessary for the linguist to contrast the two systems of phonemes and point out those which occur in one language while they do not in the other, to contrast the combinatory patterns of sounds of the two languages. ...". There is another very strong opinion that a contrastive study leads to nowhere.

"The major contribution of the linguist to language teaching was seen as an intensive, contrastive study of the systems of the second language and the mother tongue of the learner... Teachers have not always

been very impressed by this contribution from the linguist for the reason that their practical experience has usually shown them as to where these difficulties lie and they have not felt that the contribution of the linguist has provided them with any significantly new information. They noted for example that many of the errors with which they were familiar were not predicted by the linguist anyway". (Coder, S.P., The significance of learners' errors IRAL - 5, (1967), p. 162)

The above statement is no doubt noteworthy, but may be countered by the fact that many foreign language teachers have already and since long recognised the interference of the MT (L1). While the statement holds good for some teachers, on the other hand a systematic comparison of the two language systems allows a much better grading of difficulties. Moreover a contrastive study is certainly not committed to the thought that all the errors, committed by the learner are because of the interference of the MT but it considerably eases in rationalising the errors, in grading them and in finding out proper solutions, drills etc. to overcome them.

Interference or the so called 'foreign accent' which is reflected while speaking in a foreign tongue is a phenomenon resulting from the process of two languages (MT and TL) coming in contact with each other in the speech of one speaker. This is prevalent not only with isolated users of the TL but as a rule with most of the speakers, having the same MT background. Similarities in these errors of most of the speakers can be explained by the very fact that the phonetic background of the speakers is the same. The utterances in any language are formulated and controlled by a set of complex acoustic - articulatory mechanisms and are organised in the conscience of a person as a system of linguistically meaningful units, performing communicative functions in the process of the study of a given language as a medium of expression.

Here we find the necessity of studying the structure of sounds in two ways: purely the phonetic -- sound based at the acoustic-articulatory level, i.e. variants of the sound positions in speech and linguistic or, functional level -- i.e. at the level of invariant units: phonemes and prosody. Both these are very closely related and must be studied with equal importance attached to both of them while studying interference. The character of pronunciation of the TL depends upon acoustic - articulatory habits of the speakers, articulatory basis of the MT of the speaker.

Hence the ERRORS, emanating as a result of interference may be accepted and categorised into the following three groups:

- a. PHONETIC
- b. PHONEMIC
- c. MIXED

The nature of the phonetic mistakes errors shape in destruction of the different sides of the articulatory base of the TL when the rules of the TL sound system are not followed. For example the confusion between the alveolar aspirated /c/ or /x/ at the place of the Russian dental unaspirated /t/ by the learners. At the very base of such confusions often the reason is the use of wrong organs of speech or wrong place of articulation of the sound. In the phonetic errors the distortion is marked by the non-differential characteristics of the linguistic units.

At the base of the phonological errors we find the very distortion of functional correlations between different units of the TL which are connected to the differential features. For example confusion between hard-soft, voiced-unvoiced consonants; alveolar, voiceless fricative and affricative consonants /x-c/.

plosive - affricative /t'-c/ etc.; confusion in vowels of different height -- /e-i/, /o-u/, /a-o/, /a-e/, or row /i-y/etc., or change in the place of stress (shift) etc. Though in such cases improper articulations are also there, but the most important factor is that the learners fail to differentiate between these units and do not recognise them to be opposite units and often even fail to distinguish between them in speech.

In the wider sense of the term, phonological system can be said to have a close connection with the articulatory base. A partial change of articulation and other sound producing conditions, characteristic for the TL, lead to nonrecognition or ill recognition of sound units and thereby resulting into the production of a mixed type of errors in the speech of the learner. All phonological errors are in fact of a mixed character. For example when one phoneme in the MT is opposed with two in the TL. For example:

1.



2. /i/ with combinational allophone /y/, i.e.:



Thus we see that in case of non recognition of opposing phonemes of the TL, the learner faces the problem of choice. Hence both the errors: phonetic and phonological (mixed type) have to be taken into consideration to get a better result from the learner.

