

## DEVELOPING LANGUAGE STUDENTS' PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS THROUGH POETRY

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**Abstract.** *Phonological awareness may be defined as an individual's awareness of the phonological or sound structure of spoken words. Usually the term is related to the sphere of preschool and elementary classroom training, as it is one of the most important predictors of reading in normally developing children. However, when it comes to adult teaching, for example non-native English philology students, an in-depth study of phonetics is a necessity. The nature of the subject requires building cumulative knowledge, ear-training and taking a good grasp in phonology of both native and target languages, i.e. developing their phonological awareness. When combined with poetry of the studied language, it may become an interesting and motivating activity, leading to a better understanding of the language, phonetic proficiency as well as expansion of the general knowledge of English literature. The main objectives of this article are 1) to discuss the general terminology and content of phonological awareness 2) to share experience on how poetry may be applied as a successful teaching tool for developing students' phonological awareness. Therefore, the concepts of rhyme, rhythm, consonance, assonance, alliteration, etc. are discussed and examples of possible phonological activities used for analyzing poetry are given.*

**Keywords:** *phonological awareness, cognitive activities, poetic language, rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, onomatopoeia, homonymy, minimal pairs.*

## Introduction

Phonological awareness may be defined as an individual's "explicit understanding of a word's sound structure."<sup>1</sup> Various alternatives have been employed as synonyms to the term, such as phonemic awareness, acoustic awareness, phonetic awareness, auditory analysis, sound categorization, phonemic segmentation, phonological sensitivity, and phonemic analysis<sup>2</sup>. However, phonological awareness is the most popular term to be used by linguists. Some authors such as Goswami and Bryant<sup>3</sup> reserve the term phonemic awareness "imply awareness of individual phonemes; whereas, phonological awareness is a more global term that includes the earlier stages, such as rhyme and syllable awareness"<sup>4</sup>. Usually the term is related to the sphere of preschool and elementary classroom training, as it is "one of the most important predictors of reading in normally developing children"<sup>5</sup>. In addition, children with dyslexia often show phonological processing difficulties, and training in phonological awareness can improve the efficacy of reading instruction<sup>6</sup>.

When it comes to adult teaching, for example non-native English philology students, an in-depth study of phonetics is a necessity. The nature of the subject itself requires building up cumulative knowledge, ear-training and taking a good grasp in phonology of both native and target languages, i.e. developing students' phonological awareness. It refers to students' "metalinguistic knowledge of the sound structure of language--that is, conscious awareness of the phonological structure of sentences, phrases, and words."<sup>7</sup> Harris and Hodges write that metalinguistic awareness "refers to one's awareness of and control over one's language in general; it is the ability to focus attention on language in and of itself, independent of meaning"<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, phonological awareness refers to individual's ability to focus his/her attention on the phonological structure of spoken words through a variety of cognitive operations. When combined with poetry of the studied language, development of these abilities may become an

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- 1 Gillon, G. Phonological Awareness Intervention for Children: From the Research Laboratory to the Clinic. In *The Asha Leader Magazine*, 2002 [interactive] [accessed on 05-08-2013]. <<http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2002/021203/021203a.htm>>.
  - 2 Hempenstall, K. Phonemic Awareness: What Does it Mean? In *Education Oasis*, 2011 [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <[http://www.educationoasis.com/resources/Articles/phonemic\\_awareness.htm](http://www.educationoasis.com/resources/Articles/phonemic_awareness.htm)>.
  - 3 Goswami, U., Bryant, P. E. *Phonological skills and learning to read*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1990.
  - 4 *Ibid.*
  - 5 Rack, J., *et al.* The Role of Phonology in Young Children Learning to Read Words: The Direct-Mapping Hypothesis. In *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 1994, 57 (1): 42-71.
  - 6 Hatcher, P. J., *et al.* Ameliorating Early Reading Failure by Integrating the Teaching of Reading and Phonological Skills. The Phonological Linkage Hypothesis. In *Child Development*, 1994, 65 (1): 41-57 [interactive]. [accessed on 05-08-2013]. <<http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/1131364?uid=3738480&uid=2129&uid=2&uid=70&uid=4&sid=21102528168297>>.
  - 7 Rubba, J., Phonological Awareness Skills and Spelling Skills, 2003 [interactive]. [accessed on 05-08-2013]. <<http://cla.calpoly.edu/~jrubba/phon/phonaware.html>>.
  - 8 Harris, T.L., Hodges, R.E. *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 1995.

interesting and motivating tool, leading to a better understanding of the language, phonetic proficiency, fluency in reading and listening as well as expansion of the general knowledge of English literature.

