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**Pronunciation Instruction in English as a Foreign Language Contexts:  
A Review of Goals and Best Practices**

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**Pronunciation Instruction in English as a Foreign Language Contexts:  
A Review of Goals and Best Practices**

**by**

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**Report**

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## **Dedication**

For my parents who support me with endless love and trust.

**Pronunciation Instruction in English as a Foreign Language Contexts:  
A Review of Goals and Best Practices**

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With the spread of English as an international language, near native-like accuracy is no longer regarded as a necessary goal for the pronunciation class. This Report discusses the current status and goals of pronunciation instruction in ESL and EFL contexts. Second, it reviews research findings supporting the new focus on intelligibility, and examines instructors' pedagogical challenges and opinions on how to teach English pronunciation. Third, it evaluates Korean textbooks currently used to teach English pronunciation in Korea and discusses how instructional materials and resources can enhance oral proficiency in EFL contexts. Lastly, it presents a list of pedagogical implications and suggests a best practices approach to English pronunciation instruction in EFL contexts.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1	Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2	The Spread of English as an International Language: New Goals and Instructional Challenges.....	4
	Introduction .....	4
	The Spread of English as an International Language .....	4
	The Goal of Intelligible Pronunciation .....	5
	Pedagogical Challenges .....	9
	Learners' Contradictory and Unrealistic Goals .....	9
	Wrong Perceptions on Pronunciation Problems and Needs .....	11
Chapter 3	Pronunciation Instruction .....	13
	Introduction .....	13
	Current Approaches to Pronunciation Instruction .....	13
	Why Don't We Teach Pronunciation? .....	16
	Pronunciation Instruction with a Phonological Focus .....	19
	A Call for Global Instructions.....	20
	Teaching Pronunciation in Foreign Language Settings .....	23
	Korean Middle School Textbooks .....	25
Chapter 4	Suggestions for English Pronunciation Instructors .....	29
	Introduction .....	29
	Help Students Set Achievable Goals .....	29
	Consider the Major Audience .....	30
	Teach Suprasegmentals First .....	31
	Integrate Pronunciation .....	32
	Teach Self-Monitoring Strategies .....	33
	Use Accessible Resources and Individualize Students' Learning .....	34

Chapter 5 Conclusion.....	36
Bibliography .....	37

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

During the last century, English became the most frequently used language in the world. As the popularity of English spread, many more varieties evolved (Kachru, 1985, 2006, 2008). More recently, users and learners of the language have become aware of the need to take into account additional “New Englishes” other than General American (GA) and Received Pronunciation (RP). The widely used Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), for instance, recently began to include native-speaker accents from Australia, and New Zealand as well as RP varieties from the UK. The Educational Testing Service, creator of the TOEFL, explained the purpose of including more accents as necessary “to better reflect the variety of native English accents test takers may encounter while studying abroad” (ETS, 2013).

The idea of various English accents has interested me for quite some time, probably due to my personal experience of learning the language. I started studying English before the age of nine. At that time, English-language instruction was offered in Korea from middle school on. I do not precisely recall the beginning of my interest in this topic, but I do remember that the first book I studied was named *Phonics*, and that GA was the pronunciation norm. Thus, correct production of individual sounds was the major emphasis in the first semester of the Korean national curriculum. The rest of the curriculum focused on an examination, which does not test oral proficiency. Unsurprisingly, I encountered other English accents for the first time when I studied for

the TOEFL.

The class I took during my first semester at UT-Austin was an eye-opening experience in two ways. Most importantly, what I learned was a systematic way of speaking and its effect on learners' intelligibility. While I was an undergraduate student of English education in Korea, there was only one required course related to pronunciation: English Pronunciation Instruction, which armed attendees with phonological knowledge. With the exception of this course, then, students in the English education department were not required to take any other linguistics courses. In other words, until I took English as a Second Language: Oral course at UT, I did not know much about the role of prosodic features, such as rhythm and intonation, in oral proficiency.

Moreover, the fact that the course required seven weeks of pronunciation tutoring led me to reflect on the efficacy of instruction in teaching pronunciation, and to want to explore the topic more fully. In addition to my own experience, my discovery of Bradlow, Pisoni, Akahane-Yamada and Tohkura's (1997) study—which found that Japanese learners' perception of target sounds improved production without practice—supported my previous understandings of pronunciation instruction. This result interests me in that it suggests that explicit instruction in pronunciation can substantially improve learners' intelligibility.

The discrepancies between the two courses I took as a prospective ESL teacher and my own experience as a learner in a foreign language setting have led me to think more about pronunciation instruction as well as the varieties of English accents. In this

Report, I first examine English as a world language and discuss some pedagogical challenges instructors face when teaching pronunciation. Second, I argue that instruction should value intelligibility over accuracy, examine instructors' opinions on how to teach pronunciation, and review research findings and current pedagogical approaches to teaching pronunciation. Third, I evaluate Korean textbooks currently used to teach English pronunciation in Korea and discuss how instructional materials and resources can enhance oral proficiency in EFL contexts. Lastly, I list pedagogical implications derived from the aforementioned notions presented in this Report and suggest a best practices approach to pronunciation instruction.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Spread of English as an International Language:**

#### **New Goals and Instructional Challenges**

##### **Introduction**

With the spread of English as an international language, near native-like accuracy is no longer regarded as a desirable goal for the pronunciation class. The first section of this chapter discusses the effects of the global expansion of pronunciation instruction. The second section addresses why intelligible pronunciation (as opposed to native-like pronunciation) is currently considered the desired goal for English language learners. The last section discusses pedagogical challenges to targeting intelligibility in the classroom. These challenges include learners' wrong perceptions of their needs as well as their attitudes and beliefs toward pronunciation learning.

