

# TEACHING A PRONUNCIATION COURSE TO KOREAN EFL STUDENTS

(An Analysis of the Problems Encountered and of the Methods and  
Techniques Used to Overcome Those Problems)

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## Abstract

This paper is an in-depth examination of pronunciation errors commonly made by Korean EFL students and an exploration of methods and techniques used to alleviate the various difficulties the students experience. The data for the paper were gathered during an internship at a language school in Korea.

Section I is an examination of the pronunciation errors commonly made, categorized under the following headings; a) phonemic substitution; b) stress and intonation; c) unfamiliar usages. Section II is an examination of the students' attitudes and their effect on pronunciation. Section III is a discussion of the techniques and methods utilized in the class. The conclusion discusses the knowledge gained and the areas to be developed further.

## INTRODUCTION

Pronunciation is the production of sounds in words and sentences and the proper placement of rhythm in stress and intonation patterns. Effective pronunciation places stress

on ideas and facts that the speaker wishes to highlight and it helps convey the speaker's attitude. Correct pronunciation can easily be understood by a native speaker.

Pronunciation is one of the most fundamental elements that a language teacher teaches. The second language learner must not only know what to say, but how to say it. A great deal of emphasis is placed on communicative competence these days, and rightfully so, however it must not be forgotten that this should include linguistic competence: The L2 speaker must be able to organize his ideas and then clearly communicate them. Vocabulary and grammatical structures are equally important, however they are of little use if they are not presented in a comprehensible manner.

When teaching pronunciation, the teacher is providing the student with a model for producing a new sound system, which may be partially unfamiliar, and the techniques for mastering it. A large part of correct pronunciation will come naturally with time and exposure to the spoken language, however it is also more effective to approach it directly. Correct pronunciation requires the ability to recognize new sounds, reproduce them, and remember them. This is easier for some students than others, thus different students will need to devote more attention to pronunciation practice.

In this paper I will examine my work with pronunciation while teaching at a private language school in South Korea, the English Training Center (ETC) . During my internship at ETC, I taught a fifty-minute pronunciation class to students who were part of a seven-hour a day intensive language program. Teaching a course that was devoted entirely to pronunciation gave me the opportunity, for the first time, to really examine my techniques as a teacher of pronunciation. As a result, I have a clearer understanding of the role the student's attitude plays in pronunciation work, the importance of pronunciation in language learning, and the specific errors which are prevalent among Korean speakers of English. It also forced me to generate many new ideas for teaching pronunciation which I am continuing to develop.

Section I will be an examination of the errors which I find to be prevalent among the Korean EFL learner, by means of a contrastive and error analysis of Korean and English. This will be followed by a discussion of the affective factors involved in pronunciation errors and how I feel the students should utilize and/or cope with these factors.

Section II will focus on what I actually did in the classroom. This will include my objectives for the course, the first day lesson plan, the objectives and procedure for a typical minimal pair exercise, and descriptions of various activities that I created or adapted for the course. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the effectiveness of the techniques and methods.

The conclusion will summarize my overall findings and the solutions that were necessary in correcting many of the pronunciation errors of Korean students, how my knowledge of teaching pronunciation has increased, and what areas I would like to de-

velop and research in the future.

## **I. EXAMINATION OF COMMON PRONUNCIATION ERRORS MADE BY KOREAN EFL STUDENTS**

In this section I will categorize the pronunciation errors which I have found to be most prevalent among Korean EFL students. At the beginning of my internship I compiled a list of pronunciation errors that the students made in class. I then kept a running tally of these errors. From this list I have taken the most frequently committed errors and divided them into three categories: (1) phonemic substitution; (2) stress and intonation; (3) unfamiliar usages of sounds.

In the following pages I will address each of these three categories individually. Under each of these headings I have defined the category, stated the prevalent errors therein, the reason they are made, and students' reaction when confronting these problem areas. I have done this by means of a contrastive and error analysis of English and Korean. This is not a thorough contrastive analysis, but rather a general analysis of what I have found to be the prevalent errors and areas of difficulty.

### **Phonemic Substitution**

The phonemic systems of Korean and English have a number of differences. These differences result in the Korean student's most challenging aspect of mastering English pronunciation, and thus are also one of the major sources of pronunciation errors. In the production of any language, one must have the ability to distinguish a sound before having the ability to produce it. If an English phoneme does not exist in Korean, the sound

will be unfamiliar to the student, and therefore he may not be able to recognize it. The process of correct production cannot begin until the student can perceive the sound aurally. If an English phoneme has a Korean counterpart, the student will have less difficulty with its production.

The reaction of the student when confronting one of these unfamiliar sounds is to substitute it with a different sound. The substitution is made with a sound which is familiar to the speaker, and one which he perceives as phonetically similar to the unfamiliar sound (Robson, 1982). For example, /v/ does not exist in Korean and will be replaced by the familiar sound which they perceive it to be -/b/. Phonemic substitution not only occurs with the replacement of an unfamiliar phoneme with a familiar one, it also occurs in the process of over-correction.

Over-correction is a common pattern in many learning situations, however it is useful to understand what role it plays in pronunciation practice. As the student's production of the new sound becomes more accurate and automatic, he will have the tendency to over-use the newly learned phoneme and incorrectly substitute it for other sounds. Phonemic substitution is a critical pronunciation error, as it can result in the speaker being unintelligible. It is for this reason that I am addressing this category of errors first, both in my analysis of errors and in my teaching techniques and methods in the classroom.

After recording the types and frequency of pronunciation errors, I have compiled a list of the most commonly made substitutions for the English phonemes that do not exist in Korean. I have prioritized these phonemes in order of the frequency of errors, beginning with the most frequent and ending with the least. This list represents what I have found to be the most prevalent substitution errors, and those which necessi-

tate direct and prompt attention by the teacher and the learner.

