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PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE REVISITED IN THE
COMPETENCY-BASED MODEL OF EFL TEACHER EDUCATION
IN UKRAINE

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ПАРАЩУК Валентина. СУЧАСНИЙ ЗМІСТ ФОНОЛОГІЧНОЇ КОМПЕТЕНЦІЇ В КОМПЕТЕНТІСНІЙ МОДЕЛІ ПІДГОТОВКИ ВЧИТЕЛІВ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ В УКРАЇНІ. Статтю присвячено опису сучасного змісту поняття “фонологічна компетенція” вчителя іноземної мови, представлено в “Супровідному томі” (2018) до “Загальноєвропейських Рекомендацій з мовної освіти: вивчення, викладання, оцінювання” (далі – ЗЄР) (2001) та новітніх наукових дослідженнях оволодіння іномовною вимовою в межах компетентнісної моделі підготовки вчителя. Інновації у змісті фонологічної компетенції, які репрезентовано в

Супровідному томі до ЗЄР, охоплюють відмову від використання вимови носія мови як еталону й інструменту контролю та введення нового критерію 'intelligibility' (дослівно: розбірливості), тобто коректності й адекватності вимови, необхідних і достатніх для успішного спілкування іноземною мовою, а також розробку нових дескрипторів фонологічної компетенції. Ці зміни зумовлюють особливу увагу до навчання тих сегментних і просодичних засобів ініомовної вимови, які, у першу чергу, впливають на зрозумілість мовлення.

Ключові слова: фонологічна компетенція, розбірливість вимови, зрозумілість вимови, вимовний акцент, компетентнісна модель підготовки вчителя англійської мови.

PARASHCHUK Valentyna. PHONOLOGICAL COMPETENCE REVISITED IN THE COMPETENCY-BASED MODEL OF EFL TEACHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE. This paper provides a critical discussion of the content of the term "phonological competence" of a foreign language (henceforth is FL) teacher, currently used in the Companion Volume (2018) to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (henceforth is CEFR) (2001) and in recent research findings on pronunciation instruction to FL teachers within the framework of the competency-based model of EFL (English as a foreign language) teacher education. In Ukraine, there has been a shift towards competence as an aim of FL teaching in recent years, coupled with an increased focus on standards. The country's teacher-training institutions of higher learning that offer FL education programs are implicitly oriented to the CEFR as the most widely used language proficiency framework in Europe. The recently published CEFR Companion Volume (henceforth is CEFR/CV) provides new scales for language activities that were not covered in the CEFR (2001) (online communication) and presents more elaborately defined plus levels, pre-A1 levels, and C levels of language proficiency. In the focus of this study, there are innovations in the content of the phonological competence that include a new scale of descriptors of phonological control with the emphasis on the importance of ensuring mutual intelligibility, but not achieving nativelike pronunciation and eliminating accent. Empirical research findings reveal the priority of the segmental or suprasegmental features for intelligibility that challenge the conventional pronunciation instruction practices and condition their changes. The 'discerning pedagogy' (term by Derwing (2018)) focusing solely on pronunciation problems that interfere with communication may prove successful, with certain techniques, e.g. high variability phonetic training, being especially beneficial. This article concludes with important implications for the EFL pre-service teachers' pronunciation instruction in Ukraine.

Keywords: phonological competence, intelligibility, comprehensibility, accent, competency-based model of EFL teacher pronunciation education.

Dearest creature in creation,
Study English pronunciation.
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like *corpse*, *corps*, *horse*, and *worse*.
I will keep you, *Suzy*, *busy*,
Make your *head* with *heat* grow dizzy....
Gerard Nolst Trenité.

"it is intelligibility – rather than native-like pronunciation – that is most critical for successful communication in an L2"

Munro & Derwing (2011: 316-317).