Errors in pronunciation, which occur as a result of the differences in the phonological systems and the articulatory

bases of the contacting languages do not occur as isolated phenomena, but reflect the differences in the MT of the learner. For example a learner may not be able to distinguish differences not only in pairs like /p-b/, /t-d/, /l-g/, and so on; the acoustic - articulatory types of which are preconditioned in the MT of the learner; but also in pairs: /s-z/, /v-f/, etc. Each or both of which appear, to the learner, to be absolutely of a new segmental type of bilabial or labio-dental articulation, and the indication for voicing - devoicing as noted earlier will be interchanged by tense - loose and other supporting oppositions of such type. By analogy students (with great difficulties) learn the articulation of Russian soft consonants against their hard pairs /p/, /m/, /t/, /s/, etc., accepted by them as consonantal types in the MT, but also pairs of the hard /v/, /z/, /f/, as acoustic - articulatory types, foreign to the MT and also the softness of the consonants without pairs (in the Russian Language).

The study of the mistakes of **accent** in speech and writing of the learners at different levels of learning a foreign language is the first stage of the study of speech interference, where enlisting both written and oral modes of speech appear to be quite useful. The notions about the distortion of functional connections of the phonological units in the system of the TL are given here. This distortion is reflected in writing as a result of the 'inner speech' of the learner, and the learner mainly commits mistakes of phonological types, e.g. confusion in phonemes: --"tur.ma"/ "pis'mo"/ "tonkij"/ instead of "t'jur.ma"/ "pis'mo"/ "tonkij" , or "l.oSad'"/ "v s'jexax"/ "vr.at'"/ "pl.avat"/ "gimnad'ija" instead of "l.oSad'"/ "ts'jexax"/ "vr.ac"/ "pl.avat'/ "gimnazija", etc. (L.ogiova, I.M., "

El'spjerimental'no - fonjetičeskoje izučenje javl. enij zvukovoj intjer.fjer.jentsii pr.i obučeni r.usskomu pr.oijnošjeniju", Moskva, 1977). At the very base of these errors we find distortion of non differential features of phonological units, existing only in the identification of phonetic identification of a word. These distortions affect mainly the positional and combinational shades of phonemes.

III.3 METHODS OF TEACHING SEGMENTAL FEATURES OF RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (TL)

ARRANGEMENT OF THE TEACHING MATERIAL FOR BEGINNERS:

The methodology of teaching the Russian segmentals becomes most effective when training in pronunciations is carried out as a step-by-step process, with regular corrections of phonetic difficulties/errors of the learners. This has to be reinforced by a continuous widening of the modules, that are worked out in the process of teaching. At the initial stage, the phonetic material should be divided into two parts/ courses:

a. INTRODUCTORY PHONETIC COURSE; and

b. SUPPORTIVE COURSE IN PHONETICS

(I.r.ylova, N.G., Organisation of the study in pronunciation at the initial stages, in 'Posobiye po mjetodike pr.jepodavanija r.usslogo jazyla tak inostr.annogo, dl.ja studjentov, nječil.ol.ogov", R.usskij jazyl, Moskva, 1984).

III.3a The introductory course in phonetics:

This part comprises of the very basic elements of a language, with which the study of the language begins. Hence the task here should be that of the learners' being able to acquire

the skills of pronunciation and of the main characteristic features of the Russian phonetic system. However, there is no need to go into the theoretical aspects of the same. Here the training should be imparted in acoustic and articulatory skills which in turn will train the students not only to reproduce the segments and their combinations correctly, but will also train them to hear these sounds both in isolation and in combinations as well in alternations correctly. Similarly this will also train the students to distinguish the vowels in strong and weak positions, for they distinguish meanings; and reduction of the vowels: contrasting consonants in voicing - devoicing and palatalised - depalatalised features.