Therefore, the objectives of this article are: 1) to discuss the general terminology and content of phonological awareness; 2) to share experience on how poetry may be applied as a successful teaching tool for developing language students' phonological awareness.

## 1. Phonetics, Phonological Awareness and Poetic Language

“Phonetics (and phonology, be the latter separate or a part of the former) is the field where linguistics suggests an immediate application to other spheres of science and life, and where it embraces openly knowledge from other spheres of science, such as mathematics, statistics, physics, computer technology, telecommunication, and even from art, such as music or poetry”<sup>9</sup>. John Holcombe even believes that phonetics has more to do with arts (music and poetry) than sciences. According to him, “sound is a pleasure, and something innate in human beings. We like to sing, and chants that approach song are moving and socially cohesive. Poetry is more readily put to music than prose, and even pop music employs poetic devices. Poetry may indeed slide into music, though the first makes more use of articulation and phonetic timbre and the second of pitch and duration”<sup>10</sup>. Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners defines a poem as “a piece of writing in which the words are chosen for their beauty and sound and are carefully arranged, often in short lines which rhyme”<sup>11</sup>. Andrew Finch from Kyungpook National University believes that this definition, which “contains no reference to comprehension of difficult metaphorical, cultural, or ethical allusions, and nothing about grammatical correctness, metrical structure, sentence structure or logical sequencing of ideas, opens the doors to pop-songs, haiku, pattern poems, picture poems, nursery rhymes and folk-songs, all of which can be viewed as poetry. By stressing enjoyment, and presenting poetry through media and methods that provide maximum student involvement and interest, not only can language learning be facilitated, but learners at all levels can use the medium of poetry to express themselves in the target language”<sup>12</sup>. Thus it may seem that poetry is an ideal tool for visualizing, exploring, analyzing and enjoying sounds, i.e. developing students' phonological awareness.

9 Glukhiy, Y.A., Glushkov, S.V. Essays in Theoretical English Phonetics Tomsk Business Institute, 2009 [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <<http://portal.tpu.ru/SHARED/g/GLUSHKOV/Lectures/Tab2/EnglishPhoneticsEssays.doc>>.

10 Holcombe, C. H. Sound in Poetry. In *Textec.com* [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <<http://www.textetc.com/traditional/sound.html>>.

11 *Collins English Thesaurus* [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <<http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus/poem>>.

12 Finch, A. Using Poems to Teach English. In *English Language Teaching* 15(2) [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <[www.finchpark.com/arts/Poems.pdf](http://www.finchpark.com/arts/Poems.pdf)>.

As it was mentioned before, phonological awareness is usually related to the sphere of preschool and elementary classroom training, however, studies have shown that it aids in language learning, whether the target group is children or adults, or whether it is their primary or secondary language. Generally, strategies to promote phonological awareness and the content of it are similar across all languages. And if compared activities applied for children at different stages of developing and their phonological awareness to techniques employed while analyzing phonological features of a poetic text, it is possible to see, that they are in many ways similar.

Dr. Kerry Hempenstall from RMIT University, Melbourne, Australia suggests the following stages (or mental/cognitive operations, as they are more commonly called) of developing phonological awareness in children: recognition that sentences are made up of words; recognition that words can rhyme – then production thereof; recognition that words can be broken down into syllables – then production thereof; recognition that words can be broken down into onsets and rimes – then production thereof; recognition that words can begin with the same sound – then production of such words; recognition that words can end with the same sound – then production of such words; recognition that words can have the same medial sound(s) – then production of such words; recognition that words can be broken down into individual phonemes – then production thereof; recognition that sounds can be deleted from words to make new words – then production thereof; ability to blend sounds to make words; ability to segment words into constituent sounds<sup>13</sup>

When analyzing phonetic organization of a poetic text, the majority of the above mentioned cognitive operations (only referred to as recognition of phonological patterns or phonetic stylistic devices) can be followed. For example, employment of following phonological patterns is usually discussed and analyzed: rhyme and rhythm (recognition of rhymes and identification of one of eight meters); alliteration (recognition that words can begin with the same consonant); assonance (recognition that words can begin with the same vowel); consonance (recognition that words can end or have the same medial sound(s) - then production of such words); onomatopoeia (recognition that some words sound like their definition); homonymy (recognition that some words may be spelled the same way but differ in meaning or that some words are pronounced the same way but differ in meaning), etc.