The current trend in foreign language teaching in Ukraine is that of a gradual move from the *communicative approach* (henceforth is CA) to the *competency-based approach* (henceforth is CBA), with an increased focus on standards. *Competency-based language teaching* (henceforth is CBLT) is an application of the principles of *competency-based education* (henceforth is CBE) to a language setting (Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

CBE emerged in the 1970s in the US (Wong, 2008:180) and it referred to an approach in education expressly focusing on what learners can *do* rather than on what they *know* (Smith & Patterson, 1998), when learning objectives are defined in terms of "precise measurable description of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours students should possess at the end of a course of study" (Wong, 2008:180).

Patel & Vyas define a *competency* as the capacity of applying or using knowledge, skills, abilities, behaviors (KSABs), and personal characteristics (mental, intellectual, cognitive, social, emotional, attitudinal) to successfully perform professional tasks, functions or operate in a given role or position (Patel, & Vyas, 2018:185). Following from the above said, a competency is how things have to be done and at what level, thus EFL teacher *competency* is the quality or state of being legally qualified to do EFL teacher's job. The first stage of performance measurement is represented by *competence*, i.e. a person's ability or skills and knowledge that s/he possesses (Sampson, 1998:307). For a historical overview of the term "competence" see (Glaesser, 2019: 72-73).

In the focus of our research is *EFL teacher phonological competence* as an integral part of linguistic competence (CEFR, 2001: 116). The importance of phonological competence research is

defined by pronunciation central roles “in speech recognition, speech perception, and speaker identity” (Levis, 2007:184). Pronunciation is “the initial layer of talk through which speakers construct and listeners decode and interpret linguistic signals” (Pennington, & Rogerson-Revell, 2019:7). However, in TEFL practices, shifting views of language had impact on pronunciation instruction status: in the 1950s-1960s pronunciation “had a center-stage position in language pedagogy”; in contrast, it “became side-lined” in the 1970s and 1980s (op. cit.).

Within the framework of the communicative approach, the lack of attention to pronunciation, its treatment as an optional ‘add-it-on-if-we-have-time’ language feature (Levis, 2018) enabled some researchers to proclaim that area as the “Cinderella of language teaching” (Kelly, 1969:87) or “an orphan in English programs around the world” (Gilbert, 1994:38), since pronunciation was viewed as being of little importance to teaching language communicatively, because it was considered part of linguistic rather than communicative competence (Pennington & Richards, 1986).

The last ten years have witnessed an explosion of activity in language pronunciation research (Derwing, 2018:12), and most recently, “pronunciation instruction is back in vogue” (Pennington, 2015:149-150): nowadays, it can be considered the ‘Belle of the Ball’ in second/foreign language acquisition circles (Derwing, 2018:13). In spite of such positive “tectonic shifts” in pronunciation status in current research, there is incongruence between emerging research vogues and EFL teacher education programs in Ukraine. Insufficient training in pronunciation instruction, the rapidly changing world of English language communication (English as a lingua franca, global English, World Englishes: so what pronunciation model to teach?), now-obsolete emphasis on achieving accurate native-like pronunciation are detrimental to the phonological competence of new EFL teachers and result in their lack of confidence and ill-preparation for pronunciation teaching.

Given that “what teachers do is a reflection of what they know and believe” (Richards, & Lockhart, 1994:29), this paper thus examines the update content of the phonological competence of EFL teachers from the CEFR Companion Volume (2018) and recent research findings perspectives. The research questions that are guiding this inquiry are as follows: What are the new descriptors of phonological control related to proficient users, namely, C1 and C2? What is the priority of the segmental or suprasegmental features for intelligibility that should be taken into account in teaching English pronunciation to EFL pre-service teachers?

Pronunciation for EFL teacher education from a CEFR-oriented perspective

Ukraine’s national standards for a foreign language teacher profession have not been developed yet, thus the country’s teacher-training institutions of higher learning that offer FL education programs are implicitly oriented to the Common European Framework for Languages, the most widely used language proficiency framework in Europe (CEFR, 2001). The CEFR presents descriptors of language skills across proficiency levels and is utilized as guidelines for language learners and teachers by both EU member-states and non-member countries. Another authoritative framework of reference for teacher education contexts is the standards of EFL/ESL Teachers of Adults adopted by TESOL (TESOL, 2008). Recently the CEFR *Companion Volume* (henceforth is CEFR/CV) (2018) was published with the purpose of expanding, clarifying, and updating the earlier version of CEFR (2001).