The introductory phonetic course should be spread over 7-14 working days. This demands a very good system of repetitions and drills and also that the teacher should be able to decide on the necessary (minimum) supportive, and extra (maximum) material to be given to the students. However, even the most concentrated dose should include all phonetic features of the Russian language. For example while introducing the voiced consonant /d/, sooner or later /d' /, /t/ and /t' / must be introduced, or else the learner will have a rather distorted and incomplete notion of the sound /d/ in the Russian system. However it should be remembered that the most important thing is to learn the given sound in relationship to the system of sounds of the Russian language, and the same has to be done not in isolation but in a context. The following sequence may illustrate the same:

That while teaching the sound /d/, instead of teaching it in isolation, it should be given as:

[da], [dom], [dam], [ta], [tom], [tam], [d'iva:n], [d'ikta:nt], [r.at], [sat], [got], [d'ja:d'ja], etc.

While carrying out the introductory phonetic course, a teacher may group the students on the basis of the MT background of the learners and the material may be grouped into:

1. Sounds and their main oppositions (for consonants: voicing - devoicing; palatalisation- depalatalisation);
2. Stress (suprasegmentals) and their corresponding rhythmic models of monosyllabic, bi-, tri- syllabic words, reduction of vowels after hard and soft consonants.

It may be noted here that 'stress' is not a part of this study, because it falls under the category of 'suprasegmentals'. However, at the same time it is important to remember that the introductory phonetic course of Russian can not be carried out without paying attention to stress, and that no phonetic unit should be introduced in isolation, because vowels in the Russian Language play the most important role in forming and determining syllables. Russian vowels should be studied, hence, in the perspective of stress.

The above 1 & 2 may be considered to be the main course material for basic Russian phonetics, irrespective of the type of students or groups. However, the order of the material may vary depending on the type of the course or the composition of the classroom.

The introductory phonetic course in the Russian Language can be followed in two main ways:

1. With a parallel study of the MT of the Learners, and/or,
2. Without the study of the MT of the learners.

The first type, of course, is accepted to be highly effective, because the same is carried out on the basis of a study of the peculiarities in the phonetic system of the TL and the MT of the learners. In this process a comparison of the two languages in contact makes it easier for the teacher to establish

as to which of the phonetic units will be easier for the learners to pick-up and which of them would need more attention. In the initial lessons, the easier material is introduced, when the students are taught to recognise, feel the new; when differences arise while reproducing the new sounds, and to notice the different positions of the tongue, lips etc. The learners train their organs of speech to behave in a new way, unfamiliar movements of the tongue, lips etc. In later lessons more difficult and the most difficult material are introduced. However this very nature of difficulty varies from group to group, depending on their MT background.

The second type of the introductory phonetic course is not based on any particular language (MT) background. The order of the lesson is prepared on the basis of the logical and chronological nature of the Russian phonetic system. At the beginning, comparatively easier material is introduced, e.g. the hard consonants /t/, /d/, /n/, /s/, /z/, etc. Later on the complicated units are introduced, e.g. the soft consonants and the sibilants.

It has to be borne in mind that even training in lexicon and grammar during the introductory phonetic course is supportive to the main task of pronunciation. So the size of the vocabulary and grammatical structure is also to be restricted, and each word, each structure has to be judged by their phonetic content. A new word may only be introduced when all the segments in it are familiar to the learner. The same is applicable for the rules of grammar as well, so long as their segmental arrangements and combinations etc. are concerned.

Hence, in the "INTRODUCTORY PHONETIC COURSE" main attention

is paid to SPEECH. The students answer the questions posed by the teacher; they themselves put questions to the teacher, and to each other, and learn to make sentences with various combinations of words and phonetic material. Simultaneously they learn to read and write in Russian.

The lessons should follow in the given order:

- a. New sounds and segments
- b. Syllables
- c. New words
- d. Stress and reduction**
- e. Hard consonants
- f. Soft consonants
- g. Sibilants

(**While introducing various sounds and segments)

While introducing the Russian consonants, their opposition in voicing-devoicing and palatalisation-depalatalisation (hard and soft) must be explained having given graded examples and enough practice, rather than explaining in theory only. First of all the students hear these new units, reproduce them individually and in a chorus and then try to associate the same with the theoretical details and their graphic expressions in the book, or on any other visual form, and only then they write them down.