### English Sounds that Do Not Exist in Korean

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| / f / <u>fine</u>                      | Perceived and pronounced as / p / as in <u>pine</u> .<br>There are several different pronunciations of the Korean sound most similar to / p /, however the student will use the aspirated / p / which is similar to an English / p /.   |
| / r / <u>rake</u><br>/ l / <u>lake</u> | Korean has a sound which is quite similar to the English / l /. The pronunciation varies however, in different linguistic environments, sometimes sounding more similar to the English / r / than / l /, or a combination of the two sounds. The student will have difficulty pronouncing both sounds and will interchange them. It is particularly difficult for the student if the / r / or / l / occurs in a consonant cluster, or medial or final position. |
| / v / <u>vain</u>                      | Most frequently substituted with / b / as in <u>bat</u> . Occasionally it will also be substituted with / p /.  |
| / I / <u>sit</u><br>/ i / <u>see</u>   | Different dialects of Korean have counterparts for both of these phonemes, however others have only one, which is closest to / I / (Robson, 1982). Thus, the most frequent substitution is / I / for / i /. Howev-  |

er, they are often interchanged and this can be influenced by the consonants preceding or following the vowel.

/z/ zeal Usually replaced by /dz/ as in jeer. The speaker who makes this substitution will generally do it when the /z/ occurs in any position.

/θ/ thin  
/ð/ bathe These two "th" sounds are often substituted with /d/ den, /s/ sell, and /t/ ten. The most frequent substitution is /s/ for /θ/, particularly in initial or medial position. Also frequent is the substitution of /d/ or /t/ for /ð/. However, /θ/ and /ð/ may be substituted with any of the three sounds. If the th occurs after another consonant, such as in the word month, it will be particularly difficult for the student, and the th will usually be substituted with /s/.

/s/ sell  
/ʃ/ ship Korean has one counterpart for these two phonemes, which is close to the English /s/. However, this will vary with different dialects and the different position in which the sound occurs (Robson, 1982). /s/ is often replaced by /ʃ/ if it occurs in medial position and or if it precedes /l/. Initial /s/ will also occasionally be replaced by /θ/ in the over-correction process of learning /θ/. In general, /s/ and /ʃ/ will be confused with each other.

As stated earlier, this is a list of the phonemeic substitutions which I have found to be the most prevalent. Obviously, these errors will vary from speaker to speaker and there are additional substitutions which are more subtle and do not effect the speaker's intelligibility to as great an extent as these listed.

The following sounds exist in Korean and will cause little or no difficulty to the Korean student of English:

/p/ <u>pen</u>	/u/ <u>shoe</u>
/t/ <u>take, coat</u>	/o/ <u>blow</u>
/k/ <u>kick</u>	/a/ <u>father</u>
/m/ <u>mom</u>	/ / <u>above</u>
/n/ <u>none</u>	/y/ <u>yes</u>
/ng/ <u>sing</u>	/w/ <u>win</u>
/h/ <u>help</u>	

### Stress and Intonation

There are several major differences between Korean and English stress and intonation patterns which frequently pose problems for the Korean learner of English. Correct stress and intonation is an extremely important element of English pronunciation as it not only affects the speaker's intelligibility, it also influences the meaning of what is being said and conveys the speaker's attitude. In individual words, incorrect stress will cause the speaker to be difficult or impossible to understand. In longer utterances, incorrect stress and intonation may cause the speaker's feelings or attitude to be misunderstood.

#### Stress

Stress is the degree of force in production (Crystal, 1985). In English, stress is placed on syllables (e. g. aTTACK), words, phrases or sentences by an increase in volume,

length or by using a higher pitch. (e. g. They're in theHOUSE.) Thus, stressed syllables or words will be more prominent and may be used for emphasis or contrast. Stressed syllables in words are not changeable, however stressed words in phrases or sentences may vary with the intended meaning. For example, in the sentence, "I like the blue shirt," the speaker may convey four different meanings by placing the stress on different words. If the stress is on the word "I" it suggests that no one else likes the shirt. If "like" is stressed, the emphasis is on the speaker's feeling about the shirt. Stress on "blue" indicates a contrast - not any other color shirt. If the stress is placed on "shirt" it may indicate another contrast - the shirt, not the pants, for example.

English speakers also use stress to link words together to form phrases, each phrase having a stressed word. (e. g. "Go to BED and stop CRYing." In general, words that are stressed in a sentence are nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs. Words that are generally unstressed are articles, prepositions, pronouns and conjunctions (Maloney, 1972) . (Of course this will vary with the speaker's purpose.) The syllable stress on individual words must be learned with each new word, as there is no general rule.

Korean is a-syllable-timed language, which means that syllables occur at regular intervals, or receive equal stress (Robson, 1982) . English however , is generally called a stress-timed language, which is in opposition with a syllable-timed language. This means that the stressed syllables occur at regular intervals (Crystal, 1985) . Because this is not always true in English, the term "stress-timed" is debated among linguists and is used in general terms. However, the important factor here is that syllables in Korean re-

ceive equal stress, thus the learner will have difficulty with English stress patterns. The most difficult area of stress for the Korean student is the use of reduced syllables, as this does not occur in Korean, but occurs frequently in English. (e.g. tonight /tə nayt/; roses /roziz/) . The combination of stressed and unstressed syllables give the language rhythm. If the Korean student does not use proper stress while speaking, his speech will sound monotonous and mechanical.

### Intonation

Intonation is the pattern of pitch, or the melody of the language. The most important function of intonation is grammatical. Like punctuation in writing, intonation is used to indicate a question or a statement. Rising intonation is used at the end of yes/no and tag questions. (e. g. "Is he coming?" and "It'sraining, isn't it?") Falling intonation indicates the end of a statement or wh-question. In alternative questions, rising and falling intonation indicates that the listener is expected to make a choice, not answer yes or no: e.g. Are you goingtonight or tomorrow?