The message from CEFR/CV (2018) is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different nature, with the action-oriented approach putting the co-construction of meaning (through interaction) at the center of the learning and teaching process. The CEFR/CV (2018) provides new scales for language activities that were not covered in the CEFR (2001) (online communication) and presents more elaborately defined plus levels, pre-A1 levels, and C levels. For our study, all the relevant parts of the CEFR/CV (2018) related to the concept of phonological competence of language teachers are of paramount importance and will be examined critically.

Phonological competence is one of the integral parts included in linguistic competence that is also a sub-component of communicative language competence. The CEFR explicates *communicative language competence* as a unit of several components: *linguistic*, *sociolinguistic* and *pragmatic*, each comprising knowledge, skills and know-how (CEFR, 2001:13). *Linguistic competence*, in its turn, includes lexical, phonological, syntactical knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system (ibid.)

Phonological competence involves a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of: 1) the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realization in particular contexts (allophones); 2) the phonetic features which distinguish phonemes (distinctive features, e.g. voicing, rounding, nasality, plosion); 3) the phonetic composition of words (syllable structure, the sequence of phonemes, word stress, word tones); 4) sentence phonetics (prosody): sentence stress and rhythm; intonation; phonetic reduction; vowel reduction; strong and weak forms; assimilation; elision (CEFR, 2001: 116-117). Along with syntax, semantics, and morphology, phonology is a domain of its own within language, interfacing “intimately with other domains such as cognition, articulation, and perception in general” (Domahs, Truckenbrodt, & Wiese, 2016).

As language teachers are expected to be proficient users of the target language (TESOL, 2008), then they have to be able to use it effectively across C1 and C2 proficiency levels, (Topal, 2019:421). Given that teachers “present role-models which students may follow in their future use of the language and their practice as future teachers” (CEFR, 2001:144), the descriptors of phonological control related to proficient users, namely, C1 and C2, will be analyzed further.

Pronunciation instruction has historically been dominated by the *nativeness principle* which holds that “it is both possible and desirable to achieve nativelike pronunciation in a foreign language” (Levis, 2005:370; CEFR/CV, 2018:134). Yet numerous research findings have demonstrated that “accent remains a feature of the speech of many people with even a very high level of language proficiency” and it is not the ‘naturalness’ of native speakerness that is essential: it is intelligibility (Picardo, 2016: 16). In the CEFR/CV (2018), a new scale of descriptors of phonological control was redeveloped from scratch with the emphasis on the importance of ensuring mutual intelligibility (See Table 1 below).

North & Picardo claim that “the most significant change to the 2001 descriptors is the complete replacement of the holistic scale for phonological control with an analytical one for (a) overall phonological control, (b) sound articulation, and (c) prosody (stress, rhythm and intonation)” (2019:146). The term “native speaker” has been replaced with “speaker of the target language” (Deygers, 2019). A full report on the phonology project is available in (Piccardo 2016).

Table 1.

**CEFR/CV Descriptors of Phonological Control
Related to C1 and C2 language users**

	C1	C2
Overall Phonological Control	Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with sufficient control to ensure intelligibility throughout. Can articulate virtually all the sounds of the target language; some features of accent retained from other language(s) may be noticeable, but they do not affect intelligibility.	Can employ the full range of phonological features in the target language with a high level of control – including prosodic features such as word and sentence stress, rhythm and intonation – so that the finer points of his/her message are clear and precise. Intelligibility and effective conveyance of and enhancement of meaning are not affected in any way by features of accent that may be retained from other language(s).
Sound Articulation	Can articulate virtually all of the sounds of the target language with a high degree of control. He/she can usually self-correct if he/she noticeably mispronounces a sound.	Can articulate virtually all the sounds of the target language with clarity and precision.
Prosodic Features	Can produce smooth, intelligible spoken discourse with only occasional lapses in control of stress, rhythm and/or intonation, which do not affect intelligibility or effectiveness. Can vary intonation and place stress correctly in order to express precisely what he/she means to say	Can exploit prosodic features (e.g. stress, rhythm and intonation) appropriately and effectively in order to convey finer shades of meaning (e.g. to differentiate and emphasize).

