

edukacja. Wyzwania dla polskiej szkoły i ucznia, Warszawa 2014, Instytut Obywatelski.

12. Wróblewska W., Autoedukacja studentów w uniwersytecie- ujęcie z perspektywy podmiotu, Białystok 2008.

УДК 811.111

A. J. Ness

WHY WON'T THEY UNDERSTAND ME? A GUIDE TO IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILLS

Do you ever find yourself lost for words when trying to speak English? It can sometimes seem like however much you study; when it comes to communicating with other English speakers, it is impossible to make a coherent sentence. A lot of teachers will blame a lack of knowledge in grammar or vocabulary, which then leads to a lack of confidence. The cure, they believe is more grammar, more word lists and more headaches. Learning grammar and vocabulary is undoubtedly important and should be the core of your study. However, in my experience, even students with a large knowledge of grammar and vocabulary can find it difficult to speak comfortably and confidently, especially with native speakers. In this article I hope to show you a couple areas where some learners find difficulties and some advice on how to improve them.

One of the underlying reasons why many students have problems learning a new language is because of *L1/L2 confusion*, which means that your native language confuses you when you try to learn a second. Although this has an impact on grammar and vocabulary too, it significantly effects pronunciation, an area many teachers are nervous about approaching. There are many sounds in English which aren't used in Russian or Ukrainian languages. In particular long vowel sounds (remember that you open your door with *keys* /ki:jz/ not a *kiss* /kis/), diphthongs (which means two vowel sounds together such as in bay, shape and brave) and other sounds such as those made with 'th'. However, this is just the start of the

‘fun’ with phonetics. Unlike many other European languages, English is not always phonetic (meaning the way English is written doesn’t always tell us how it should be said). Take this sentence as an example:

English may be a difficult language; it can be learnt **through tough thorough thought, though.** / /θru: tʌf 'θʌrə θɔ:t ðəʊ/

Here you can see how the letters ‘ough’ make five words with five different sounds. This is an extreme example, but similar examples are littered throughout the English language. The reason for this inconsistency can be found in the history of the development of the English language, the different languages that have influenced English and the effects of ‘*the great vowel shift*’ in the late 16th century (if you want to learn more about this I would recommend an article called *A Brief History of the English Language* by Stephanie Allen).

So how do you go about solving problems with pronunciation? The answer to this question depends on how you personally like to learn. A good place to start would be to learn phonetic script, which many of you may already have learnt at school. It’s a very useful tool to seeing how English words look phonetically. When keeping vocabulary lists and learning new words, write a transcription next to the word so you always have a record of the pronunciation. In addition to this start to spend some time learning how to produce English sounds accurately. For those who learn best through reading, there is a great book called *Lose your accent in 28 days* by Judy Ravin, which explains in detail the mechanics of pronouncing all English sounds. For audio and visual learners (those who learn best through listening or seeing) the internet is a great resource. Simply typing ‘English Phonics’ into YouTube produces thousands of results which allows you to hear the sounds and see the mechanics. Although this sounds like an incredible amount of extra work, more accurate pronunciation will help you to be understood more easily, which will in turn effect your confidence.

However, all of this work counts for nothing if you don’t practice what you have learnt. Practice makes perfect, as the old

saying goes. In Nikolayev though, this could be a problem. Having lived here for over two years now, there is one thing that I have noticed. There are very few foreigners here. Although I believe this is a great city, I think it is fair to say that it is not yet the number one tourist destination for native English speakers. Likewise, travelling to the United States or Great Britain is a luxury many people can't afford or don't have time for. One option is to visit an English club, run at many schools, often at the weekend with Ukrainian or sometimes native speakers. This being said there are also other ways to help you practice your English speaking on-line. Websites such as *Interpals.com* can put you in touch with millions of people all over the world, including many native speakers. Through mediums such as skype, you can have English conversation practice, with native speakers, from the comfort of your own home. However, this is not a comfortable option for lots of people who may be cautious of communicating with strangers. Learning your favourite songs in English, and then reciting them when you are in the shower, is also a fun and effective way to learn vocabulary, grammar forms and pronunciation. You should take care though, as songs often use lots of figurative expressions which are not used in natural conversation. Additionally, in order to make phrases fit into the rhythms of the song, some changes are made to the stress and pronunciation of some words (the best example of this is in the song *Hotel California*, which changes the stress in the word 'hotel'), poems and lines from films are also just as effective. Though no method is perfect, thanks to the internet and technology the chances to practice English with native speakers have greatly improved.

So to finish, there are many reasons why students may find it difficult to find the confidence to speak, it is not just limited to their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Pronunciation is a key area, which can sometimes be overlooked. Spending a little more time to improve this part of your study can greatly improve your confidence in speaking English. Having said this it is important to find a way to practice what you have learnt. Talking face to face with a native speaker is a great method if you have the opportunity, but don't forget that the internet provides you with many more opportunities to

communicate without leaving your home. Learning a second language will always be difficult, but I hope this article gives you some ideas of how to improve some areas and give you the confidence to get out there and learn more.

УДК 811.111

G. Spachmo

RESPONSIBILITY MANAGEMENT, MANAGEMENT AND POLITICS IN SCHOOL. WHAT NOBODY IS TELLING YOU ABOUT FINNISH SCHOOLS. FROM A NORWEGIAN PERSPECTIVE.

School Politicians and school leaders from many countries have in recent years been looking towards (and traveled to) Finland to understand why Finnish students score consistently well in the "World Championship for schools." (It's called PISA and is an international test for 15-year-old school students).

In January, I attended a conference organized by the Foundation "Rings in water", imaginatively enough called "Rings in water conference, 2015," and here I was so fortunate to hear more good speakers. Among other things the organizers had invited Ollie Mättä who works in the Finnish teacher education. (He works at the same time in a Finnish high school, so in Finland they have teacher educators working in schools while they also are training future teachers. Maybe that's one of the reasons that students score high on PISA).

I have previously visited a school in Finland and have heard Norwegian politicians and school leaders speak cordially about the Finnish school, so much of that Ollie Mättä told was not entirely new to me. However, I was increasingly puzzled over how Norwegian politicians (and probably also school administrators) select some aspects of the Finnish school that they emphasize as the explanation for Finnish pupils good performances, while there are other aspects of the Finnish school that is not being mentioned. (This applies to politicians in all parties). I do not think this is the same phenomenon