Teaching English Pronunciation for International Communication

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ABSTRACT

Koreans' interest in and concern with learning English are at the peak as more actions and transactions in our daily life are carried out in English. Even though we are experiencing a big transition from a conventional grammar-translation method to communicative language teaching, little efforts have been made to set the new goals and objectives, norms and standards, and to develop new instructional methods for teaching pronunciation for international communication. This lecture will introduce a new approach of teaching English pronunciation for international communication, suggesting how to implement it to Korean ELT classrooms. It will also address the necessity of research on Korean learners of English, focusing on their perception and production of English sounds for international intelligibility and identity.

I. Introduction

1. English for International Communication (EIC)

1) Change in speakers of English

	1950	1995	2050
# of Native speakers(NS)		337 million	433 million
NS as proportion of world's population	9%		5%
# of Non-native speakers		418 million	790 million

(McNamara, 2000)

2) Characteristics of EIC

A. Spoken by bilingual and multilingual people.

B. The new kind of context in which new varieties of English flourish, strongly influenced by the phonology grammar, and idioms of other languages and then become institutionalized within bilingual and multilingual communities.

C. Increase of diversity of regional and local varieties with a fight between intelligibility and identity.

D. Destandardization: a greater diversity of forms in public discourse; a reduction in the gatekeeping practices which imposed a uniform usage on printed text; a close relationship between written and spoken language; and a change in the technologies of writing and broadcasting which allow a greater range of styles and varieties to appear on web pages and magazines

E. Informalization: a greater diversity of forms of English and more colloquial language in public discourse (Graddol, 1999).

II. Teaching Pronunciation in Korea

1. English use in Korean society

1) ELT and tests at elementary, secondary, and tertiary level, in public and private sectors.

2) Publications in English: textbooks and other materials, journals and magazines, newspapers

3) Information technology

4) Domestic and international tourism

5) Broadcasting: Titles of TV/Radio shows; slogans

6) Business, commerce, and entertainment: titles of books, magazines, movies, songs; names of a variety of products; advertizing slogans

7) Daily conversation: Greetings, idioms, jokes

2. Intelligibility and identity

1) Good or native-like pronunciation is revered but Korean version of English pronunciation is highly intelligible (Choi, 2000) among the Korean speakers of English.

2) Korean accent of Koreanized English pronunciation tends to be preferred in the sense of identity. E.g. Those children who grew up in English-speaking countries adopt Korean accent when they return to Korea, in order to be 'unmarked' among their peers.

3. Perception of teaching pronunciation in Korean ELT context

1) Acquisition of standard English, GE preferred to RP, has been a goal of teaching/learning. Pronunciation varieties of Englishes are regarded as bad or incorrect...

2) Pronunciation has been perceived as nonteachable or nonlearnable, particularly for post-puberty learners which became a driving force to implement ELT in elementary schools.

3) Neither teachers (and/or teachers-to-be) nor students have been required to take pronunciation/speech tests.

III. Teaching Pronunciation for International Communication for Korean learners of English

1. New Approach to Teach Pronunciation for International Communication (Jenkins, 2000a, b)

1) The Lingua Franca Core (LFC) for production

(1) Definition: A pronunciation core consisting of those items found to be crucial to intelligibility between L2 speakers of English. These items were selected on the basis of extensive empirical research data carried out in a range of EIL contexts.

(2) The core areas

a. All consonant sounds except /T/and /D/ as in think and this; and /l/ when it occurs syllabically or before a consonant or pause as in, respectively, middle, talk, and full, where it can be substituted with /U/.

b. Vowel length distinctions e.g. the short vowel sound /I/ in live as compared with the long sound /i:/ in leave.

c. Consonant cluster simplification according to L1 English simplification rules, in particular no simplification of word-initial clusters, such as the str in string

d. Division of the stream of speech into word groups (or tone units) and the placing of nuclear (or tonic) stress on the most salient syllable in each word group. E.g.   // I drink a lot of COFFee // but my son prefers TEA //

e. Articulatory setting, in particular a relaxed jaw and fairly still upper lip, to enable the core features, especially those relating to length, to be produced and maintained comfortably.

(3) The non-core areas

a. The non-core consonants (see above)

b. Vowel quality (as opposed to length), provided it is consistent.

c. Weak forms

d. Other features of connected speech, especially assimilation

e. Pitch movement

f. Stress-timed rhythm

g. Word stress

2) Exposure to a wide range of L2 regional accents

3) The development of accommodation skills

4) Implications of the EIL approach

(1) The need to redefine pronunciation error and, as a result, to reconsider the issue of pronunciation testing

(2) The need to review the current status and role of non-native teachers of English

(3) The importance of including a sociolinguistics component on all teacher education and training courses.

2. How to apply the new approach to Korean ELT context

1) Improving the. problem factors in teaching English pronunciation to Korean students:

(1) The sound difference between English and Korean

(2) The degree of importance of pronunciation in college entrance exam

(3) The amount of exposure to English(es)

(4) The attitude and sense of identity, motivation and the concern for good pronunciation or intelligibility (Park, 2000)

2) Developing a learner-centered teaching model

(1) Needs analysis: to identify the possible counterpart and purposes of communication in English, wants and needs

(2) Goals and objectives

a. International intelligibility

b. International communicability

c. Increased self-confidence not as a second-degree speaker of English but a unique one

d. Speech monitoring abilities and speech modification strategies for use beyond the classroom

(3) Instructional features

a. Major pronunciation features, focusing on the LFC for the production

b. Exposure to a wide range of L2 regional accents

c. The development of accommodation skills

(4) Instructional Strategies

a. Using authentic materials in varieties of Englishes Songs and chants, poems, speeches, drama script, situational comedy script

b. Pronunciation games

c. Group projects

d. Using tape recorder and/or (multi-media) language laboratory

IV. Conclusions

1. Research should be done on Korean speakers of English, focusing on their perception and production of English sounds in the sense of international ntelligibility and identity. It also needs to be identified who are the most likely communication counterpart for them to use English with, in order to equip them with practical communication skills for successful communications.

2. We need to inform our students of language variation and change by finding ways of reflecting and filtering it, and to teach them to swim with the tide, rather than

against it(Crystal, 1999).

3. It is a·must for teachers to keep abreast with the changes in ELT. Therefore, on-going teacher training programs should be developed and implemented to empower them with updated knowledge information, and skills.

4. It is vital for Korean teachers and students of English to realize that all the speakers of English are equally unique language users, regardless of their region and status as native or nonnative speaker of English.. After all, language learning is a way of embracing the people in the world and making the world peace possible based on this sense of equality.

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