The next most important function of intonation is to convey the speaker's attitude. By varying intonation patterns, the speaker may use the same words to convey different feelings such as hesitation, anger, kindness, sarcasm, etc. For example, when saying, "thank you," a lower pitch for "you" generally expresses a sincere gratitude. If the pitch is lower on "thank" it is generally used as a casual acknowledgement, such as a store clerk may use. A speaker may use rising intonation to express uncertainty or falling intonation to express certainty. (e.g. Iam? Iam.) Another example of how intonation can project different attitudes is in the statement, "that's too bad." Rising intonation and stress on "too" will convey a harsh

and uncaring feeling whereas stress and rising intonation on "bad" (that's too bad) will express sincerity and sound soothing. Because of the abstract and cultural aspect that is involved, this is often difficult for the Korean student to understand.

Intonation as a grammatical function does not seem to pose a great deal of difficulty for the Korean student, as they also use rising and falling intonation to indicate question and statements, in a similar fashion. However, the other functions and patterns of stress and intonation are very different and thus problematic. Most of the Korean students' past English learning experiences have been primarily written. Their contact with the spoken language has been limited and largely with Korean speakers of English. In general, they are not accustomed to the melody and rhythm of English and will need to have their attention called to this aspect of the language.

### Unfamilliar Usages of Sounds

The final area of frequently made errors results from what I have categorized as unfamiliar usages of sounds. This includes sounds which exist in both Korean and English, but have different patterns of occurrence. The principle difference between Korean and English, which is the basis for most of these errors, is the syllable structure of Korean. The Korean phonemic system is based on a consonant-vowel syllable structure. A vowel may form a syllable by itself, however a consonant must always be followed by a vowel (Han Sohn, Ph.D., English Language and Literature Director, Yonsei University, Seoul, Korea, 1988)

Due to this difference in syllable formation between Korean and English, the most diffi-

cult structure for the Korean student to pronounce in English are consonant clusters. Consonant clusters are sequences of consonants at the beginning and end of words and syllables. The following are examples of consonant clusters: street, month, clusters. (Note that the st in clusters is not considered a cluster because the s is at the end of one syllable and the t at the beginning of the next.) Because of the Korean syllable structure, no clusters are allowed. Orthographically, some clusters do exist at the end of Korean words, however they are not pronounced as clusters. If the final consonant of the cluster is followed by a vowel, it is shifted to the next syllable in order to block the cluster, a process known as resyllabication (Han Sohn, 1988)

Consonant clusters occur frequently in English. The Korean student will generally try to break up these clusters by adding /ə/ between consonants. For example, the word Christmas would be pronounced /kərlsəmasə/. If the cluster includes a sound which does not exist in Korean, such as in the word month /mənθə/, obviously the problem is compounded and will be very difficult for the student to pronounce correctly. Very often, the student will substitute the unfamiliar sound with a familiar sound - e.g. month becomes /məns/. If the student does pronounce the cluster, he will frequently add an extra vowel sound after the final consonant of a final cluster - e.g. month is pronounced /mənθə/ or lunch as /lənchi/.

The consonant clusters which I have found to be the most important to address are those which occur in the final position and are used to form the plural (cups), regular simple past tense (typed, lived), and the possessive and third person singular (likes, leaves). These are ending with the phonemes /s/,

/z/, /t/, /d/. The most frequent reaction of the student to these ending is to omit them, thus making pronunciation and grammatical errors. For example, it is common for students to say something like, "He like it" or "I have three book."

Another group of consonants which will pose some difficulty for the student, resulting from different patterns of occurrence, are the sounds /l/, /r/, and /n/. These consonants have a complicated set of rules in Korean whereby the /l/ is sometimes pronounced /n/ and vice versa. /r/ is often pronounced as /n/ in Korean, and of course there is the confusion between /r/ and /l/ which was discussed in the first section, under phonemic substitution.

Correcting the foregoing errors was complicated by affective factors. In the following section I will examine those factors and discuss ways in which the student and teacher can cope with them.

## II . EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND THEIR EFFECT ON PRONUNCIATION

As with any learning process, the affective domain plays a crucial role in the student's learning success. Although the affective factors which I will discuss in this section generally hold true in any learning process, there are certain ones which I find particularly important in pronunciation work. The two factors which seem to have the greatest on the student's ability to pronounce correctly are motivation and attitudes related to self-image.

In this section, I will separate these two factors, as motivation is a very broad area which is comprised of attitudes. The attitudes I will discuss are related to personality,

or "self", and include frustration, tolerance of ambiguity, positive self-image and confidence, and receptivity to new material. After defining motivation and these attitudes, along with their role in the pronunciation class, I will offer some suggestions and opinions as to how the student can utilize and / or cope with these factors in a positive manner.

### MOTIVATION

H. Douglas Brown (1987, p.114) states that, "Motivation is commonly thought of as an inner drive, impulse, emotion, or desire that moves one to a particular action." I would like to take that definition further and use Gardner and Lambert's (1972) classification of motivation as either instrumental or integrative. Instrumental motivation refers to learning a second language for instrumental goals, such as career advancement, translation, technical reading, etc. Integrative motivation is based on the desire to integrate oneself into the target culture. In general, my students' motivation can be classified as instrumental, as they are studying English to succeed in business, or to prepare to study abroad, which will be beneficial for future employment and success.

Overall, my students' level of motivation was quite high. They were diligent workers who sincerely desired to be successful. Korea, being a newly industrialized country and the 1988 Olympics being held in Seoul, fueled this motivation to succeed. The affective domain of language learning is too complex to say that high motivation will lead to successful learning, however I feel that it is safe to say that motivation is a key element. Because motivation is comprised of attitudes, positive attitudes will have a positive effect on motivation.