III.3b The supportive course in phonetics:

After the introductory phonetic course a detailed study of the lexico-grammatical material begins. This has to be undertaken with a view to mastering the various rules of speech and syntactical structures. This can be divided into : a. LISTENING, b. SPEAKING, c. READING, and d. WRITING. However, a learner at this stage is not expected to know all the intricacies of the phonetic rules of the Russian language, hence a supportive course in phonetics has to supplement the factors that are yet to be learnt, but can be learnt parallelly with the grammatical

material. This may even be called the task of acquiring and automatising of the skills of pronunciation. However care should be taken in grading the material and here it's important to remember the aims and objectives of the course; what is the specialisation that the learner is required/likely to have. This helps in choosing the vocabulary that is to be taught to the learners and the grading of the material depends on this vocabulary.

In most of the standard text-books, the phonetic material is offered in the following volume and manner:

1. Vowels and consonants in various phonetic positions; combinations of different consonants (clusters) and vowels; pronunciation of grammatical variations of words.
2. Rhythmic models of monosyllabic words and their groupings, based on consonants and variable stress.
3. Continuity (slowness) in pronunciation of words in speech; words without stress and weak stress.
4. Polysyllabic words and their groupings according to stress patterns, to be supplemented by drills and phonetic dictations.

The supportive course in phonetics is designed with a view to facilitating the work of the learner over lexicon and grammar, and preparing each new unit of the lexico-grammatical material and removal of the phonetic difficulties from these. However, the chronology of introduction of the phonetic material and gradation of the same, as mentioned earlier, will depend upon the text-book that is being followed.

The supportive course in phonetics, thus requires 5 - 10

minutes in each class (i.e. phonetic exercise and drills), and it is best to do the same at the beginning of the lesson, which helps the learners to switch over to a foreign tongue and create conditions for hearing in the foreign tongue as well, with a view to preparing the organs of speech and hearing to behave in the TL.

When we have text-books without such a supportive course in phonetics, it is upto the teacher to independently work out lessons in phonetics, and supplement the main material with the same. However, to define and to formulate good phonetic exercises, it is often necessary to deviate from the main lesson, i.e. the actual lexico-grammatical material. Basing on this material the teacher should select and design the phonetic exercises.

There are a few different ways of carrying out the phonetic exercises. In order to develop audio skills of a learner, oral narration of small texts prove to be quite useful. These texts may consist only of a few phrases on a common/known topic. The teacher has to decide in advance as to which phonetic unit is to be taught or reinforced, and also the teacher has to see to it that the same is repeated in the text adequately. After reading out the passage to the students, they are asked to repeat the same, and then the teacher should find out the level of correctness achieved, and then, if and when necessary, help the students in identifying their errors and overcoming them. To further strengthen the same, the teacher may give phonetic dictations as well.

The following types of work are recommended for the development of audio skills:

1. Chorus repetitions of speech situations.
2. Individual repetitions.
3. Learning proverbs, sayings, etc., where the difficult segments are repeated several times in different positions and combinations.
4. Learning small poems, or parts thereof, or songs.
5. Narration of the story of a film in the TL.
6. Reproduction of words and correction of errors by other fellow classmates.
7. Small dialogues.

Apart from the above, there are various other ways by which speech skills can be developed, e.g. quizzes, group discussions, cross-word puzzles, etc. These have to be worked out well in advance by the teacher to suit the type and interest of the particular group of students. It is most important for the learners at this stage to be able to correct one's own errors all by oneself. This is possible when the correct pronunciation gets set in the ears of the learner.

III.4 METHODS OF TRAINING IN PRONUNCIATION

The question as to what should be the method of training in pronunciation greatly depends on the composition of the class: as to what extent the students are capable of analyzing the rules and the sound system of the Russian Language. There are certain units which have to be accepted as they are mastered by imitation and repetition, whereas there are units which can be explained by rules, and the learners may be expected to learn them with

a conscious effort about these units. Hence the two methods may be called:

a. IMITATIVE METHOD, and

b. CONSCIOUS METHOD (i.e. analytical-imitative).