(Source: CEFR/CV, 2018)

As demonstrated by the descriptors of phonological control related to C1 and C2 language proficiency given in Table 1, the key factor for discriminating between C1 and C2 levels is *intelligibility*, i.e. the focus is on how much effort is required from the interlocutor to decode the speaker's message (CEFR/CV, 2018:135). Intelligibility is considered to be "the primary construct in phonological control" (CEFR/CV, 2018:47). Explicit mention of *accent* has been used at both C1 and C2 levels. Traditionally, accent was seen as "a marker of poor phonological control" (CEFR/CV, 2018:134). Currently, accentedness, i.e. the extent to which patterns of speech sounds deviate from a native speaker (standardized) variety, plays a much less crucial role, and the focus in pronunciation instruction is "not the elimination of accent, but the pursuit of intelligibility" (Levis, 2005).

Recent research findings (e.g. Munro and Derwing, 1995) demonstrate that some aspects of foreign accents have a greater effect on the successful communication of meaning than others, in other words, while some highly-accented utterances are unintelligible, others are perfectly intelligible. Munro argues that a non-native speaker whose speech becomes less divergent in some pronunciation features will not necessarily be more easily or accurately understood (Munro, 2011). Lin & Francis claim (2014) that "factors related to speaking rate, including pause duration, have the greatest effect on measures of acceptability, intelligibility, and listening effort". It is rather non-native English speakers' fluency (speech rate, fewer pauses and re-starts), but not accuracy, that may be the most important thing for making their speech easier to understand (*op. cit.*). Thus, in pronunciation instruction practices, aspects of speech that interfere with understanding matter more than aiming for nativelike performance (Derwing, 2018:14).

Unfortunately, a detailed description of those features of FL pronunciation that have a large impact on communication is not available in pronunciation instruction manuals so far, being a current priority for researchers. The search for such pronunciation priorities conducted by McAndrews & Thomson (2017) has yielded "a modest number of consensus recommendations" for pronunciation instruction practitioners (*op. cit.*, 2017:270). Speaking of the priority of the segmental or suprasegmental features for intelligibility, there has been no clear answer; researchers are still divided on what contributes more to the loss of intelligibility: divergent segmentals or prosody (McAndrews & Thomson, 2017:271; Winters & O'Brien, 2013). Within the segmental domain, consensus has been reached that allophonic variation does not present a great challenge to intelligibility (McAndrews & Thomson, 2017:271). Another important finding concerns the functional load of sounds: sentences containing divergent FL vowels or consonants of high functional load (= frequency of occurrence in speech) maybe less comprehensible (*op. cit.*) for non-native speakers. Consequently, divergent FL sounds of high functional load should be given more practice during pronunciation instruction.

Overall, the message for EFL teacher education programs is that pronunciation instruction should aim for making pre-service teachers actively aware of the newly discovered facts on the interrelationship between *accuracy* and *intelligibility*.

There are some other concepts related to phonological competence: phonological awareness, phonemic awareness and metaphonological awareness (Topal, 2019:421). Yopp and Yopp (2009:12) as cited in (Topal, 2019:421) understand phonological awareness as "... sensitivity to the sound structure of a language", demanding the learner's ability to concentrate their attention on spoken sounds, "while temporarily shifting away from its meaning". In other words, phonological awareness helps learners distinguish between syllables, words, onsets and rimes (*op. cit.*, 2019:422). Topal argues (2019:422) that language learners "need to be trained through contrastive analysis so that they can distinguish between the syllables and sounds of both native and target languages", building their awareness of L1 and FL phonological systems distinctive features and of the phonological rules that govern FL speech.

Phonemic awareness is the sensitivity to the smallest units of sound (phonemes) that enables FL speakers to distinguish between units of meaning (morphemes) (Topal, 2019:422) or it is an awareness of the ways "in which words and syllables can be divided into smaller units" (Goswami & Bryant, 1990:2).