Each student comes into the class with his

own level of motivation and individual reasons for wanting to improve his English. Some students need English to carry out international business. Some are spending a good percentage of their income for the school's tuition, while other students' companies are financing it. Still others are preparing to emigrate to the U.S. or Canada. In this sense, motivation is not much in the teacher's control. However, if motivation is constructed of attitudes, the teacher can promote positive attitudes, which will increase motivation. Because it is ultimately the students' will and decision to put forth effort in learning, the teacher is truly a facilitator in this realm of language learning. The teacher can create an inviting and rewarding learning environment to increase motivation, however it is not information that can be "taught."

### **Attitudes**

The student's attitudes, or the affective domain of language learning, involve the emotional side of the learning process. It is all related to one's self-image, or knowledge and feelings about oneself. Any learning activity involves a certain awareness of this and the following attitudes are closely related to one's self-image: frustration, self-confidence, self-esteem, tolerance of ambiguity, receptivity to new material and risk-taking. I will discuss each of these attitudes by defining them, describing how they are manifest in the pronunciation class and how they are interrelated.

**Frustration.** Because the pronunciation class focuses on producing unfamiliar sound correctly, frustration is frequently and easily experienced. The endless repetition of sounds that the teacher hears but the student does not, can be very frustrating for the student.

Frustration can have a very adverse effect

on learning, thus the teacher needs to be aware of its presence and control it. I developed a sense which helped me to distinguish when students were frustrated or simply trying hard to master something - (usually by a more anguished expression on the student's face) . Should the student become too frustrated, they may decide they cannot succeed and give up.

Many of my students entered the class feeling frustrated with their pronunciation. Somewhere during their past learning experiences, many of them developed the concept that their pronunciation is worse than other EFL learners. They tend to focus on what they produce incorrectly, rather than correctly. A certain level of dissatisfaction is necessary to have the motivation to improve. If the student feels too comfortable and confident with his pronunciation, he has no reason to better it. Simply the fact that the student feels frustrated should be viewed positively, as it shows that the student is aware of the errors, which is the first step towards correction.

I previously mentioned that frustration is related to one's self-image. If one has the confidence or trust in oneself that the new material can be mastered, one is less likely to be overly frustrated in the early stages of learning.

**Tolerance of Ambiguity and Receptivity to New Material.** I group these two attitudes together, as they are so closely intertwined. Being open to new material requires a certain tolerance of ambiguity. When learning new, unfamiliar sounds or pronunciation patterns, the student is dealing with things that are outside of his present realm of knowledge, and must be willing to accept this, particularly in the beginning stages.



Again, this is all related to one's self-image, and a sense of security and confidence that the ambiguous will eventually become understandable. The teacher can help the student tolerate ambiguity by not expecting perfect results too quickly and by accepting the time and errors that are necessary before mastery of new material. By sufficiently covering new material and reviewing it in different ways over a period of time, the student will see that positive results do eventually occur, thus giving him a sense of security. In this respect, it takes time for the student to learn that results occur, and thus be more tolerant of ambiguity. It should then have a snowball effect - the student will feel confident that he will succeed, feel motivated to continue, accept new material and ambiguity, and so on.

**Self-Image/Self-Esteem.** It's difficult to separate attitudes neatly under different headings - as illustrated in the previous paragraphs; they are all interrelated and based on one's self-image. Frustration, tolerance of ambiguity, receptivity to new material, risk-taking, inhibition, confidence - (the list can go on!) all come down to how one views oneself and trusts that one can master the unknown.

It is necessary in a way, for a student to take on a new identity when learning a new language (or specifically a new sound system). In order to do this, one must have the self-esteem and confidence to put aside certain parts and time to master it. Another way to deal with a frustrating moment is to say or do something humorous, or simply offer a friendly, understanding smile.

Humor is an important means for minimizing negative attitudes for me. It keeps the class atmosphere lighter and more relaxed, thus

more conducive to risk-taking. If the students are feeling inhibited about making certain sounds or putting enough emotion into stress and intonation patterns, it helps them to hear the teacher do it in an uninhibited manner. I find that the students do not worry so much about making a fool of themselves if the teacher can do it too. If the minimal pair drills are too difficult and become frustrating, I change to a dialogue or skit with a bit of humor in it.

In regards to self-confidence, one effective way of increasing it is simply by understanding what the student says. It is always rewarding for the student to be understood by a native speaker. It reassures the student that while he is correcting pronunciation errors, he is still capable of communicating and producing comprehensible speech. This usually encourages him to speak more, which will allow the practice necessary for improving pronunciation.

Another way of raising a student's self-esteem is to allow him to self-correct. If the student spots and corrects the error, rather than the teacher, he is less likely to take it personally; he also feels more in control of his learning. In addition it gives him a sense of accomplishment, as he has discovered his own error. One way to do this, is to allow a moment of silence, or a simple, "O.K. ? " after the student says the structure being practiced, and let him decide if it was correct or not. After doing this for a while, the students develop a sense of how to critically listen to themselves - by doing it themselves and by listening to their classmates do it. If this technique is difficult in the early stages of a course, peer-correction, or group-correction, (as described more in the following section on materials development), can be a good way of initiating this critical listening skill in

a non-threatening fashion.

There is a fine line between allowing frustration and self-criticism to have a positive effect and allowing them to have an adverse affect. The students should view their awareness of errors as a positive step towards correction, and not be frustrated by the errors. By realizing they are making mistakes, they should be motivated to improve and will have the ability to do so. If a student seems frustrated about a mistake, I like to offer some sort of praise for the fact that he knew it was wrong. This way, he feels some sense of accomplishment and does not feel inhibited about making mistakes.

### **III . DEVELOPMENT AND DESCRIPTION OF TECHNIQUES AND METHODS UTILIZED DURING THE INTERNSHIP**

When I was asked to teach this pronunciation class. I had already been teaching at the school for three months and had become aware of the pronunciation problems that existed. Thus, although I had a rough idea of what I wanted to work on, I began noting precisely what errors the students were making in order to give myself a more accurate focus. I taught the course twice during my internship, therefore my objectives became more clearly defined during the second course, which is what I will focus on in this section. Since completing my internship, I have further developed ideas for pronunciation, which will be discussed in the final section dealing with areas for future development.