“It’s up to educators to locate them and present them to students with grace and optimism and show they are not merely decorative, playing no discourse role in the host text, but rather function as defamiliarized textual strategies, contributing to the texture of the text”<sup>14</sup>, adding to the vividness of a poem and challenging students’ cognitive abilities in the most beautiful way. Thus the following sections will deal with common phonological patterns applied in poetic texts and will provide examples of techniques

13 Hempenstall, K., *supra* note, 2.

14 Lotfipour-Saedi, K. Discoursal Function of Phonological Patterns in Poetic Texts: Implications for (UN-) Translatability of Poetry. In *Meta: Journal des traducteurs / Meta: Translators' Journal*. 2005, 50(4) [interactive]. [accessed on 01-05-2013]. <<http://www.erudit.org/revue/meta/2005/v/n4/019849ar.html?vue=resume>>.]

suitable for training language students' phonological awareness through the usage of them.

## 2. Rhyme

*Oxforddictionaries.com* defines the term “*rhyme*” as “correspondence of sound between words or the endings of words, especially when these are used at the ends of lines of poetry”<sup>15</sup>. According to William F. Styler, the author of a “*Notes from a Linguistic Mystic*”, rhyming, as well as alliteration, is one of the first levels of phonological knowledge. Before starting the activity he recommends brainstorming students with various words that rhyme. “Write them on the board, so that students can see that some words with endings of different spellings, such as “try” and “pie,” still rhyme. You can even get them in the mood by reading them a nursery rhyme; even adult ESL students may get a kick out of this. For the activity, write a short English poem on the board, but omit some of the words that are part of a rhyming pair. For example, if line 1 rhymes with line 2, omit the last word in line 2. Ask students to guess which words belong in the blanks, based on the context and the rhyming sound”<sup>16</sup>.

One of the most interesting poems to be analyzed with language students at Mykolas Romeris University is “*Tarantella*” by H.Belloc. Here are the activities to stimulate students' awareness of rhyme and rhyming words. Students are presented several rhyming words taken from the poem and asked to continue the sequence with the rhyming words of their own:

- a) inn, din, spin, ..... , .....
- b) cheer, jeer, ....., .....
- c) hap, clap, snap ..... , .....
- d) swirl, twirl, girl, ..... , .....
- e) chance, dance, ....., .....
- f) ground, sound, ..... , .....
- g) wall, hall, fall, ..... , .....
- h) boom, doom, ..... , .....

To quote William F. Styler's characteristics of the English: “...English spelling isn't terribly phonetic, to put it nicely. The same letter combinations can have the different pronunciations in different words (“gh” in “ghost” and “rough”), and only through years of teaching, spelling bees, and repetition are we able to finally figure out how to read things written in our own alphabet”<sup>17</sup>. Resting on this idea, a following type of activity can be applied to stimulate students' rhyme awareness (when analyzing

15 Oxford Dictionaries Online [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/>>†

16 Styler, W. F. Seeing Rhyme in Writing: a Foreign Concept. In *Notes from a Linguistic Mystic*. 2007 [interactive]. [accessed on 17-05-2013]. <<http://linguisticmystic.com/2007/04/28/seeing-rhyme-in-writing-a-foreign-concept/>>.

17 *Ibid.*

“*Tarantella*” by H. Belloc.) Students are asked to identify the words which are odd, i.e. which do not rhyme with the first two words taken from the poem. These are:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| a) tedding, spreading  | pleading, creating, heading, leading      |
| b) fleas, tease, ideas | please, tears, increase, areas, cease     |
| c) more, hoar          | door, poor, floor, pour, store, moor      |
| d) tread, dead         | bead, instead, bread, read, dread, behead |

When working on assignment students will get to remember that e.g. combination “*ea*” can be alternatively pronounced with short [e] like in “spreading”, or long [i:] as in “leading” or with a diphthong, as in “creating”. Thus it becomes obvious that although some words may seem rhyme-looking because of their orthography, in reality they are not.

