

Title: Russian-English Prosodic Interference Affecting Communication
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Experience shows that language competence at the segmental level is not enough to make communication successful, since much is conveyed by the prosodic characteristics of speech, as well as its nonverbal features. Sometimes prosodic characteristics which are modified in the speech of bilinguals due to the interaction and interference of the languages in contact can cause misunderstanding, even to a great extent, on the part of native speakers of the language.

What prosodic deviations from the English norm would be unacceptable to speakers of vernacular English? Why is it so important to be aware of the unintended connotation of a message with an incorrect prosodic pattern?

Prosodic deviations/modifications caused by language interference and transfer may unintentionally change the emotional-attitudinal connotation of an utterance, e.g., from polite to impolite, etc. As a result, not only the accented English speech of an EFL/ESL learner, but also the personality of a nonnative speaker, is being evaluated by the native speakers (Bolinger 1980). In such a case, an incorrect tone can lead to misunderstanding on the communicative and interpersonal levels, resulting in communication failure.

The author shares some data collected in the research she carried out in groups of Russian learners of English at a university in Russia. The research explores prosodic deviations in the English speech of Russian EFL learners and studies the impact of modified intonation patterns on the message conveyed by the utterance as perceived by speakers of vernacular American English.

The result of the phonetic study proves that some modified intonation contours used in English questions by Russian speakers may have a negative effect on communication: the questions were judged from “reserved” and “indifferent” to “impolite”, “insistent” and even “rude” by the English monolinguals involved in the experimental research.

Bolinger, Dwight. 1980. *Intonation and Its Use*. Vol. 1. Stanford.

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