One of the greatest challenges of this course was the fact that it was fifty minutes of pronunciation . The students in the course were studying at the school seven hours a

day (five different classes a day) , and were in the beginning level. This was particularly challenging because I would normally not consider teaching pronunciation in such a large block of time. In my other classes where the students were only studying two hours a day, I generally did pronunciation practice for 5-20 minutes.

Due to the brevity and intensity of the course (the school operated in four-week sessions) , my principal goals for the class were to allow the students to develop self-monitoring, or metacognition skills and to provide them with a supply of materials and techniques for practice. Preparing the students to continue to learn and improve outside of the class is a crucial point - particularly in such a brief class and in consideration of the time it takes the average student to master correct pronunciation. Because these were beginning level students with minimal language facility, I concentrated on individual sounds and the most basic stress and intonation patterns.

In the following pages the objective and procedures for various lesson plans and activities will be discussed. This will include an explanation of materials that I adapted from text books or created, and a brief review of the effectiveness of the materials. The first day of class will be explained in its entirety (to illustrate how I assessed the students' level and to state the course objectives) , followed by samples of typical lessons and activities.

#### **Objectives for Pronunciation Course**

1. To develop skills for pronunciation practice and self-monitoring.
2. To develop a critical ear and awareness of their own pronunciation.

3. To overcome anxiety involved in pronunciation practice and develop a positive attitude vis-a-vis their pronunciation.
4. To develop the necessary skills to produce phonemes which do not exist in Korean
5. To develop an awareness of the importance of stress and intonation in English.
6. To use correct stress and intonation as a grammatical function and know the general rules therein.
7. To build confidence and develop an understanding that communication is possible without perfect pronunciation.

### First Day of Class

Objectives: 1) Teacher will assess students' errors, their degree of confidence in recognizing errors and listening comprehension level; 2) students will understand basic terminology necessary for pronunciation study and gain an understanding of practice techniques for use outside of class.

To assess the students' errors and listening comprehension, I gave a listening test which consisted of fifty pairs of sentences or phrases. I recorded my reading of one phrase or sentence in each pair, had the students listen to the tape, circle the one they heard, and then mark on a scale of 1-5, their confidence in their answer. The fifty test items were a compilation of phrases and sentences that I wrote or pulled out of various books, and centered on the sounds which I discussed in my examination of errors. This is a sample test item:

1. a) I saw a cloud. (confidence scale)
- b) I saw a crowd.     1 2 3 4 5

I gave the same test on the last day of class to compare the scores. In general, the scores improved, some greatly, some little, but for the most part the confidence ratings were much higher and more accurate, (i.e. if the answer was wrong, rating was lower.)

For future assessment, I had the students read a dialogue in pairs, similar to what they were studying in their text book at the time. I recorded this so I could note their errors after class, and so I would have a basis for evaluating their progress at the end of the course. The dialogue was a simple conversation between two people using greetings and introductions, language they were familiar with.

My final assessment was based on the students' natural speech. To achieve this, I engaged the students in some small talk before and after the class, and listened to their pronunciation as they spoke with other teachers and students. At these times, the students were more relaxed and were not concentrating on their pronunciation in the same manner as they might in the classroom. This allowed me a further assessment of their speech in non-formal situations.

Having three different means of assessment completed, I then introduced the vocabulary that would be necessary for the class to understand discussion of pronunciation, by means of a diagram of the organs of speech. These diagrams are included in most pronunciation books; much clearer than what I could draw, so I chose one and left only the crucial words on in that I intended to use in the class: tongue, front, back, teeth, upper, lower, vocal cords, voiced and voiceless. The students were familiar with most of these terms from previous classes and I passed quickly over the handout, as its main function was as

a reference source and to introduce the vocabulary.

The final item to be covered on the first day of class was written on a handout - "Helpful Hints for Practice Outside of Class":

1. Practice aloud and listen to yourself. If possible, record your voice and listen afterwards.
2. Practice what was covered in class the same night at home.
3. Practice in front of a mirror when working on a new sound.
4. Be patient. It takes time and practice to learn a new way of speaking.

Due to their limited English, it was necessary to use handouts so as to allow them time to consult their dictionaries and each other. This also allowed them to refer back to it as their comprehension increased and they became clearer as to what areas they needed to concentrate on.

Having examined the first day of class -- course objectives, student assessment, introduction of vocabulary -- in this next section I will continue and discuss various techniques for teaching unfamiliar sound. This will be presented in four parts: 1) Phoneme Discrimination Material; 2) Additional Activities for Follow -Up on Minimal Pair Drills; 3) Stress and Intonation Practice; 4) Miscellaneous Techniques. This will also include my reasons for choosing activities with various levels of student/teacher control. A brief assessment of the material and its effectiveness will follow.

### **Phoneme Discrimination Material**

During the course, the students concentrated on 2-5 unfamiliar phonemes (sounds that do not exist in Korean) a week, depending on the level of difficulty. Thus for example, the sounds /r/ and /l/ which the students have a great deal of difficulty with, were focused on for an entire week, and reviewed throughout the course. When introducing a new sound, or sounds, I found that minimal pair drills, or phoneme discrimination drills, were the most effective means because they provide the student with ample listening practice to distinguish the sound aurally and they allow the student a very focused practice, thus exercising the necessary speech organs. There are many books on the market which include minimal pair and minimal sentence exercises. Rather than spending a great deal of time creating my own minimal pairs, it was much more efficient to sift through available materials and choose the drills that focused on the particular sounds I wanted to teach and edit the drills to suit my students. Pronunciation books which include a diagram of the organs of speech producing the sound were the most effective, as they provided the student with something to look at outside of class, as well as a second view of my own physical production. This is useful in helping the student develop self-monitoring skills and in supplying sufficient examples of how to produce a sound. The amount of time spent on minimal pair drills should be limited, as it not only becomes tedious, (perhaps more so for the teacher) and it can cause frustration in the students if they are not successfully hearing or producing the sound.