##### **The Spread of English as an International Language**

The use of English, especially since World War II, has expanded exponentially. Kachru (1985) describes the evolution of this expansion with three concentric circles: the inner circle, the outer circle, and the expanding circle. The inner circle consists of countries that have historically used English as a first language, like the UK, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The outer (or extended) circle consists of countries that were once colonized by the UK and then started using English as a second language (e.g., India, Nigeria, Singapore, the Philippines, Hong Kong). The expanding circle

consists of countries that use English for international communication (e.g., China, Korea, nations of Europe and the Middle East). People in the expanding circle use English for a number of purposes, such as higher education, international business, and tourism. As English has become the most widely used language in the outer and the expanding circles, numerous variants of the language have developed (Kachru, 2006).

The outer and expanding circles are growing so rapidly that now there are more nonnative speakers of English (NNSs) than native speakers (NSs). In the late 80's, Todd and Hancock (1986) and Strevens (1988) estimated there were approximately 800 million English users, with less than half (300 million) of them being NSs. More recently, Kachru (2006) reported there were about a billion NNSs from China, two hundred million NNSs from the USSR, and a hundred million NNSs from Indonesia. The number of NNSs from the expanding circle countries has also been increasing steeply in other countries, such as Greece, Israel, Japan, and Korea, where English is spoken primarily for instrumental purposes. The sheer number of nonnative users of the language has led to a call for analyzing the needs of this particular group and offering effective programs for them. Given the diffusion of English, SLA researchers have debated whether English learners should follow native speaker norms. They point out that these learners' most urgent need is to communicate, for a variety of purposes, in English with both NSs and other NNSs (e.g. Dauer, 2005; Jenkins, 2000, 2002).

### **The Goal of Intelligible Pronunciation**

Even though most adult learners generally fail to attain near perfect pronunciation

(Flege, Munro & Mackay, 1995; Scovel, 2000), they often succeed in speaking well enough to be understood (Derwing et al., 1997, 1998). It is not surprising then that researchers began to see that the most urgent need of adult language learners, who learn English from outer and expanding circles, is to communicate in English with NSs or other NNSs regardless of purpose (Abercrombie, 1949; Flege, Munro & Mackay, 1995; Jenkins, 2006; Morley, 1994). Rather than aiming for near-native speech, Abercrombie (1949) proposed as a fundamental principle “comfortable intelligibility.” Morley (1994), who valued intelligible speech as a means of not only survival but also success, promoted the potential efficacy of instruction on pronunciation, which can result in improved intelligibility.

A few researchers considered the positive effects of setting higher pronunciation goals for some learners, as it generates stronger motivation, then helps learners move beyond simply attaining intelligible speech (MacDonald, 2002). Thus, he suggested instructors, in beginning stages, apply strategies tactically for particular learners. Nevertheless, his overriding concern remained intelligibility. It is clear that native-like pronunciation is unrealistic for many second language learners who start learning the language after the critical period.

In SLA, the concept of intelligibility appeared a long time ago – a hundred years ago – but researchers described it in a consistent way. First, intelligibility was initially discussed by Henry Sweet (1900) who saw it as an essential goal of the pronunciation classroom. Then Nelson (1982) published a definition of intelligibility: “the apprehension of the message in the sense intended by the speaker” (p. 63). Later on, Munro and

Derwing (1995a, 1995b) provided a broader definition: intelligibility is “the extent to which a speaker’s message is actually understood by a listener” (p. 76). Today, pronunciation experts widely accept this definition.

Since the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of intelligibility has become more crucial. Indeed, breakdowns in communication may cause negative consequences not only in educational or professional opportunities, but also in social acceptability, which may result in outright discrimination. However, what actually affects intelligibility is still controversial. The most salient feature of foreign speech, accentedness, has often been considered a bad thing – something to be treated (Munro & Derwing, 1995a; Griffen, 1991).

Munro and Derwing (1995a) initiated an empirical test investigating the effect of accentedness on intelligibility. Up until their study, pronunciation teaching that focused on removing foreign accents prevailed due to the NSs listeners’ negative attitudes (or even discrimination) toward accented speech (Sato, 1991). Because the field lacked a standardized assessment to measure intelligibility, the researchers had listeners transcribe speech samples and compare the transcriptions with the intended utterances of speakers. The next assignment for the listeners was listening and rating the extent of foreign accent and comprehensibility with a 9-point Likert scale. The researchers found a noticeably different result from previous assumptions; listeners rated as moderately or heavily accented utterances that they could be understood easily and transcribed perfectly. That meant accentedness did not necessarily affect intelligibility in a negative way.

The same researchers observed a similar result from another study investigating

the effect of a foreign accent on sentence-processing time including a third factor: comprehensibility (Munro & Derwing, 1995b). It was true that the Mandarin-accented speech required more time to process compared to NS speech; however, the relation of degree of accent and processing time was not statistically significant. The pattern of the relation was not consistent within native raters, but some native listeners rated accented utterances as hard to comprehend. The researchers speculated that listeners reacted negatively toward accents because they found it a more demanding task; that is, it became irritating.

Derwing and Munro (1997) further explored the relationship of accent, intelligibility, and comprehensibility of ESL speakers in Canada. The speakers came from four L1 backgrounds – Spanish, Cantonese, Japanese, and Polish. Other than ratings (measuring accent and comprehensibility) and transcription, the listeners were asked to guess the first language of the talkers as well as their familiarity with talkers' L1s. The researchers confirmed their previous results; accentedness did not necessarily inhibit intelligibility. In other words, the consistent result throughout a number of studies indicates that accentedness, perceived comprehensibility, and intelligibility are distinct in spite of their interdependency.

As outlined throughout the current Report, there has been a major shift, from accentedness to intelligibility, in the purpose of teaching pronunciation. Intelligibility is no longer a contentious issue. It is an undoubtedly primary goal for general learners. Today, the relevant questions concern such issues as how intelligibility develops, how it is measured, what factors contribute to the growth of intelligibility. These questions await

answers based on empirical studies. In fact, more questions remain for the instructors and learners, such as, how do learners perceive their goals related to oral proficiency? Do they also perceive accentedness as a major challenge to be a better speaker?