Sometimes, however, it is worth reminding your students that “...in English a different stress is placed on words that are spelled exactly the same, depending upon the meaning that the speaker wishes to create. For example, with the word “record,” there is a different stress based on whether we wish to refer to the noun of a piece of music media or to the verb for the actual act of registering or a piece of information”<sup>18</sup> or that certain words may have several variants of pronunciation. For example, the word “forehead” can be pronounced as [ˈfɔːhɛd] or [ˈfɒrɪd]. However, in a poem “There was a little girl” by H.W. Longfellow “forehead” should be pronounced as [ˈfɒrɪd] just because it will rhyme with “horrid”.

There was a little girl,  
Who had a little curl,  
Right in the middle of her forehead.  
When she was good,  
She was very good indeed,  
But when she was bad she was horrid<sup>19</sup>.

Some authors also suggest asking the class to transcribe a poem phonetically using the IPA system. William F. Styler, for example, suggests transcribing “The Chaos”, by Gerard Nolst Trenité. It’s a rhyming poem in the English language written to show off some of the most interesting spelling irregularities in the English language. He says: “...if you read the poem aloud, the rhyme is obvious. Just looking at the text, though, there’s really no hint of the rhyme excepting the final letter, and rhyme is more than just final letters. “Sound” and “Wound” don’t rhyme (in the simple sense), even though every letter but the first is identical. “Bough” and “flow” share only one letter, yet they rhyme wonderfully in English”<sup>20</sup>.

18 What Are the Five Areas of Phonology That Make the English Language Difficult to Learn? In *YourDictionary. LoveToKnow*. [interactive]. [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://esl.yourdictionary.com/lesson-plans/what-five-areas-of-phonology-make-english-language-difficult-to-learn.html>>.

19 Longfellow H.W. There Was a Little Girl. In *Poetry Foundation* [interactive]. [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/173916>>.

20 Styler, W. F. *supra* note 16.

Even if students can't read the IPA, they can see the words rhyming. Because the IPA transcribes sounds, they can see when the lines end in the exact same sounds. If the final vowel and consonant(s) are the same in the IPA, then it rhymes. It's that simple.

However, IPA activity may confuse students, when the phenomenon of homonymy is being encountered. For example, when putting down a funny limerick about a man from Devizes, students may get confused when they get to the last line. Here, instead of interpreting it as "the other won", they may write "the other one" and get lost. Where's the verb?

There was a young man at Devizes  
Whose ears were of different sizes.  
One was so small,  
It was no use at all  
But the other won several prizes<sup>21</sup>.

Students should be warned that "they need to learn to look for contextual clues around that word, in order to determine the correct way to pronounce it"<sup>22</sup> and that even literate English speakers "...have a great deal of training throughout their lives dedicated to making heads or tails of their bizarre writing system"<sup>23</sup>. However, it is important to emphasize that if coupled with joyful activities, any training process may be alleviated. The aforementioned exercises involving rhyme detection, rhyme oddity and generation first of all require students' attention to the ending sound in words, but they may also raise students' metalinguistic *awareness* of English language spelling, pronunciation and word stress irregularities and the effect they may have on the logical utterance of a poem.

### 3. Rhythm

Ch. Praveen, a professor at Government College of Teacher Education, Calicut writes that "rhythm may be interpreted as patterned sound. Unconscious but inevitable rhythm patterns are produced by the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables"<sup>24</sup>. According to him, "rhythm in poetry can be described as a natural manifestation of an emotional state, and expression of an emotional consciousness. Conscious and planned rhythm is one distinguishing feature of poetry. When we speak of the teaching of rhythm, we refer to the guidance of a natural rhythmic sense to express itself in patterns recognizable as poetry. No one needs to know the names of meters and of patterns to grasp the concept of rhythm. When we read aloud to the learner, he hears the rhythm,

21 G-Rated Limericks in *alfaDictionary.com*. [interactive] [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://www.alpha-dictionary.com/fun/limericks.html>>.

