



ORTHOEPIC COMPETENCE AS A HIGH-VALUE COMPONENT OF SPEECH CULTURE

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Abstract

This article analyzes orthoepic competence as a significant component of students' speech culture in the process of studying Russian. Drawing on the source conference material, the paper interprets orthoepic competence as the integrated ability to observe pronunciation norms, use stress correctly, maintain clear diction, and coordinate phonetic, intonational, and communicative features of speech in accordance with the goals and conditions of interaction. The study argues that the formation of such competence is not a narrow technical task but an essential element of professional preparation, because insufficiently normative speech negatively affects perception, credibility, organizational interaction, and the overall quality of communication. Special attention is given to the causes of pronunciation errors among students in non-Russian-speaking educational environments: dialect influence, entrenched accent patterns, the impact of colloquial and media speech, weak self-monitoring, incomplete knowledge of norms, and difficulties connected with the articulatory apparatus. The article also identifies the pedagogical implications of these factors and substantiates the need for systematic, staged, and communicatively oriented orthoepic work. It is concluded that the formation of orthoepic competence strengthens speech culture, improves professional communication, and supports the broader linguistic development of future specialists.

Keywords: Orthoepic competence, speech culture, Russian language, pronunciation norms, stress, diction, communicative competence, professional speech.

Introduction

In the modern educational and professional environment, speech is judged not only by what is said but also by how it is sounded. Clarity of pronunciation, correct stress placement, intonational adequacy, and overall phonetic discipline influence the perception of the speaker's competence, confidence, and communicative reliability. The source material from the uploaded conference document correctly emphasizes that insufficiently literate oral speech has become unacceptable in many formal and informal contexts because distortion at the phonetic level can interfere with understanding, weaken credibility, and complicate communication in professional settings. This observation is especially relevant for higher education, where students are trained to enter fields that require negotiations, presentations, collaboration, and institutional interaction. For future specialists, normative pronunciation is not merely a decorative feature of speech culture. It is part of professional readiness. In this regard, the concept of orthoepic competence deserves sustained attention. Within the logic of the source article, this competence includes mastery of the norms of oral and written literary language as realized in speech activity, together with pronunciation knowledge, listening skills, stress control, intonation, diction, loudness, rhythm, and tempo. Such a broad interpretation is methodologically productive because it shows that orthoepy is linked with the entire culture of speech behavior. It is therefore necessary to analyze both the internal structure of orthoepic competence and the practical difficulties that hinder its formation among students studying Russian.

The structure and significance of orthoepic competence

Orthoepic competence may be defined as an integrated speech ability that allows a speaker to follow accepted pronunciation norms and avoid phonetic deviations that reduce communicative effectiveness. The source material suggests that this competence includes not only knowledge of pronunciation rules but also a developed pronunciation-hearing culture. This point is particularly important. Students do not merely need to know "correct forms" intellectually; they must recognize them auditorily, reproduce them consistently, and correlate their speech with communicative purpose. For this reason, orthoepic competence stands at the intersection of phonetic, intonational, articulatory, and communicative training. It is related to clear pronunciation of sounds, accurate placement of lexical stress,

rhythmically balanced utterance, adequate voice control, and the ability to adjust one's oral speech to the social situation. In professional communication these qualities matter greatly. Correct pronunciation ensures respect for the speaker, facilitates the transfer of information, and contributes to the prevention of misunderstandings and unnecessary conflict. The source article also highlights that students in higher education differ greatly in their initial level of speech culture and language preparation. This heterogeneity makes orthoepic work even more significant. A future specialist may possess strong conceptual knowledge yet still fail to present it effectively because phonetic shortcomings distract the listener or create an impression of insufficient linguistic competence. Hence orthoepic competence should be considered an obligatory part of language instruction for professional formation, especially in settings where Russian functions as a language of broader academic or occupational communication.