## **Pedagogical Challenges**

### **Learners' Contradictory and Unrealistic Goals**

Generally, goals that language learners bring to the pronunciation classroom are contradictory (Levis, 2005): for most, the goal is achieving native-like speech, the standard pronunciation of the United Kingdom or North America; for others, the goal is simply achieving intelligibility. For example, when one group of students were asked to choose their pronunciation-learning aims between the two contradictory goals, 62% of participants answered that they wanted to speak like native speakers (Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard, & Wu, 2006). To find an agreement between teachers' and students' learning goals in pronunciation classrooms, Timmis (2002) investigated 400 learners' perceptions from fourteen countries regarding native-speaker norms related to pronunciation and grammar, and compared the responses to the ones from 180 teachers from 45 countries. With respect to pronunciation, 67% of students wanted to sound like native speakers, while the majority of teachers (only 27% chose native norms) tended to value intelligibility as a more realistic goal rather than the desirable one.

One consistent finding of these studies is noteworthy: even though most participants showed positive attitudes towards inner circle accents, General American (GA) or Received Pronunciation (RP), only a few participants could identify the correct

type of speech sample, which they reported as their goal to reach. In Timmis' (2002) study, fewer than 60% of student respondents were able to distinguish their desired accents. Consistently, among 62% of respondents who preferred inner circle accents, only 29% (Scales et al., 2006) correctly identified such accents. These findings represent a mismatch between the learners' ability to identify the accent they preferred and their desire to speak like native speakers from this group. The observed mismatch across studies can be a pedagogically influential point as it entails a need for guidance on learners' perception about various English accents.

Another relevant challenge concerning these misconceptions is that even in inner circles most English learners misunderstand various types of accents. Recently, Kang (2010) investigated ESL learners' attitudes toward instructors' accents from two inner circle countries, New Zealand (NZ) and the United States (US). In the study, learners in NZ showed higher dissatisfaction with their curriculums and instructors' accents, and 40% reported seeing their instructors' accents as poor speech models. Only 8% of NZ respondents chose NZ as a proper place for pronunciation practice, whereas 65% of US respondents chose the US. Thirty percent of NZ participants answered that they would study pronunciation in their home countries, as teachers could understand and correct their pronunciation problems.

For one thing, this result demonstrates the importance of instructors' pronunciation on learners. For another, it demonstrates—without a proper understanding of World Englishes—learners' negative perspective formation toward various accents of the outer circle or even those of the inner circles, such as NZ. In her discussion, Kang

suggested that instructors and learners both need to understand varieties of English accents, as misconceptions might lead to learners' prejudices against a certain pronunciation. She also suggested that this understanding be part of teacher preparation.

The implication of these findings, learners' cultural familiarity and attitudes toward certain accents, are worthy of further investigation to contribute pedagogical implications; however, the topic is beyond the scope of the current Report.

### **Wrong Perceptions on Pronunciation Problems and Needs**

Other than misperceptions toward the variety of English accents, a more fundamental misconception of learners is their grasp of their own problems and needs regarding how to enhance oral proficiency.

From a study exploring how language learners see their pronunciation needs (Derwing & Rossiter, 2002), 55 of 100 participants who experienced communication breakdowns chose pronunciation as the main cause of miscommunication. In dealing with pronunciation problems, 39 out of 100 were unable to tell what the difficulties were, and of the remaining 61 respondents 84% reported segmental-level problems such as "th," "l/r" (noticeable but lower in functional load), or other individual consonants and vowels. In total, only 10% of the reported problems were related to prosody, such as sentence stress, speech rate, or two cognates. The result may be explained by the learners' lack of knowledge regarding the prosodic aspects of speech. One last thing to note from the paper is the way participants became aware of the problems. Only a few students could answer the questions; most of them were told the answer by their teachers, friends, or by

host families. This suggests that prosodic aspects of speech are unknown even to teachers, friends, as well as participants themselves. This is partially because prosody is less obvious and not dealt with orthographically in classrooms.

In spite of the prevalent misconceptions of pronunciation problems, 90% of participants showed enthusiasm about taking a pronunciation course in the future (only 8 out of 100 had taken a pronunciation course before). In other words, the finding represents a call from learners for pronunciation instruction and, by extension, for integrating prosodic aspects in teaching pronunciation.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Pronunciation Instruction**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter addresses pedagogical considerations for pronunciation instruction. The first section examines instructors' opinions about how to teach pronunciation and why so many of them avoid teaching it altogether or focus only on segmental training. The next section reviews and supports a recent shift in pronunciation instruction from a segmental to a suprasegmental focus. The last section describes foreign language instructional settings, and ends with a discussion and overview of pronunciation activities and resources in foreign language textbooks.

#### **Current Approaches to Pronunciation Instruction**

Flege (1988) asserted the efficacy of instruction in general language learning by saying that NNS showed little spontaneous improvement without instruction. Flege reiterated the statement applicable to pronunciation instruction in another paper: Acquisition of pronunciation is not different from other language aspects, such as syntax; learners need proper guidance to know where they are going (Flege & Wang, 1989).