22 YourDictionary. *LoveToKnow*. *supra* note 18.

23 Styler, W. F. *supra* note 16.

24 Praveen, Ch. Guiding ESL Learners to Appreciate Poetry. In *The Internet TESL Journal*. 2007, 13(8) [interactive]. [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Praveen-Poetry.html>>.



and it is recorded in his mind. When he reads the poem aloud for himself, he reproduces the rhythm, swaying his body or moving his head as he reads. Rhythm is as natural to a child as breathing. All language has rhythm. The child is born into a world of rhythm.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, when analyzing for example H. Belloc's "*Tarantella*" or L. Carroll's "*Jabberwocky*", it is not vital to emphasize that the author applies iambic metricality. In order to develop students' phonological awareness it is more logical to let them listen to original "*Tarantella Napolitana*" or "*Siciliana*" dance before reading "*Tarantella*", to make them feel the energy and the vividness of the Mediterranean dance. We can turn their attention to irregular lines of the poem which are long or short, we can illustrate how hard sounding d's and t's and b's emulate feet beating out the dance steps or that "...the dance effect is enhanced through the employment of onomatopoeia and by the repetition of words and phrases to reinforce the energy and the action"<sup>26</sup>. All these combine to evoke the dance form of the title.

When analyzing L. Carroll's "*Jabberwocky*", it is worth noticing that actually it is a ballad poem. "What's a ballad? The short answer is that it's a song. Ballad stanza is traditionally found in folktale songs, and is used as a way for people to communicate legends and tales to each other orally. Its rhythm and rhyme make it easy to remember for this reason. Even though it has some crazy language, "*Jabberwocky*" is no exception. The lilting rhythm of "*Jabberwocky*" helps the narrator's cause. It makes the poem easy to remember (so that he can tell it to you around that campfire), and it keeps the story moving forward at a regular clip. Ask your students to compare:

'Twas *brill-ig*, and the *sli-thy toves*  
 Did *gyre* and *gim-ble in the wabe*“ to  
 “and THEN and THEN and THEN and THEN!”<sup>27</sup>

All the exclamation points in the middle are what give our storyteller his cues to gesticulate wildly at us while relaying the epic battle, and so even though the rhythm stays constant, we have some good changes in volume.<sup>28</sup>

Activities meant for developing students' awareness of rhythm first of all stimulate their general listening competences which are inseparable from phonemic awareness instruction. Furthermore, cognitive skills of perception, memory and sequencing of sounds heard are being developed.

#### 4. Onomatopoeia

When analyzing "*Jabberwocky*", it is worth turning language students' attention to "...all this wonderful onomatopoeia – that is, words that sound like their definition (think

25 Parveen, Ch. *supra* note 24.

26 Kevin. Hilaire Belloc: Tarantella. In *How Poems Work*. 2012 [interactive]. [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://poemsunpacked.blogspot.com/2012/07/hilaire-belloc-tarantella.html>>.

27 Shmoop Editorial Team. Jabberwocky by Lewis Carroll. In *Shmoop*. 2000. [interactive]. [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://www.shmoop.com/jabberwocky/symbolism-imagery.html>>.

28 *Ibid.*



“hiss” and “buzz”). Phrases like “snicker-snack!” and “whiffing” and “galumphing” and “chortled” (the last two of which are officially recognized English words now) or give us sound cues that help us not only see, but hear the events going on in the poem. After all, it’s a nonsense poem – the words were mostly chosen or made up for their sound, not their sense<sup>29</sup>. Equally, onomatopoeic “hip, hop, hap, clap, ting, tong, tang” in “*Tarantella*” add to the rhythm and vividness of the poem. Why not asking our students to translate them into their native languages? Usually the students are enthusiastic enough about such an activity. They must be warned, however, that “...achieving equivalence on the level of onomatopoeic words is a basic problem a translator usually faces”<sup>30</sup>. Nevertheless, some linguists have noticed that onomatopes in different languages have much in common. “Hamza Zülfikar, for example, wrote, that people who speak different languages give more or less the same names to the sounds of nature, because the easiest and natural ways to express this or that sound and very alike. The differences between onomatopes in different languages can arise in the process of secondary onomatopes derivation, but it is still possible to find similarities on the primary onomatopes level<sup>31</sup>.”

