Unlocking Russian Pronunciation

Sample Student Goals

Below I’ve provided some initial sample student goals I set for a few actual students when I was teaching at Swarthmore and Bryn Mawr Colleges. As you can see, many students have similar issues at the beginning, since acquiring target-like pronunciation is a developmental thing that seems to proceed through stages, but there is some variation.

Also, some of the goals I’ve set here are covered extensively in lessons that we won’t get to for a bit. It’s ok to assign these goals, anyway. Some topics, like deemphasis of unstressed syllables, can be taught quickly as a preview of things to come, and students should pick it up right away. It’s also ok to teach a simplified version of a topic (e.g. your students likely already know something about type I vowel reduction – unstressed о and а sound like а!) and to set goals according to what they have already been taught. Good luck!

Student 1

1. All correct phonemes (Lesson 2)
2. Smooth, steady pace, fast enough to hear deemphasis of unstressed syllables
3. Deemphasis of unstressed syllables (Lesson 4)
4. Type I vowel reduction: о/а (Lesson 4)
5. Type II vowel reduction: е/я (Lesson 4)

Student 2

1. Default mouth position (Lesson 1)
2. Deemphasis of unstressed syllables (Lesson 4)
3. Hard & soft consonants т/ть and д/дь (Lesson 3)
4. Type I vowel reduction: о/а (Lesson 4)
5. Type II vowel reduction: е/я (Lesson 4)

Student 3

1. Default mouth position (Lesson 1)
2. Smooth, steady pace, fast enough to hear deemphasis of unstressed syllables
3. Deemphasis of unstressed syllables (Lesson 4)
4. Continued work on consistent «р» (Lesson 2)
5. Strong “j” sound in word-initial soft consonants (Lesson 2)

Student 4

1. Smooth, steady pace, fast enough to hear deemphasis of unstressed syllables
2. Deemphasis of unstressed syllables (Lesson 4)
3. Type I vowel reduction: о/а (Lesson 4)
4. Type II vowel reduction: е/я (Lesson 4)
5. Voicing rules (Lesson 5)