However, in spite of reported learners' strong and steady wishes to reach their pronunciation goals, little is known about which procedures actually work in classrooms; practical value of pronunciation instructions remains controversial due to a dearth of supportive empirical and longitudinal research. The want of longitudinal studies is

associated with the retention of instruction. Language teachers are well aware of instant improvement, but not of latent improvement—emerging long after the treatment. The problem of the former improvement is that sometimes it disappears with a change of focus in classrooms (MacDonald, Yule, & Powers, 1994). Obviously the latter is preferable, but only a few researchers have reported longitudinal gains after instruction (see Sardegna, 2009; 2011; 2012). Sardegna (2009) examined maintenance of improvement from 5 months to 3 years after students received instruction on pronunciation strategies for self-monitoring and self-correction to improve English phrasal stress, construction stress, and word stress during a one-semester pronunciation course, and found that the students maintained a significant improvement on all the targeted features over time. She corroborated these findings in another study (Sardegna, 2011) that examined long-term progress with linking features. Sardegna also looked at learner profiles and factors contributing to greater or lesser long-term gains and reported her findings in another study (Sardegna, 2012). She found that individual characteristics, such as students' practice engagement, their progress during instruction, and their sense of self-efficacy, affect pronunciation progress over time. In addition to pronunciation strategies, teacher scaffolding and learner reflections appeared to contribute to pronunciation improvement during a one-semester course, as documented in Sardegna and McGregor (in press).

Unfortunately, interventions like those described in Sardegna's studies are rare. As outlined in Chapter 2, teaching pronunciation has been largely ignored by both researchers and instructors because of the expansion of communicative approaches for

language teaching (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Since communicative approaches inherently focused primarily on fluency and placed a lower value on accurate pronunciation or intelligibility, most education programs following these approaches did not provide directions for teaching pronunciation. Thus, some instructors reported feeling uncomfortable or even having intimidated feelings when they encountered learners' pronunciation needs, or were expected to teach pronunciation (Burgess & Spencer, 2000; MacDonald, 2002). Without pre- or in-service training, the instructors typically need to resort to feedback only on salient, segmental mistakes, which are easy to identify, and easy to be corrected with modeling. Undoubtedly, phonological instruction has been preferred for a long time because it allows the untrained instructors to rest on intuitions, available without particular lesson plans or preparations. This type of instruction misses what learners really need to improve general oral proficiency. This methodology, moreover, has been criticized for a lack of transfer to learners' spontaneous speech (Derwing & Rossiter, 2003).

Some teachers often preferred to ignore learners' pronunciation mistakes as long as they could understand the learners' intended meaning (Kang, 2010). This finding supports a consistent result of previous studies; pronunciation is not often explicitly discussed in classrooms, until it causes problems or miscommunication (MacDonald, 2002; Yates, 2001). In summary, the current status of pronunciation instruction in most classrooms today is that it is often not acknowledged as an independent subject, but as an extra or a supplementary activity. Again, these facts indicate a lack of guidance for teaching pronunciation and how pronunciation is not taught.

## **Why Don't We Teach Pronunciation?**

Instructors are the ones who administer and implement institutional policies in classrooms. Taking this fact into account, one cannot help to notice the importance of listening to instructors' voices and of investigating their pronunciation teaching practices. Why do instructors often avoid teaching pronunciation in classrooms? Moreover, this examination is going to fit the purpose of the following chapter—pedagogical implications discussion and suggestions for the instructors.

The relevant studies, discussed in *Current Approaches to Pronunciation Instruction*, already provide rough answers for the instructors' reluctance and uncomfortable feelings toward teaching pronunciation, such as an absence of pre-service programs, a dearth of proper materials to utilize in classroom, affective factors of instructors, a lack of assessment rubrics, and a want of institutional guidance. Above all, a number of researchers have discussed a consistent lack of teacher training programs across the inner circle countries. For example, in Canada, only a few teacher education programs offer a course for teaching pronunciation, surprisingly some programs even do not require an introductory linguistic course to receive certificates (Derwing, 2010). In Canada, according to another study, approximately half of 67 programs reported that they taught pronunciation as an individual subject or integrated it into general classes (Breitkreutz, Derwing, & Rossiter, 2001). Among 67 teacher participants, 73% had taught pronunciation before, and 76% reported that they were confident in teaching the subject although only 30% of them had received pedagogical training in advance.

Burgess and Spencer (2000) examined training programs for ESL teachers in Britain, and found that most courses for pronunciation were limited to phonology, despite a strong call for integrating suprasegmental features. MacDonald (2002), who interviewed eight current ESL instructors from two institutions in Australia to find why some teachers are reluctant to teach pronunciation, observed a consistent want of teacher training program as well.

Secondly, teachers reported the lack of appropriate and practical materials to teach pronunciation. Because the communicative approach lacked practical materials, the only available materials for instructors were minimal pair drills from audiolingualism (e.g., Nilsen, & Nilsen, 1971), which turned out to carry lower functional load later (Brown, 1995), and did not confuse listeners as other global aspects of speech (e.g., intonation, rhythm, or prosody) did. Consequently, repetition or drills were used as the most popular activities. Not much later on, some textbooks or programs became available, but the instructors often misused them. For example, it was common for inexperienced instructors to depend on the same pronunciation textbooks or software to repair every error of every learner (Derwing & Munro, 2005). Therefore, it was not surprising to see that instructors did not want to teach pronunciation and neglected it in the classroom for a long time. However, at the same time, the instructors have a thirst for the most effective method to help learners, as well as hands-on materials to apply in their classrooms. Moreover, the development of materials will assist the instructors in ESL settings who struggle with having learners from various L1 backgrounds, with various pronunciation needs, in a single classroom (Burgess & Spencer, 2000; Derwing &

Rossiter, 2002).

Some instructors reported emotional challenges they experienced during reacting to or monitoring students' utterances as they did not want to hurt students' feelings, or interrupt the flow of speech (Burgess & Spencer, 2000; MacDonald, 2002; Timmis, 2002) by correcting students' speech. Participants recounted uncomfortable feelings of giving feedback as instructors, even though they welcomed feedback as language learners.