Student groups at Mykolas Romeris University are in most cases comprised of young people from Lithuanian, Russian and Polish speaking backgrounds. They might get surprised to find out that the interjection “*hop*” is quite similar to its Russian equivalent “*хлон*”, while in Lithuanian the sound of clapping hands is usually pronounced as “*pliaukšt*”, whereas in Polish it is “*klask*”. Finding equivalents for “cheers, jeers” might be even a greater fun and in such a way stimulate their creativeness.

In general, onomatopoeia activities not only add to enhancing students’ aesthetic and emotional appreciation of poetic language, but also develop their awareness of rhyme and rhythm and evoke intentional, reflective attitudes towards linguistic cross-cultural differences.

## 5. Alliteration, Consonance and Assonance

According to Srinivas, owner of a linguist-blog “On a Fool’s Errand”, “...there can never be too much of alliteration, consonance or assonance in a poem - it is like saying there is too much ice-cream or honey around”<sup>32</sup>. *Yourdictionary.com* defines alliteration as “a literary device that repeats a speech sound in a sequence of words that are close to each other. Alliteration typically uses consonants at the beginning of a word to give stress to its syllable.

29 Shmoop Editorial Team. *supra* note 27.

30 Feytelberg, E. M. Phonosemantic and Phonostylistic Phenomena in Turkish Literary Text as a Translation Problem. In *Journal of Siberian Federal University. Humanities & Social Sciences*. 2010, 4(3): 518-525. [interactive]. [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <[http://elib.sfu-kras.ru/bitstream/2311/1762/1/03\\_feyteljberg.pdf](http://elib.sfu-kras.ru/bitstream/2311/1762/1/03_feyteljberg.pdf)>.

31 *Ibid*, 520

32 Srinivas. Having Phonology Inform Poetry. In *On a Fool’s Errand*. 2012. [interactive] [accessed on 20-05-2013]. <<http://transient-lines.blogspot.com/2012/10/having-phonology-inform-poetry.html>>.

Alliteration plays a very crucial role in poetry and literature: it provides a work with musical rhythms; poems that use alliteration are read and recited with more interest and appeal; poems with alliteration can be easier to memorize; alliteration lends structure, flow, and beauty to any piece of writing”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, finding examples of alliteration in poetry is an efficient tool to develop language students' phonological awareness. In fact there is no necessity to define the term to them. It is enough reminding them any of the tongue-twisters you start your phonetic lectures with: “*Betty Botta bought some butter...*” or “*Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*” and the students will provide the definition themselves. When asked to identify the examples of alliteration in “*Tarantella*”, they are usually able to point out that sequences *hammer/hip/hop/hap, tease/tasted/tar, ting/tong/tang, more/Miranda/more* all contain the repetition of an initial sound (consonant) and that the words are close in a phrase. They only have to be reminded that alliteration is a special case of consonance - “a poetic device that usually involves the repetition of consonants within two or more words in sequence,”<sup>34</sup> and that this repetition can also appear in the middle of the word or at the end of it. There are a lot of examples of consonance in “*Tarantella*”. For example, hard sounding d’s and t’s and b’s in medial position of words emulate feet beating out the dance steps:

“And the *tedding* and the *spreading*  
Of the straw for a *bedding*”

The repetition of nasal consonants in the middle and at the end of words is visible:

“...Of the girl gone *chancing*,  
*Glancing*,  
*Dancing*,  
*Backing* and *advancing*”,

L.Carroll in his “*Jabberwocky*” employs a semivowel “w” repeating it several times in a short succession, as well as “*ff*” combo.

“...The *Jabberwock* with eyes of *flame*,  
Came *whiffing* through the *tulgey wood...*” (“*Jabberwocky*”)

Students should be given notice that consonance should not be confused with assonance, which is the repetition of vowel sounds. „Assonance examples are sometimes hard to find, because they work subconsciously sometimes, and are subtle. The long vowel sounds will slow down the energy and make the mood more somber, while high sounds can increase the energy level of the piece<sup>35</sup>. When analyzing “*Tarantella*” it is worth turning closer students' attention towards the way in which Belloc handles the pacing while applying assonances: the quick-stepping “*and the tedding and the spreading of the straw for a bedding*” are read in a much faster manner than e.g.

33 *YourDictionary. LoveToKnow, supra* note 18.

34 *wiseGEEK* [interactive]. [accessed on 05-08-2013]. <<http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-consonance.htm>>

35 *YourDictionary. LoveToKnow, supra* note 18.