Before the above two methods are discussed in details, it is important to mention here that the teacher has to decide about the method, depending on the composition of the class; how much time can be devoted to explaining these rules; what is the level of the learners' knowledge at this stage; and which of the methods can be of more use from the point of view of the objectives, or the goals of the course.

III.4a THE IMITATIVE METHOD

This method deals in first listening to the sounds in isolation and/or combinations (sounds, syllables, words, sentences), and reproduction of the same afterwards. This needs a proper training in hearing the Russian sounds, which is often difficult for grown-ups. This happens because the learner is already used to hearing a set of sounds similar mostly to that of the Mother Tongue, and the Other Tongues that the learner is in contact with. Hence a lesson, following this method needs to be grouped under two categories: a. HEARING, and b. REPEATING.

The teacher has to decide as to which units should be put under which category, and the learner must know that units under category "HEARING" are those which must be heard adequately correctly first, distinguished from those similar to their MT or OTs, and only then repeated.

The Imitative Method has a big drawback. The results here are greatly dependent on the imitative skills of the learners, which include hearing and repeating both. Children fare better in this exercise whereas adults with age, lose mastery over it.

III.4b THE CONSCIOUS (ANALYTICAL - IMITATIVE) METHOD

This method bases on a conscious analysis of the system of sounds of the Russian language, and is quite widely in practice in the native classrooms and abroad. It demands understanding of "WHAT" and "HOW" of the sounds/segments and only then to reproduce the same. The explanation of the target material may be done in the MT or any OT, that may be convenient to the teacher and the learner(s). After explaining the phenomenon, the same may be illustrated by prerecorded material in the voice of a standard native user of the Russian language.

However, this method also has to depend on imitation, but here it is of a conscious nature, and the learners often find it easier to correct their own errors, even while they are not in the class room.

It is observed that this method of teaching, which follows after an explanation of the phenomena, is more effective because of its conscious nature. However, care should be taken that the learners do not spend more time analyzing the rules. The goal here is not so. Explanations and analysis of phonetic phenomena should just assist the learners to master the segments adequately. The teacher has to be very careful in making the plans of the lesson(s) and plan well in advance the steps and content of the lesson.

III.4c STAGES OF INTRODUCING THE RUSSIAN SEGMENTS FOR THE ANALYTICAL-IMITATIVE METHOD

The goal of the method is to by all means make the learners pronounce the given segment, and achieve the correct articulation of the same having actual acoustic effects. Here the teacher has to categorise all such segments that may be controlled by the same rules. This 'model' then makes it easier for the learner to get accustomed to the other segments of the same type, because it is quite difficult to reproduce a totally new segment both in isolation and in a given context. The learners have to pay attention to the qualitative changes and characteristics of the Russian segments. Hence the process has to begin with the segments in isolation or syllables, depending on at what stage the teacher deems it fit to do so. The articulation of sounds can be called a complex process of the movements which can be consciously understood by the learners, and those which can be just felt and noticed. These later ones may be termed as the perceptible moments of articulation. They are:

- a. The position of the tip of the tongue: (High-Low), the movement of the whole tongue (front-back), and tension of the tongue. Here importance is given to the nature of articulation: place of the contact or slit, when the same is formed by the front of the tongue.
- b. The formation of the lips: (protruded out, spread on sides, wide open).
- c. Opening of the mouth.
- d. Working of the vocal cords: (presence / absence of vibration).
- e. Character of the air stream: (warm - cold, narrow - wide, its strength and direction).

A teacher has to predetermine the features and moments of articulation that are of greater importance and need special mention and care. It may be done by identifying for each segment necessary details. Care must be taken in order to avoid unnecessary mention of any feature that may not be required for Bengali-speaking students. For example the sound /t/ is rarely mistaken, however, when opposed with /c/, necessary care should be taken to avoid any confusion.

In the following chapter a brief review of related studies and works, and implications of the same for the present study have been included.