

Using Korean Phonetic Alphabet (KPA) in Teaching English Stop Sounds to Koreans

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abstract

In the phoneme level, English stop sounds are classified with the feature of 'voicing': voiceless and voiced (p/b, t/d, k/g). But when realized, a voiceless stop is not always the same sound. For example, the two 'p' sounds in 'people' are different. The former is pronounced with much aspiration, while the latter without it. This allophonic difference between [p^h] and [p] out of an English phoneme /p/ can be well explained to Koreans because in Korean these two sounds exist as two different phonemes (/ㅍ/ and /ㅃ/ respectively).

But difficulties lie in teaching the English voiced stop sounds (/b, d, g/) to Koreans because in Korean voiced stops do not exist as phonemes but as allophones of lenis sounds (/ㅂ, ㄷ, ㄱ/). For example, the narrow transcription of '바보' (a fool) is [b̥abɔ]. In the word initial position, Korean lenis stops are pronounced voiceless and even with a slight aspiration while in the intervocalic environments they become voiced. That is, in Korean voiced stops do not occur independently and neither they have their own letters.

To explain all these more effectively to Koreans, it is very helpful to use Korean Phonetic Alphabet (KPA) which is devised by Dr. LEE Hyunbok (a professor of phonetics at Seoul National Univ. and chairman of Phonetic Society of Korea).

KPA/IPA	ㅍ/p ^h	ㅃ/p	ㅂ/p [~] (unreleased)	ㅁ/b
voicing	-	-	-	+
aspiration	+	-	-	-
sample word	pin	spin	cap	bin