It is likely that pronunciation would be taught explicitly if it was one of the learning outcomes. Except in the assessment of international teaching assistants (ITAs) in the United States, there is no agreed rubric upon pronunciation evaluation in North America, so assessment is mostly avoided (Derwing, 2010). Likewise, a teacher from Australia (MacDonald, 2002) mentioned that terms like 'audible' or 'clearly understood', from the institute rubric for speaking evaluation, were insufficient and made the instructors depend on intuitions or avoid assessment at all.

Finally from the institutional level, pronunciation is taught in fewer classrooms as a separate subject compared to: reading, listening, speaking and writing. For example, the curriculum some institutions were using did not include pronunciation as a requirement, or even if it was included, most instructors, did not know how to set priorities to assess later, without a standardized method of evaluation (MacDonald, 2002). Thus, the instructors and researchers consistently reported a need for institutional standards or directions.

The abovementioned difficulties explain why the teachers are not willing to teach

pronunciation in classrooms. Teachers feel unprepared to teach pronunciation or even do not know how to incorporate pronunciation activities (Derwing, 2010; Sardegna & Smith, 2013), without training, materials, rubrics, and directions. Nevertheless, pronunciation instruction remains important and many scholars are waiting for more empirical studies to reveal the most effective types of instruction to promote long-term retention, and the practical knowledge for teachers to utilize in the classroom.

### **Pronunciation Instruction with a Phonological Focus**

Traditionally, teaching pronunciation was equated with the elimination of foreign accents by concentrating on individual sounds, particularly through listening and practicing problematic sound contrasts. This procedure developed from audiolingualism. Therefore, earlier empirical studies of teaching pronunciation mainly investigated the effects of training on segmental perception and production.

Even though an emphasis on individual sounds was a conventional way of teaching pronunciation, few studies have been performed to prove the efficacy of this type of instructions on enhancing learners' pronunciation, particularly English learners. Amongst the few studies exploring empirical improvements of oral proficiency through listening training of sound contrasts, I will first review studies exploring the effectiveness of phonological instruction on American learners of Spanish, and then on ESL learners.

Elliot (1997) investigated the effect of segmental instruction on American college learners of Spanish as a foreign language. The participants were taught allophones explicitly, compared the target sounds with counterparts in English, and then practiced

the sounds in communicative activities. This formal instruction in phonology, however, failed to generate significant improvement on learners' spontaneous speech. Rasmussen and Zampini (2010) studied the effects of six-week phonetic training on native English speakers learners of Spanish, and found that an experimental group showed significant improvement in the intelligibility of trained sounds. In other words, the learners who practiced individual sounds had more understandable L2 speech. This result supports the integration of phonetic training in the language curriculum to enhance learners' intelligibility of L2 speech.

Wang and Munro (2004) examined three English vowel contrasts with native Mandarin speakers whose first language does not have these vowels. The two-month training consisted of identifying target vowels, and integrating the sounds in words and speech. All training was done with a software program, and learners could access the program as often as they needed. Throughout the training, learners became able to pronounce all the target vowels successfully, and the improvement did not disappear after three months from the end of the treatment.

### **A Call for Global Instruction**

Some early researchers expressed a preference for global instruction. To find more globally influential factors on intelligibility, these researchers investigated the effect of features such as prosody (e.g., rhythm, intonation), suprasegmentals, or more comprehensive instruction including teaching self-strategies.

Brown (1995) claimed that suprasegmental instruction is more helpful than

minimal pairs, but he lacked empirical evidence. Nelson (1982) also discussed the effects of the context of situation and rhythm as two strong parameters on speech intelligibility. Particularly, he emphasized the cross linguistic influence of rhythm.

Firstly, MacDonald, Yule, and Powers (1994) investigated how twenty-three graduate students from China reacted differently to three types of pronunciation instruction: corrective feedback from the instructor (C1), self-study in labs (C2), no instruction (C3), and modified interaction condition by clarification requests from interlocutors (C4). There were three recordings of oral presentations (reading a list of vocabulary), before the instruction, immediately after, and two days after. Unfortunately, none of the results found one particular instruction to be better, probably due to the short period of the interventions (two ten-minute lectures for each condition). Yet, the researchers described change patterns of learners' utterances. For example, utterances of C1 were worse before getting better, while C2 showed greater improvements. Through the study, the researchers recommended instructors to be careful to judge the effectiveness of instruction.

Derwing, Munro, and Wiebe (1997) supported the usefulness of pronunciation instruction for thirteen adult ESL learners who attended a speaking-improvement program in Canada. This study reinforced Flege's claim about the need for pronunciation instruction. During twelve weeks of the program, two instructors focused on improving general speaking habits from predominant ones to localized ones, but did not work on segmental features. Therefore, students worked not only on global factors (e.g., stress, intonation, and rhythm), but also on other factors like body language, voice quality,

volume, rate, and discourse markers. At the end of the program, the native listeners rated a second set of speech samples as more intelligible than the ones recorded at the beginning of the program. The improvement was even apparent to untrained listeners.

The same researchers (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998) then compared the effects of three different types of instruction (segmental instruction, global instruction with a prosodic focus, and no instruction) with three variables: comprehensibility, accentedness, and fluency. Participants recorded a list of sentences and spontaneous narratives twice during the semester: at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester. The first two groups showed improvements, but only the global instruction group improved in both measurements: sentences and narratives. The result of the study validates not only the learners' transfer of prosodic leaning on spontaneous speech, also the efficacy of global instruction in teaching pronunciation.

Similarly, Hahn (1994) found influences of some prosodic features on intelligibility while investigating nuclear stress. She measured native American undergraduate students' processing and comprehension of three types of an international teaching assistant's speech. Speech samples were different in terms of primary stress: correctly used, incorrectly used, and missed entirely. Even though it failed to gain statistical significance, native listeners could recall more of the speech with correct primary stress and were likely to process correct speech easily. The result of the study also supports the need of including primary stress in ESL classrooms.