Metaphonological awareness can be defined as the learner's metalinguistic sensitivity of FL phonetics and phonology, as intentional focus on phonetic forms and articulatory gestures during FL speech performance (Wrembel, 2013:121).

EFL prospective teachers' pronunciation training should focus not only on imparting motor and auditory skills, but also on the cognitive aspect of phonological acquisition. We support Wrembel's view that "metacompetence-oriented theoretical training in the sound system of the target language assumes conscious knowledge of rules and detailed articulatory descriptions to facilitate the production of particular sounds" (Wrembel, 2005:4).

To be considered proficient users of language (C1-C2), language learners need to be equipped with both segmental and suprasegmental knowledge to be fluent and using intonation cues effortlessly in interactions (Topal, 2019:425), and by extension, EFL language teachers are expected to "be knowledgeable enough to teach the phonological rules that help their learners to be fluent and utilize intonation cues in spoken interaction" (op. cit.).

'Discerning pedagogy' for pronunciation instruction

With a variety of forms of English from geographical and social perspectives, a phonodidactic question arises: which speech model should be adopted for pronunciation instruction: Received Pronunciation, General American English, English as a Lingua Franca, Global English, etc.? While answers to this question vary in research sources, the following observation seems to truly reflect the reality, and for this reason is worth taking into account: "in most cases, the students will learn whatever dialect their teachers speak" (Derwing, 2018:15). In other words, the learners acquiring English pronunciation out of L1 natural environment will display a set of divergent features creating the accentedness of their speech at the productive level, with accent remaining "a feature of the speech of many speakers even with a very high level of language proficiency" (Picardo, 2016:21).

At the same time, at the perceptive level, in the course of pronunciation instruction, such non-native users should be exposed to a wide range of Englishes to get a clear awareness of pronunciation features of various English accents and their own accent that might impede both intelligibility and comprehensibility in communication (see also: Derwing, 2018:16).

Derwing argues that "instead of focusing on accent reduction or eradication", the educational efforts should be directed at "intelligibility and comprehensibility enhancement" (Derwing, 2018:17). She suggests some basic principles for pronunciation instruction united under the approach which she calls "discerning pedagogy, focusing solely on problems that interfere with communication" that should replace "a haphazard, one size fits all approach" (op. cit., 2018:17). Among such educational priorities, according to Derwing, teaching perception to FL learners should go *first*; *secondly*, explicit instruction with examples is recommended, whenever students have perceptual problems, the more so research findings (Saito, 2011:45) suggested that "explicit instruction had a significant effect on comprehensibility, especially in the sentence-reading task", although Saito cautions that a significant reduction in foreign accent was not obtained in any contexts (*ibid.*); *thirdly*, it is claimed that providing explicit corrective feedback "can result in significant improvement" (Derwing, 2018:16); *fourthly*, using authentic language may prove beneficial just "to heighten perception and to serve as catalyst for explicit explanations"; and *finally*, selective use of technology with its "tremendous advantage of letting students practice pronunciation on their own" (op.cit., 2018:16) should also be on the teaching "menu".

One of the recent phenomena relating to the affordances of technology is the so-called *informal digital learning of English* (henceforth is IDLE), in other words "self-directed, informal English learning using different digital devices and resources independent of formal contexts" (Lee, 2019:768). Some studies showed that "receptive IDLE activity (e.g. watching English content) significantly predicted positive perception of English varieties" (Lee & Drajeti, 2019:419).

If IDLE as a facilitator of the learners' exposure to a range of English varieties worldwide is directed by learners themselves in informal settings, a technique called *high variability phonetic training* (henceforth is HVPT) has become an effective laboratory speech-perception training method which can be used more often in classrooms, and especially for homework with the purpose of increasing listeners' ability to perceive non-native pronunciation (Derwing, 2018:16). HVPT uses multiple voices rather than one voice during the perception practice, and "variability inherent in different voices seems to help L2 learners to perceive new sounds in a more targetlike way" (Barriuso, & Hayes-Harb, 2018: 177). Derwing refers to some useful websites, such as

Englishaccentcoach.com, *Youglish*, etc. that provide for multiple exposures to pronunciation (Derwing, 2018:16).