“Never *more*, Miranda,  
 Never *more*.  
 Only the high peaks *hoar*;  
 And Aragon a torrent at the *door*.  
 No sound  
 In the *walls* of the *halls* where *falls*  
 the tread...”

Why is this? The secret lies in the employment of short vowels for the quick lines and long vowels for the slow ones. It is obvious that lines containing short, front, mid-open [e] are read much faster than those with repeating back, open, tense vowel [ɔ:], which decreases the energy and makes the mood of the poem serious, nostalgic and somber.

“There is so much to be evoked through the judicious use of consonant and vowel sounds. The upshot is that there are units below the level of the word which can be finessed in poetry to capture moods, places, sounds and sights, in short entire worlds. Indeed, when the ‘sense’ in words is itself subject to - possibly irreducible - variation, it is difficult to argue that consonantal and vowel echoes carry what an author intends them to, although some phonic patterns are known to reinforce certain types of meanings. As a case in point, consider the vowel sound in the words *skull*, *ugly*, *dull*, *mull over* etc. It is associated with things that are uncouth, hard, unpleasant, dry, offensively direct etc.<sup>36</sup> Therefore we can state that although alliteration/consonance/assonance activities are primarily meant for developing students’ ears for words that share a common feature or sound (vowels or consonants), they may also enable them to begin thinking about the sound properties of words as separate from the word’s meaning.

## 6. Minimal Pairs

Another activity that can be applied for training language students’ phonological awareness is asking them to create so called minimal pairs for the suggested poetry words. In phonology, “minimal pairs are pairs of words or phrases in a particular language, which differ in only one phonological element, such as a phoneme, toneme or chroneme and have distinct meanings”<sup>37</sup>, e.g. *Pit/sit*; *cat/caught*; *law/raw*. They are used to demonstrate that two phones constitute two separate phonemes in the language.

“Minimal pairs were an important part of the theory of pronunciation teaching during its development in the period of Structuralist Linguistics, particularly in the 1940’s and 50’s, and minimal pair drills were widely used to train students to discriminate among the phonemes of the target language. Later writers have criticized this approach as being artificial and lacking in relevance to language learners’ needs”<sup>38</sup>.

36 Srinivas. *supra* note 32.

37 Beare, K., Pronunciation - Minimal Pairs. In *About.com*. [interactive]. [accessed on 05-08-2013]. <<http://esl.about.com/library/lessons/blminimal.htm>>.

38 *Ibid*

However, minimal pairs are still being widely applied even in modern teaching. Some authors believe, that “practicing minimal pairs can help students localize the often minute differences in pronunciation between one word and another.”<sup>37</sup> For example, Russian and Polish speaking students sometimes find it difficult to differentiate between long and short vowels of English, whereas students from Lithuanian speaking backgrounds tend to substitute voiced consonants at the end of words with unvoiced sounds. Asking them to produce minimal pairs may help students identify the differences and the way the mispronounced sound(s) may change the meaning of the word or even the whole stanza. Compare the meaning of “*the eyes of flame*” to “*the ice of flame*”, or “*he left it dead*” to “*he left it Dad*”. This operation may be compared to one of the cognitive operations children undergo when developing their phonological awareness: recognition that sounds can be deleted from words to make new words and ability to blend sounds to make words.

Thus, when working on e.g. “*Jabberwocky*” by L.Carroll, students can be suggested creating minimal pairs for the following words taken from the poem: a) *rath-* b) *thought-* c) *eyes-* d) *dead-* e) *head-* f) *did-* g) *bird-* h) *tree-* i) *back-*

For “*Tarantella*” analysis, the following examples may be suggested suitable for minimal pairing: a) *peak-* b) *bed-* c) *feet-* d) *got-* e) *dead-* f) *vine-* g) *cheers-* h) *tang-* i) *din-*

Students can be warned that minimal pairs can be composed by substituting consonants in initial or final position, or changing vowels in medial position.

Minimal pairing can help students localize the often minute differences in pronunciation between one word and another, besides they are effective for both training their articulation and bottom-up listening skills.