The importance of prosody was highlighted again, from a listeners' perspective, when several experienced ESL instructors were asked to rate segmentals, syllable

structure, and prosody of nonnative speakers' speech in another study (Anderson-Hsieh, Johnson, & Koehler, 1992). The findings revealed that prosody, in particular, played the most important role on the intelligibility of nonnative utterances. In 2003, Derwing and Rossiter pointed out the value of teaching prosody to help learners improve comprehensibility in a relatively shorter time while segmental instruction is presumed to exert a long-term effect on comprehensibility. (In other words, segmental instructions do not cause instant improvement). Other than prosody, the effect of the temporal properties on speech was also demonstrated in Tajima et al. (1997); the intelligibility of two Chinese participants' speech was improved significantly when the duration of acoustic segments was artificially modified to be similar to those of native speakers. Lastly, some scholars (e.g., Ingels, 2010; Sardegna, 2009; Sardegna & McGregor, in press) instructed learners on how to do self-monitoring at the global level, such as on message unit boundaries, primary stress, and intonation and supported the efficacy of the self-monitoring strategies.

During the past two decades, researchers have agreed on the effectiveness of global pronunciation instruction. However, an argument about the most effective factor among suprasegmentals, such as rhythm, intonation, stress, and so on, is still unanswered. Therefore, the instructors are expected to be attentive to various findings and be careful to utilize accessible sources to meet learners' needs.

### **Teaching Pronunciation in Foreign Language Settings**

Less than ten percent of journal in ESL/SLA have reported research findings in

pronunciation instruction during the last two decades (Deng, et al., 2009), and most of these studies were conducted in ESL settings. That is to say, teaching pronunciation in EFL settings, is definitely in need of further exploration. As far as I know, most studies conducted in EFL settings investigated the relation between learners' attitudes (e.g., perception or motivation) and achievement (Cenoz & Garcia Lecumberri, 1999; Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Smit, 2002; Smit & Dalton, 2000). According to the existing studies in EFL contexts, pronunciation is usually not taught in an explicit way in these contexts, or it is taught through the repetition of target sounds (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010).

For example, Bradlow et al. (1997) provided perceptual training using 68 minimal pairs of /r/ and /l/ sounds, for 11 adult Japanese learners of English. Then the researchers compared pre- and post-test results with those of a control group, which consisted of 12 native Japanese speakers. The learners from the experimental group showed statistically significant improvement in production of the target sounds, as well as perception of the sounds. Cenoz and Garcia Lecumberri (1999) examined the perception and attitudes of 86 first-year Basque university students toward pronunciation, and reported that participants rarely received phonetic training from secondary school, so learners were unaware of suprasegmental aspects of English. Lastly, Smit and Dalton (2000) reported a part of a longitudinal study investigating motivation patterns of pronunciation learning. All learners were taking a pronunciation course at the Vienna English Department which had a tradition of teaching English pronunciation explicitly. The researchers concluded that the English department in Vienna University was on the right track in terms of

teaching pronunciation; explicit instructions successfully contribute to enhance learners' intrinsic motivation and decrease anxiety.

To sum up, although the above studies described different forms of teaching pronunciation in foreign language settings, all consistently reported the benefits of explicit teaching. Taking the call for integrating suprasegmental into account, explicit teaching suprasegmentals usually result in greater improvement, a finding waiting to be supported by more studies as a limited number of studies are available (e.g., Sardegna, 2009, 2011; Sardegna & McGregor, 2013), to prove its effectiveness in the contexts. It is likely that learners who succeeded to enhance their oral proficiency with perception training would be able to improve to a greater degree with suprasegmental instruction.

### **Korean Middle School Textbooks**

To get a more detailed idea of how pronunciation is taught in a foreign language setting, particularly in South Korea, I browsed three textbooks out of the twelve most widely used in middle schools. I chose South Korea because that is the setting where I both learned and taught English. The first two textbooks are published by a company called *Chunjae*, and I refer to them by the first authors of each book (*Chunjae (Kim)* and *Chunjae (Lee)*). The other I refer to as *Doosan*, named after its publisher as well. These textbooks were developed for first year middle school students. Each textbook comes with a workbook (sometimes called activities). I looked at the proportion pronunciation instruction took up in the three textbooks.

*Chunjae (Kim)* consists of ten chapters, five for each semester. Each chapter consists of five subchapters: Listen and Talk, Read and Do, Think and Write, Language and Focus, and Project. *Chunjae (Kim)* allocates three pages for Listen and Talk in an integrated way with speaking and writing activities. *Chunjae (Kim)* includes speaking activities, with any explicit instruction given at either the segmental or suprasegmental level. The chapters in the workbook consist of six subchapters: Background and Culture, Listen and Talk, Read and Do, Language Focus, Think and Write, and Culture File/Fun File. The workbook notably offers, in four subchapters, three sets of activities for different levels of proficiency. The first and the last subchapters are for all level of learners.

In the workbook, there are two pages for Listen and Talk and pronunciation knowledge is explicitly provided twice, as footnotes and in smaller font, under the title “Sounds in Focus.” For example, Chapter 1 provides examples of how pronunciation changes in contractions (e.g., *I’m*, *you’re*, *she’s* and so on). No further explanation is offered. The second provision of pronunciation knowledge deals with linking, given in two sample sentences. One thing to note is that the same pronunciation activities and information are provided repeatedly for the three levels throughout the entire workbook.

“Sounds in Focus” in the second chapter introduces intonation with two sample sentences, with arrows at the endings. The second “Sounds in Focus” in Chapter 2 is segmental level pronunciation: /æ/ and /ʌ/, with four examples for each sound. Pronunciation information is provided in the same format regardless of levels. “Sounds in Focus” for Chapter 3 are linking and tone.