The following is a sample minimal pair exercise to introduce a new sound for the first time. The first time requires more time than subsequent drills, approximately 20 minutes

for a class of 12-15. (A longer or shorter time, depending on the students level of involvement and mastery.)

### Minimal Pair Exercise

Objectives: 1) Students will be able to discriminate between the phonemes / r / and / l / in initial and medial position (final position and clusters will be introduced the following day along with a review of this lesson) ; 2) students will practice the physical skills necessary to produce the sounds.

Procedure:

1. Listening practice. Teacher reads list of minimal pairs, students listen.  
lake      rake  
lice      rice  
jelly      Jerry (etc. -10-15 pairs)
2. Aural discrimination. a) Teacher reads list again, sometimes repeating the same word twice, and students say "same" or "different." b) Teacher reads words in groups of three and students say which is different, "one," "two," or "three." (e. g. rake, lake, rake.)
3. Visual aid. Teacher gives students a handout with a drawing and a simple explanation of how the phonemes are produced, a list of minimal pairs and approximately five minimal sentences. For example, to practice / l / - "Place the tip of your tongue against the back of your upper teeth. As you make the sound, air flows around your tongue and your vocal cords vibrate." With this description is a drawing showing the placement of the tongue. To concentrate on the / l / - / r / contrast, the handout would also have a similar drawing and explanation for / r /.
4. Aural comprehension quiz. Teacher reads minimal sentence and students circle

what they hear, from a choice of two words. If the teacher says, "I saw a ship," the students paper should look like this - I saw a ship/sheep. Teacher checks answers to assess their comprehension.

5. Oral practice.
  - a) Students repeat chorally after teacher.
  - b) Teacher listens for errors and has smaller groups repeat to provide additional practice reading words aloud and quiz each other on aural discrimination. Teacher circulates, monitors students' production and offers help.

As stated earlier, this is a typical procedure for introduction of a sound for the first time. Initially, I was concerned that the students would be bored with these types of drills, however my experience is that they become very involved in the practice and often want to continue longer. When teaching a new sound, I feel that repetition is a very effective means, as it allows the student a model to imitate. This aids the student in mimicking and remembering the new sound. The concentrated practice helps the student to overlearn the production, so that the sound is produced automatically. After the drill, I ask the students to continue their practice for homework and tell them I will check their pronunciation again the following day.

### Additional Activities for Follow-Up on Minimal Pair Drills

#### A. "Issuing Tickets"

When reviewing the phonemes the students were to practice at home, I issued tickets to students when they made an error. The "ticket" was a small piece of paper on which I wrote 1-2

minimal pairs, including the word that contained the error. I quickly scribbled these tickets as the students were speaking and handed it to them immediately. These worked very well because they added a playful element to the class as the students could laugh about the number of tickets they received, and it forced them to practice the sound as homework. The student would have to say the words on the ticket correctly the next day in order for me to take the ticket back. If they could not pronounce it correctly, I asked them to take it home again and try the next day. This increases the motivation to practice, and practice is the key to mastery. The playful element of this activity reduces the students' inhibitions, as it places them in the role of a game player, rather than a pronunciation student. When the students are relaxed and enjoying themselves, their attitudes are positive, thus learning is more likely to be successful.

B. "Quizzing the Teacher"

Students call out words from various handouts used in class as the teacher writes what they say on the board. If the word on the board is not what they intended, the student repeats it until it is correct. This technique allows the student to visually see how he is being understood, as well as providing the student the opportunity to correct himself. It also created a non-threatening and enjoyable situation as the students are anxious to try out different words and are often amused by what they see on the board.

Because the students are more in control in this activity (than in repetition

drills, for example) , it increases their confidence and encourages risk-taking. The initial repetition drills teach the production of sounds, but this takes it a step further and allows the students to choose what to practice. Seeing their own speech on the board gives them immediate, concrete feedback. Because they are amused by what they see on the board (perhaps it is the first time they "see" their speech) , they do not feel frustrated if there is an error. By putting their word(s) on the board, they are able to separate themselves from it and look at it with less emotional attachment. The teacher needs to say nothing during this activity. The student can correct himself by seeing which specific part was not correct. When this self-correction occurs, in addition to the positive attitudes, I believe the learning is more meaningful and long lasting.

C. "Sound and Spell" (from Index Card Games for ESL, Prolingua Associates, 1987, pp 22-30)

This is particularly useful for practice with vowel sounds, both for pronunciation practice and spelling. Each group of 2-3 students receives a stack of 30 cards, each card having one word on it. The students are told there are five different sounds in the stack. They should pronounce each word and separate them into five categories. The teacher checks each group as it finishes by having the students read the cards aloud. If a card is mispronounced and misplaced, I repeat the word and let them move it to the correct category and pronounce it again. Sample sound group--tip, busy, pretty, sit, women, English.

D. "Baseball" (not only for specific phoneme practice--to review and practice any item covered in class) Class is divided into two teams. Teacher writes word, phrase or sentence on board, which includes item to be reviewed. Team member pronounces what is written on the board. If it is pronounced correctly, the team scores one point and the next member takes a turn. If it is incorrect, the team receives a "strike." (3 strikes= 1 out; 1 out and the other team is up.) The students determine if the answers are correct or not. This way, all the students are carefully listening and asking the "batter" to repeat the item until they are sure of their judgement. I kept out of the decisions, unless it was a gross error; generally the students were very accurate in their judgement of what was correct. The students seemed to enjoy the game very much; it provided them with aural as well as oral practice, and it was a nice change of pace, particularly on Friday afternoons. I did not feel that the students were uncomfortable having the team depend on them. Perhaps because they were studying together seven hours a day, there was a strong sense of community. My Korean students seemed to enjoy the competition and team work. Although they answered individually, they were answering as a team member. This lowered fear and frustration, which, as previously stated, promotes positive attitudes and learning.