Many research findings reveal that form-focused instruction in phonology may contribute to the comprehensibility of EFL speakers (Venkatagiri, Levis, 2007:263). An example of teaching framework that facilitates form-focused instruction eliciting the necessary repetition to promote automatic fluency in a communicative framework is called Automatization in Communicative Contexts of Essential Speech Segments (henceforth is ACCESS) (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005:329-331). “*Essential Speech Segments* refers to the targeted set of utterances” that students acquire at every lesson (op. cit., 2005: 328). The central innovation of ACCESS that (a) communication is genuine, it involves at least two participants working together to complete a task by exchanging information possessed by one and not the other (op. cit., 2005: 332); (b) the activity is inherently repetitive (op. cit., 2005: 332) when repetition is necessary for task completion; and (c) targeted expressions are useful in real world communication, expressing a particular language function and thus having high re-use potential (Gatbonton & Segalowitz, 2005:333). Promoting the *automatization* of essential speech segments in genuine communicative contexts, ACCESS is useful for accurate pronunciation acquisition.

Conclusion

In this paper, the concept of the phonological competence updated in the Companion Volume (2018) to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) was examined. Intelligibility is acknowledged as the crucial factor in FL pronunciation and also that accent may remain even at C2 level of FL proficiency. Innovations in the content of the phonological competence condition changes in the EFL teacher education programs in Ukrainian institutions of higher learning. Guided by *intelligibility principle*, recent research findings have led to recommended priorities for pronunciation instruction: the educational efforts should be directed at intelligibility and comprehensibility enhancement of EFL pre-service teachers’ pronunciation, instead of focusing on their accent eradication. Discerning pedagogy for pronunciation instruction puts an emphasis on teaching perception using multiple voices and varieties of English that increases learners’ ability to perceive and understand English pronunciation. Explicit instruction should focus on those segmental and prosodic features which are crucial for intelligibility.

Given that the EFL teachers’ knowledge of pronunciation and pronunciation pedagogy, and also their confidence in how to teach pronunciation area are dependent on the amount of training teachers have received in that area (Baker, 2011:82), phonological competence is an important contributing factor to an overall language proficiency, demanding a lot of attention and effort in the process of EFL teachers’ education.

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СТРУКТУРА ТА ЗМІСТ СЛОВНИКОВОЇ СТАТТІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОГО ЕЛЕКТРОННОГО ТЛУМАЧНОГО ОНЛАЙН- СЛОВНИКА: НА ДОПОМОГУ КОРИСТУВАЧУ

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ДАЦЬКА Тетяна. ГРИЦЮК Наталія. СТРУКТУРА ТА ЗМІСТ СЛОВНИКОВОЇ СТАТТІ АНГЛІЙСЬКОГО ЕЛЕКТРОННОГО ТЛУМАЧНОГО ОНЛАЙН-СЛОВНИКА: НА ДОПОМОГУ КОРИСТУВАЧУ. Статтю присвячено описові елементів структури сторінки трьох авторитетних англійських тлумачних електронних онлайн-словників: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Oxford Learner's Advanced Dictionary* та *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. На основі цього складено узагальнену таблицю, яка містить пояснення щодо кожного із головних елементів, які зазвичай наявні в словниковій статті, задля полегшення формування лексикографічної компетенції учнів та студентів, які вивчають англійську мову як іноземну.

Ключові слова: англійський тлумачний словник, словникова стаття, онлайн-словник, лексикографія, лексикографічна компетенція.

DATSKA Tetiana. HRYTSIUK Natalia. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF A WORD ENTRY AT AN ENGLISH-ENGLISH ONLINE DICTIONARY: USER TIPS. The paper is concerned with the establishment of the basic elements inherent to the structure of a word entry of three authoritative English-English online-dictionaries: *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, *Oxford Learner's Advanced Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. As a result the table with the description of main elements of a word entry has been compiled. This table can be of benefit