The second textbook, *Chunjae (Lee)* consists of 12 chapters, 6 for each semester. Each chapter consists of nine subchapters: Warm Up, Listen In, Speak Out, Group Activities, Get Ready for Reading, Read, Write On, Mission Possible (post reading activities), and Review. Each chapter includes a page for Listen In, a page for Speak Out and a page for group activities. To illustrate, the first chapter, “I’m lucky” contains two sentences for linking (see appendix), and four words using the /th/ sound. Other than these, the chapter basically follows the “listen and answer the questions” form and “practice dialogues” in given contexts. The pattern of linking and one target sound is repeated throughout the entire textbook. There is no information about prosodic features of speech. The *Chunjae (Lee)* workbook includes no explicit information on pronunciation. All listening and speaking activities are provided either in the form of “listen and answer” or “read dialogues and practice” (similar to role-playing).

The last book, *Doosan*, consists of 10 chapters, five for each semester. Each chapter consists of eight subchapters: Before You Begin, Listen and Talk, Communication Task, Enjoy Reading, Grammar in Use, Think and Write, Project Work, and Let’s Check. Four pages are allocated for speaking in communicative activities, integrated with listening and writing. There is, for each chapter, a small box at the bottom of one page called “Sounds”. In the first chapter, “Sounds” provides one vowel /i/, one consonant /f/, and linking. This pattern is followed in the remaining chapters (except for word stress in Chapter 2). Each target sound comes with four sample words, and two sentences are given for linking. The chapters in *Doosan*’s workbook consist of Prepare to Listen and Talk, Listen and Talk, Prepare to Read, After You Read, Grammar in Use,

Grammar and Writing, and Review. Compared to the other two textbooks, *Doosan* spends more pages on listening and speaking, about 4 out of 16 per chapter without any explicit instruction for pronunciation.

This brief analysis of three textbooks does not tell everything about current pronunciation teaching in South Korea; however, it offers a glimpse of pronunciation instruction at least at the textbook level. It is only a small step in understanding teaching pronunciation in Korean middle schools. To provide a bigger picture, I would need to look at teachers' guidebooks, teaching in classroom, and the entire national curriculum for English, from elementary school to high school.

According to the National Curriculum Information Center (NCIC), students in Korea officially start studying English in third grade in elementary school. According to the nationwide curriculum for English education, pronunciation knowledge (both segmental and suprasegmental level) is included in all learning outcomes for third graders. One obvious pattern in the books examined here is that all the textbooks include the concept of linking. I referred again to the national curricular to see whether linking was one of the learning objectives for middle school first-year students, but I did not find it listed there.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Suggestions for English Pronunciation Instructors in EFL Contexts**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter provides six suggestions for EFL pronunciation instructors taken from the literature reviewed for this Report.

#### **1. Help Students Set Achievable Goals**

Even for learners who start learning language at a young age, reaching native-level proficiency is no guarantee. Instructors need to consider other influencing factors like L1 use, L2 input, and practicing L2 (Flege, 1995) and help learners set realistic aims. Achieving intelligibility is a suitable goal for most learners, as speech needs to be clear enough to be understood (Morley, 1991). Throughout the current Report, I emphasized the value of intelligibility as an achievable goal for general learners of a second language in a pronunciation class. However, such an emphasis does not necessarily mean that all instructors should regard intelligibility as a definite goal for every class or every learner. The meaning of achievable varies from learner to learner, based on an individual learner's level of proficiency and capability.

For example, if the learners' speech is comprehensible and intelligible enough from the outset of instruction, it is desirable to work on other problematic features so that the learners can enhance their general proficiency. Derwing et al. (in preparation) worked on enhancing the speech of six ITAs and professors whose undergraduate students

considered them to be bad teachers because of their L2 accents. The researchers realized that the major problem with these instructors was not accented speech, but poor teaching skills. All six participants were intelligible already when they first came to the center for help. The result indicates the importance of analyzing learners' needs and setting proper aims for instructors. Moreover, setting appropriate aims is important as it directly relates to learners' motivation. Since learners' individual characteristics, mainly motivation, play decisive roles in eliciting greater improvement, no matter how well prepared an instructor is, no matter what they teach, the results of instruction sometimes are not as productive as expected (e.g., Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1997; MacDonald, Yule, & Powers, 1994; Yule, & MacDonald, 1994). Therefore, while learners are guided to have achievable aims, the instructors need to be open to more general aims to cover a variety of demands of learners from the beginner to the advanced level (MacDonald, 2002).

## **2. Consider the Major Audience**

The foremost thing to consider when setting a proper goal in learning a new language is what the purpose of learning is. Let learners think of their prospective audience and the specific context of the language use. Learners should focus on developing their speech to make it understandable at least for their particular groups of listeners if not for all NSs (Jenkins, 2006). Thinking of an audience would give more concrete ideas with regard to setting the right goals, taking into account the current status of English as an international language in order to reinforce a variety of English accents

(even non-native accents). Selecting one target style of speaking amongst many possible ones enables the learners to concentrate on it.

I suggest including potential interlocutors: conversation is not unidirectional but mutual and bidirectional (Derwing, 2010; MacDonald, 2002; Omaggio Hadley, 2001). Conversation is inherently a chain of speaking and listening. By setting target groups, learners can concentrate on training to get used to a particular way of speaking and listening. This suggestion is supported by a number of studies revealing the effect of topic, culture, and accents familiarities on listeners' comprehension (e.g., Derwing, & Munro, 1997; Smith, 1992). Smith (1992) found that speakers' proficiency does affect the listeners' intelligibility, comprehensibility, and interpretability. When the learners built enough proficiency in the target styles and became intelligible to one particular audience, then they were able to share different settings with classmates to broaden their styles for a larger audience.

### **3. Teach Suprasegmentals First**

In a proposal for pronunciation instruction in Lingua Franca Core (LFC), Jenkins (2000, 2002) offered several pieces of advice on prosody instruction, such as placement nuclear stress, and proper use of contrastive stress, even though the idea of having only nonnative-nonnative communication as international English is criticized for neglecting other possible (and in some cases more common) kinds of communications like native-nonnative communication (Dauer, 2005).