## 7. Phonetic Description of Sounds

If language students are already familiar with the classification of English vowels and consonants, they can be asked to identify certain sounds within a poem being analyzed, or to provide a phonetic description of sounds: for consonants, the description may include voicing and place and manner of articulation; for vowels- height and a frontness/ backness dimension, labialization and quality features. For example, while analyzing a poem, students can be asked to detect words, containing all kinds of vowel sounds (e.g. front, close and tense (=i:), or central, mid-open (=ə:)). Similar tasks can be given for identifying consonant sounds and semivowels. Such activities may be applied as self-check tasks after studying and memorizing a bit complicated vowel and consonant classification charts. They may also affect students’ spelling abilities especially of those relying on their visual memory.

## Conclusions

Phonological awareness is an individual's awareness of the phonological structure of spoken words. It is an auditory skill that is developed through a variety of activities that expose students to the sound structure of the language and teach them to recognize, identify and manipulate it. When combined with poetry, it may become an interesting and motivating tool, developing students' metalinguistic awareness, leading to phonetic proficiency as well as expansion of the general knowledge of English literature. Although phonological awareness is usually related to the sphere of preschool and elementary classroom training, activities for developing it are similar in many ways in children and in ESL students analyzing a poetic text, i.e. recognition that words rhyme, that words can begin, end or have the same medial sound, recognition that some words sound like their definition, etc. In poetry analysis these are referred to as detection of phonetic or musical devices. When a student is able to identify them, resting on the theoretical knowledge gained in phonetic lectures, he/she gets a double benefit: his/her phonological awareness is being stimulated and certain metalinguistic competences are being developed: awareness of English language spelling and pronunciation irregularities, the importance of word stress and the effect they may have on logical utterance of the poem. Furthermore, a students' knowledge on English verse and poetic language is being enhanced.

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## FILOLOGIJOS STUDENTŲ FONOLOGINIO SUPRATIMO UGDYMAS PASITELKiant POEZIJĄ

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**Santrauka.** *Fonologinį supratimą (angl. Phonological awareness) būtų galima apibrėžti kaip asmens jautrumo laipsnį sakininės kalbos garsų struktūrai. Paprastai šis terminas yra siejamas su priešmokyklinio ar jaunesniojo mokyklinio amžiaus vaikų kalbinių įgūdžių ugdymu: tyrimai rodo, kad egzistuoja priežastinis fonologinio supratimo ir skaitymo įgūdžių ryšys. Tačiau fonologinio supratimo ugdymas yra svarbus ir suaugusiųjų mokyme, pavyzdžiui, lavinant neraštingų ar neigalių suaugusiųjų kalbinius įgūdžius. Atskira sritis yra filologijos studijos, kai fonologinis supratimas yra vienas iš esminių dalykų, padedančių suvokti studijuojamos kalbos struktūrą, fonetinių elementų funkcionavimą, tarties normas. Derinant jį su studijuojamos kalbos literatūra, įskaitant poeziją, gilinamos ne tik fundamentaliosios, bet ir kultūrinės žinios apie studijuojamą kalbą. Šio straipsnio tikslai yra keli: 1) aptarti fonologinio supratimo terminiją ir turinį, 2) apžvelgti anglų filologijos studentų fonologinio supratimo ugdymo galimybes, analizuojant studijuojama kalba sukurtus eilėraščius.*

*Fonologinio supratimo turinį sudaro lingvistiniai vienetai (garsai, skiemenys, žodžiai, rimas) ir kognityvios operacijos tais lingvistiniais vienetais manipuliuojant: atpažinimo, pateikimo, nustatymo, pridėjimo, panaikinimo, sujungimo, išskaidymo ir analogijų panaudojimo. Kai kurios šių kognityvinių operacijų gali būti naudojamos, nagrinėjant poetinę kalbą: aptariant analizuojamo kūrinio eilėdarą (rimą ir ritmą), instrumentuotą arba kalbos garsų grupavimą ir išdėstymą tekste, siekiant sukelti meninį išpūdį (aliteraciją, konsonansą, asonansą, onomatopėją ir t. t.). Straipsnyje pateikiamos rekomendacijos dėl fonologinio supratimo ugdymo galimybių gali būti naudingos aukštųjų mokyklų anglų kalbos literatūros, fonetikos ir fonologijos dėstytojams.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *fonologinis supratimas, kognityvios operacijos, rimas, ritmas, aliteracija, onomatopėja, homonimija, minimalios žodžių poros.*

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