Sources of pronunciation difficulties among students

A major strength of the source material is its careful attention to the causes of pronunciation errors. Such errors do not appear randomly; they arise from specific linguistic and educational conditions. The first important factor is dialect influence. When students grow up in a speech environment with stable local pronunciation features, these patterns may become deeply rooted and continue to shape their oral production even after formal instruction begins. A second factor is the persistence of accent features that were never corrected systematically. Once a pronunciation habit has become automated, it cannot be removed by explanation alone; it requires repeated guided practice. A third factor is the influence of colloquial simplification, media speech, and informal digital communication. If students are constantly exposed to reduced or non-normative pronunciation, the standard begins to lose its authority. The source text also identifies errors connected with stress placement. These may result either from dialect influence or from fossilized habits acquired earlier in life. Another significant factor is insufficient knowledge of Russian phonetic and orthoepic norms. Even motivated students may reproduce unstable pronunciation patterns if the rule system remains unclear or fragmented in their minds. Equally important is the problem of weak self-monitoring: some learners know the correct form in principle yet fail to control their pronunciation in real-time speech. Finally, certain difficulties are related to the articulatory apparatus and therefore require

special corrective effort. The pedagogical implication is blunt but useful: pronunciation errors are rarely singular. They often appear in clusters, which means that diagnostic work should be comprehensive rather than selective. One crooked stress mark rarely travels alone; it usually brings cousins.

Pedagogical strategies for forming orthoepic competence

Because the causes of pronunciation difficulties are multidimensional, the formation of orthoepic competence must also be systematic and staged. The source article rightly stresses that students should master the norms of Russian speech throughout the entire period of study rather than in a short introductory module. This long-term approach is justified because pronunciation habits develop gradually and require repeated reinforcement. At the methodological level, orthoepic training should begin with diagnosis: teachers need to identify frequent errors in reading, speaking, stress placement, and intonation. Such diagnosis makes it possible to distinguish between errors caused by ignorance of the rule and errors caused by unstable automatization. The next stage involves targeted practice. Here the source material mentions training exercises graded by the growth of lexical and grammatical complexity. This principle remains highly relevant. Correct pronunciation should first be practiced in isolated units, then in controlled phrases, and only later in spontaneous or semi-spontaneous speech. However, drills alone are insufficient. Since orthoepic competence serves communication, pronunciation work must be linked with meaningful speech activity. Reading aloud, guided discussion, short presentations, paired dialogue, imitation of professional situations, and auditory comparison of normative and non-normative variants can all support this goal. In non-Russian-speaking higher educational institutions the teacher's role becomes especially important, because limited communication with native speakers may produce the illusion that high speech culture is unnecessary. The source text warns against precisely this attitude. If students do not encounter situations requiring cultivated oral speech, they may underestimate the value of pronunciation norms. Therefore the teacher must deliberately create communicative contexts in which speech quality matters and receives feedback. In this way orthoepic work becomes not a punitive correction of mistakes but a component of the student's linguistic self-development.

Conclusion

Orthoepic competence is a central rather than marginal element of speech culture. The source conference material convincingly shows that pronunciation norms affect the quality of perception, the authority of the speaker, the success of professional interaction, and the overall culture of oral communication. In higher education, especially in environments where Russian is not the primary language of daily communication, the formation of this competence requires deliberate and continuous methodological support. Its structure includes knowledge of norms, pronunciation-hearing skills, stress control, diction, intonation, tempo, and self-monitoring, all of which work together in real communicative situations. The factors that hinder its development—dialect interference, entrenched accent patterns, colloquial influence, weak control, insufficient rule knowledge, and articulatory difficulties—demonstrate that orthoepic training cannot be reduced to occasional correction. It must be based on diagnosis, staged exercises, meaningful communicative practice, and a clear understanding of the professional value of cultivated speech. When this work is organized consistently, students not only improve their pronunciation; they also develop a more precise, responsible, and culturally adequate mode of communication. For that reason, orthoepic competence should be treated as one of the foundations of speech culture and a necessary outcome of Russian language education for future specialists.

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