E. "Tongue Twisters"

Any tongue twister, original or out of a book, is a way to practice particular phonemes in a different and enjoyable manner. I often heard students practicing

them outside of class too.

F. "Flash Cards"

Write words that have been used in class on cards - one word or minimal pair per card. Use the cards as a way to review or do a spot-check at the beginning or end of a lesson or activity. Have class repeat chorally, in smaller groups and individually. If a student makes an error, ask another student with the correct pronunciation to repeat it as a model for the student who made the mistake. Have the first student repeat again, and second student after. Repeat procedure until pronunciation is correct.

### Stress and Intonation Practice

Much of the stress and intonation practice we did in class evolved around what material the students were covering in their text books at the time. I had the students practice the dialogues in the book, concentrating on their pronunciation. Having the students role play the dialogues and exaggerate their gestures and stress and intonation usually helped them to relax and sound more natural than when they did the usual readings. I asked the students not to read the dialogue when speaking, but to only glance at it occasionally, thus not having to memorize it, but being able to have eye contact and let their voice flow more freely.

The Korean students were fairly reserved in general, therefore it was necessary to "loosen them up" to work on stress and intonation. If a dialogue had a short, simple exclamation, such as "Ouch!" or "Oh really?!", I found it very effective going over these phrases early in the practice, so the students could speak loudly, over-emphasize the intonation and enjoy themselves speaking in a

totally different manner. This also helped to put them in the mode of taking on a new identity, thus relaxing more and trying to imitate the voice more precisely.

When working on the rhythm of a phrase or sentence, I often had the students tap on their desks with me, first without speaking, then while speaking. Carolyn Graham's Jazz Chants and Small Talk were also very effective techniques for working on rhythm and intonation. Small Talk was particularly effective for reported speech or useful, everyday expressions. However, I often found the students felt too self-conscious with many of the chants to become too animated, thus making it difficult for me to be animated. I find that the chants require a certain type of outgoing student and teacher to be truly successful. They definitely worked better with some groups than with others. I chose chants that either utilized a particular sound we were working on at the time, or contained language that was related to what they were covering in their book.

For practice with rising and falling intonation in questions, after having the class repeat chorally to master the patterns, I gave them various information-search kinds of handouts that required interviewing each other. The first time, the questions would be written out, thus a very controlled practice. The next time, only a list of the information to be gathered was written, using single words or phrases, so as to force the student to formulate his own questions and speak without reading. For example, "Find out your partner's - age, address, birthday, favorite food, favorite sports." As with all other activities, these questions were used in conjunction with the language the students were studying and /or sounds being approached in our pronunciation class.

I did not focus on stress and intonation as much as I would if I were to teach the same class again. I felt that more attention needed to be given to individual sounds, particularly because their language was so limited. However, this opinion will be discussed in greater depth in Section IV.

### Miscellaneous Techniques

- A. "Fluency Squares" (from Story Squares and Fluency Squares, Knowles and Sasaki)

These fall into a separate category because they worked on so many different areas - phonemes, questions, stress and intonation, and grammatical structures. For a change, I used these once a week at most, as they usually used up an entire lesson.

- B. Activities for practice with endings for third person singular and past tense:

Because of the consonant-vowel syllable structure of Korean, students had a great deal of difficulty pronouncing these endings. I found several activities which were quite effective.

- a. Question Drills. Teacher asks one student a question and then asks other students to repeat first student's response, using the third person singular. For example, "Do you like dancing?" "Yes, I do." "Who likes dancing?" "Mr. Lim likes dancing." These questions can be very personalized and /or humorous, thus encouraging student involvement.
- b. "Sound Categories" (from Index Card Games)

The categories the cards are separated into in these cases can be for the pronunciation of past tense endings - /t/,



/d/, /Id/- or for final - s -/z/, /Iz/,  
/s/.

### **Overall Assessment of Material and Effectiveness**

Although at times it seemed as if some students were not improving in class, I discovered later that they were not making the common pronunciation errors that had been dealt with in the class. I taught various levels at the school, and noted that the students at higher levels who had been in the class were making many fewer errors than the students who had not. I taught a group of students for a four-week pronunciation class, and then taught the same group two months later for a reading class. I was very pleased to hear that some of the students who were having the most difficulty in that class were now saying sounds correctly that they had not mastered before. I think this is due to the various speeds at which students learn. As a teacher, I must also have patience and not become frustrated when immediate results are not always evident. In other classes, where the students were much more advanced, many students were making more pronunciation errors than my lower level pronunciation students. Although the students were adults and had been studying English for years in school, for many, this was the first time they were really communicating in English, thus their errors were not fossilized. In spite of my initial concerns that fifty minutes was too long for a pronunciation class and that the students were not improving quickly enough, the benefits were evident in the following months.

## **IV. CONCLUSION - DISCUSSION OF KNOWLEDGE GAINED AND AREAS TO BE DEVELOPED FURTHER**

### **A. Knowledge Gained**

Teaching a pronunciation course for the first time has led me to several discoveries about correcting pronunciation errors. It has also caused me to realize what a complex subject it is, and that I still have much to investigate and develop regarding my own approach. Not only has it been very educational in the specific area of pronunciation, but also in my teaching in general.

I have become much more aware of the relative importance of the affective domain in learning. The interpersonal relations between teacher and students, and among students, is of crucial importance in the educational setting. My increased awareness of the affective domain (in particular the student's self-image) and its role in the learning process, has caused me to re-evaluate and alter my teaching methodology.

What has been particularly enlightening in my examination of the student's self-image, is the need for the teacher to be sensitive to frustration and the minimization thereof. The student must believe in his ability to master the unknown and have the confidence to speak and continue trying. If the teacher can create a relaxed atmosphere wherein the student feels free to take risks, then learning is possible. By allowing sufficient time for review, repetition, and seeing positive results, the teacher is able to promote the confidence and motivation necessary for improvement. Limiting frustration is a key element in this process.