Therefore, the instructors who make decisions about class content should focus

their instruction on prosodic features such as rhythm, stress, and intonation, which exert more influence than segmentals on the development of intelligible utterances. Derwing and Rossiter (2002, 2003) also claimed that teaching prosodic elements is the most desirable way to improve students' oral proficiency. However, for those who do not feel confident in the explicit teaching of prosodic features, the researchers suggested providing communicative strategies at least, to assist learners in handling communication breakdowns. Finally, the call for prosodic instruction does not mean that it should be the only one focus of instruction. Prosody should be prioritized due to its more general and direct influence on spoken language (Levis & Grant, 2003). When learners' speech becomes intelligible, then the instructors address the more localized, segmental level of challenges.

#### **4. Integrate Pronunciation**

It is recommended to teach pronunciation in an integrated way. This enables the instructors to provide more opportunities for learners to practice how to interact in a number of authentic situations (Scales, Wennerstrom, Richard, & Wu, 2006). Taking institutional circumstances into account, most realistic and feasible option is integrating pronunciation into other stand-alone classes such as speaking and listening classes (Derwing, 2010; Levis & Grant, 2003). As most institutions consider pronunciation as a supplementary activity, rather than as an independent fifth skill, they do not offer separate pronunciation courses, but offer speaking and listening classes. Moreover, given that conversation is inherently reciprocal, pronunciation can be easily integrated into

listening and speaking classes (Murphy, 1991).

The idea of integrating pronunciation into existing courses is supported by some research. For example, from a study investigating the effects of three types of instruction on ESL learners' intelligibility enhancement (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1998), the researchers observed significant improvement in oral proficiency with a brief daily 20-minute lesson. From another study (Derwing, Munro, & Wiebe, 1997), instructors and learners involved in a 12-week long course were alike in reporting that a three-hour class per week was too long; motivation usually started to wane after nine weeks. These findings lend support to the integration of pronunciation into speaking or listening classes.

## **5. Teach Self-Monitoring Strategies**

MacDonald (2002) recommended instructors help learners monitor their own speech to improve intelligibility. When learners are trained to use strategies in an appropriate manner, they can gain more chances to practice on their own, at their own pace, outside the classroom (Sardegna, 2009; 2011; 2012; Sardegna & McGregor, in print). These advantages of teaching self-monitoring strategies are particularly important, for learners in foreign language settings. The learners in second language settings are likely to have more chances, intentionally or not, to expose themselves in language practice situations. This is not the case for learners in a foreign language environment, such as Korea.

Ingels (2010) examined the different effects on pronunciation development of

three self-monitoring skills (listening only, listening and transcription, and listening, transcribing, and annotating corrections). She found that what was most effective for learning primary stress was listening, for learning intonation listening and transcription, and for learning message unit boundaries, transcribing, and annotating corrections. These results tell us that participants benefit from learning self-monitoring strategies in general, and the proper use of each strategy for a particular feature maximizes those effects. Similarly, Velde, Zhuang, and Kang (2013) demonstrated the effect of self-monitoring strategies on advanced ESL learners' oral presentations. With a mere two 20-minute, mini-lesson throughout a semester, participants were able to give better presentations. Sardegna and Smith (2013) also demonstrated that a short (six-weeks) tutoring intervention based on strategy-instruction was effective in improving learners' linking, primary stress, vowel reduction, and intonation. As these results indicate, teaching strategies do not necessarily require much effort; a couple of mini-lessons a semester might yield changes. Becoming able to monitor themselves, the learners can be lifelong learners of the language as they pursue academic and professional success (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Dickerson, 1994; Morley, 1991).

## **6. Use Accessible Resources and Individualize Students' Learning**

Today, instructors have available a number of published empirical studies and textbooks, such as *Speechcraft* (Hahn & Dickerson, 1999), *Teaching Pronunciation* (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010), *Well Said* (Grant, 2001), and *Sound Concepts* (Reed & Michaud, 2006). These materials offer comprehensive resources for

phonetic knowledge, pronunciation rules, activities, and even lesson plans. With more resources than ever, instructors need to be aware of existing materials and be ready to use them selectively at the right times. Proper use of the right materials is directly associated with the exposure of L2, particularly in foreign language settings where language classes and the instructors are the only accessible L2 sources.

However, instructors should also be careful about selecting materials. One unified instruction (or syllabus) may not be appropriate to handle learners' different needs. Like every teaching situation, despite being placed at the same level all learners bring different challenges. In other words, teachers are expected to diagnose every learner's needs and prepare, as much as possible, the right materials for each of them (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010).

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

In this Report, I cited strong evidentiary support for emphasizing intelligibility in both second and foreign language classrooms. I asserted that given the current status of English as a world language, curricula should adopt intelligibility as an important learning outcome. I also consulted as many empirical studies as possible to see how pronunciation is actually taught in classrooms. Not surprisingly, pronunciation—as opposed to grammar, speaking, listening, reading and writing—is seldom taught explicitly in most ESL/EFL classrooms. I also examined teachers’ attitudes and perceptions regarding pronunciation teaching—why they were not willing to teach pronunciation. A review of the literature revealed that over the past two decades research related to pronunciation instruction in second-language settings has proliferated, whereas research in foreign language settings has not. In addition to the review of relevant literature and a brief analysis of the amount of attention devoted to pronunciation—as opposed to other skills—in three middle school textbooks in Korea, I derived six fundamental pedagogical implications. These implications are especially aimed at the instructors in foreign language settings who are in need of more investigations and practical suggestions. I acknowledged that this Report did not cover every aspect of teaching pronunciation, but I hope that readers find it informative and useful for themselves and their students.

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