One important aspect of promoting positive attitudes is the manner in which the teacher

approaches error correction. In a class as specialized as a pronunciation course, correction is a key issue. Allowing the student to self-correct whenever possible is a very effective means of promoting a positive self-image, as it provides the student with a sense of accomplishment during the learning process and protects the ego. This also allows the student to focus on his improvement rather than on his errors, as well as to take control of his learning, which I believe to be more profitable for the student.

I have also learned when dealing with corrections, that consistency is very important. If the teacher is working on the particular sound or pattern, then corrections should be limited to that one, or others already studied. If the teacher is correcting too many different items at a time, the student may feel inhibited about speaking and /or his attention will be drawn away from the target structure.

As a pronunciation teacher, it is also important to keep an "open ear" when listening to students pronunciation. It became quite natural for me to instantly translate an /r/ to an intended /l/, as I am familiar with the error. However, it is necessary to keep in mind what another native speaker, who is not accustomed to these errors, will understand. Therefore, the teacher needs to step into the role of another English speaker who is unknowing of the learner's language, and decide whether certain errors can go uncorrected or not.

My final observation about the correction process is that the teacher should make it evident to the student that he is producing correct speech. Too often teachers pounce on an error and neglect all the other elements that were produced correctly. To avoid making students overly self-conscious about their

pronunciation errors, I find it useful to note their errors and come back to them later with flash cards, writing them on the board, or providing them with a handout for the next class. This way the student is detached from the error, and the whole class can correct and practice the target structure together, not only the individual (s) who originally made the error.

Another important conclusion that I have reached as a result of teaching this pronunciation class, is that one of the foremost obligations of the pronunciation teacher is to speak naturally. This may sound quite simple and obvious, however it is still a challenge for me. It is very easy to slow down one's speech and over-enunciate. It may help the students at the time, however in the long run it is a disservice, as they have difficulty understanding other native speakers speaking naturally. Speaking naturally includes not increasing volume, slowing down, or pronouncing letters that are not normally pronounced, or at least not clearly pronounced. The dropping and blending of sounds is an important part of speech. (For example, "gonna" for "going to", or "meetcha" for "meet you.") I do not necessarily mean that beginning level students need to use those types of speech patterns, however, they should recognize them. Speaking naturally also means speaking one's own dialect. The students can hear other dialects of English through videos, radio, other speakers of English, and movies.

One of the main reasons for speaking naturally is to be consistent. I would catch myself pronouncing sounds or words during drills and then realize the students were hearing me pronounce the same things differently outside of class. The inconsistency may cause the student to feel insecure or frustrated when he discovers that his understanding of

English in the classroom does not carry over into other situations.

Another result of this internship has been a clearer definition of my role as a teacher. The teacher's role is to provide students with material and control for learning. In a pronunciation class, which lends itself to a great deal of control, (i.e., minimal pairs and sentences, dialogs, Jazz Chants, etc.) it is necessary to allow enough time for less controlled and free practice. The students tend to do well with the drills, but not as well outside of the structured setting. I have found one effective means of limiting this problem is by including an activity with a minimal amount of structure in every lesson. This can be done by setting up interviews with only clues as to what information is to be gathered (as described in Section III), so that the student is not reading already-made material.

In the following section the areas that I would like to develop further will be discussed, which will include visuals, drama, and games.

### **B. Areas to Be Developed Further**

Since my internship I have developed ideas for future use and experimentation. One area I would like to experiment with is the use of a color chart for sound, such as Gattegno's Silent Way fidels. As Gattegno has done with his fidels, I would like to create a poster of different colored squares, each square representing a phoneme. This chart would concentrate on the phonemes that present problems for the specific group I am teaching. If the students could produce a sound by associating it with a color, perhaps it would be less intimidating than reading words that they realize are difficult for them. This type of color chart could be used for phoneme practice in the beginning of a course and it

would then be available to refer to at anytime when students have difficulty with a particular word. A visual such as this with only colors and no letters or phonemic symbols may seem less intimidating, as well as not being associated with past language education. Perhaps this would lower the affective barrier which may be interfering with the correct production of a sound.

Other visuals I would like to develop would be for stress, rhythm, and intonation patterns: using musical notes or different length lines at varying levels to represent the melody and rhythm of the language. In future pronunciation teaching, I would like to place a more equal emphasis on phonemic practice and the melody of language.

Another area I would also like to develop further is the use of drama as a means of teaching pronunciation. Drama can be a very effective and interesting way of working with repetition. It also allows the student to take on a new identity and hopefully shed inhibitions. Why drill meaningless sentences, when the same target sounds can be put into meaningful skits or dialogues? The students can practice their skits in small group and the teacher is free to circulate in the groups and work with pronunciation. The groups are told that their skit will be performed for the class, thus adding motivation to perform well. Perhaps the students will be nervous in the beginning, but after several such presentations, and a lively atmosphere, they should be relaxed and enjoy it.

The final area I would like to integrate more of into my approach is the use of games. When I began this internship, I felt that drills were the most effective means of teaching pronunciation. However, as the course evolved and I reevaluated my approach, I realized how many other possibili-

ties there are for teaching pronunciation, and that I could bring the class alive as I would any other language class. As with drama and visuals, games lower the affective barrier. They are enjoyable for the students, and much less frustrating than drills.

As a result of this intership, I have a much clearer understanding of what is involved in the correction of pronunciation errors, as well as the importance of the affective domain in the process. I feel that I have established a good foundation of techniques and methods for teaching pronunciation, as well as ideas for future improvement and development. This internship has been extremely valuable for me, not only in the specific area of teaching pronunciation, but for my teaching in general. The knowledge that I have gained regarding correction, class dynamics and the importance of the student's attitude, will have beneficial and long lasting effects on all aspects of my language teaching.

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