

# **Integrating Pronunciation into a Classroom and on the Web**

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The aim of this presentation is to suggest a method of integrating the teaching of pronunciation into a typical communicative classroom and on the web. This presentation seeks the way by analyzing useful communicative expressions with a speech analyzer for English learners to see the sound pattern of those expressions and say them right. It is hoped that this presentation will prompt teachers to understand the current role of pronunciation in communicative English programs and that the WWW can help students improve their pronunciation to develop their speaking and listening skills. It also suggests the need for a database of visualized communicative expressions.

## **1. Introduction**

Many questions involving pronunciation can be raised: what is the role of pronunciation in current communicative language programs?; what are the current perspectives on pronunciation and the learner?; what can be the current roles of teachers in a communicative classroom in relation with pronunciation?; what elements of pronunciation should be focused in a conversation class?; where do we find the place for pronunciation in CALL.? In this presentation, I will discuss these questions to suggest the possible methods of integrating the teaching of pronunciation into a normal conversation class and on the web.

## **2. Current perspectives**

### **2.1 Pronunciation**

Pronunciation includes vowels, consonants, the sound change in connected speech, stress, rhythm, intonation, and many other prosodic cues. Among these elements, discourse intonation reflects the speaker's intention. Much research has shown that nonnative speakers are frequently misinterpreted because of their choice of intonation features. Nonnative speakers cannot often hear important keys to meaning because of their limited command of intonation (Celce-Murcia & Brinton & Goodwin, 1996). The roles of discourse intonation support the argument by Clennell (1997:117) that the successful use of discourse intonation could well be the key to effective cross-cultural communication.

What we can conclude from most of research on pronunciation since 1990s is that the pronunciation skill in current communicative language programs should no longer focus on accuracy but be recognized as an integral part of language fluency, competence, proficiency and cross-cultural communication. We can further conclude that pronunciation, listening, and speaking are interdependent and that discourse intonation among pronunciation elements should be integrated into a conversation class. This conclusion is well indicated in the argument by Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin(1996) that the teaching of pronunciation should be integrated with oral communication.

## **2.2 Computer technology and intonation**

The development of computer technology in the last 20 years has visualized the sound of English. Various speech analyzers display an intonation of an utterance. The pitch, length, and loudness of the sound of an utterance can be simultaneously heard and seen on a screen. Many speech technology systems allow students to record their utterances and compare a visual display of their own intonation contours with prerecorded native speaker models. Research on using speech technology systems like

Visi-Pitch or other self-designed software for intonation training has shown that audio-visual feedback is more effective than an audio feedback.

There are technical limitations of the computer hardware and software: both teachers and students have difficulties in relating visual and auditory signals; sentences containing many unvoiced sounds are more poorly visualized than the sentences containing many voiced sounds.

### **2.3 The teaching of pronunciation**

The growing interests in intonation and the relation of pronunciation skills with receptive and productive skills since 1990 have lead the teaching of pronunciation to new directions, which are indicated in many conversation textbooks. In each unit of common textbooks such as *New Interchange One* by Richards (1997), *Interactions One and Two* by Tanka & Most (1997), *Gateways One* by Kimbrough & Frankel(1998), linking, reduction, and stress are practiced through listening discrimination activities. As for intonation, it is mostly restricted to sentence types: WH-questions; yes-no questions; tag-questions; exclamatory statements; alternative questions. Discourse intonation that plays an important role in cross-cultural communication is not dealt enough. Most importantly visual displays of intonation by speech analyzers are not introduced despite their effectiveness in teaching and learning. Pronunciation is still isolated from conversation classes. Techniques still concentrate on the traditional notions of minimal pair drills, the use of a phonetic alphabet, transcription practice, detailed description of the articulatory system, and tongue twisters.

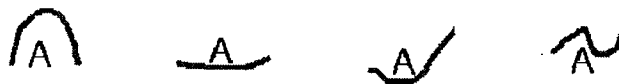
### **3. Pronunciation in a communicative class: suggestions**

What we need is a method to integrate pronunciation into a conversation class that include 'whole-person' learner involvement. As a teacher, we need to help students

feel and see the sound patterns of English. We need to make students perceive that the sound of English is different from that of their native language. Students need to understand that the same expression changes its sound pattern in different situations. How do we make students feel the sound pattern of English in a conversation class? One way is to employ computer technology system to visualize communicative expressions and introduce them in a conversation class when their usage is taught.

### 3.1 From the beginning: visualized alphabet

We need to make students unconsciously acquire different patterns of English sound. We can do it from the early stage as in fig 1. We can present a letter with different sound patterns to help students feel and see that each letter can have different sound patterns. Each figure can be made to a flash card for a game. We can say the letter with a specific sound pattern and let students pick up the same sound pattern of a letter. Or we can ask students to pick up a different letter with the same sound pattern.

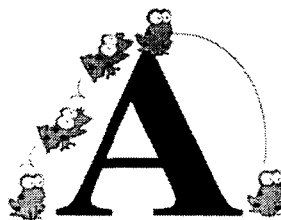


<Figure1>

For little students, the sound patterns of English can be presented with characters they like as in fig 3-5.



<Figure3>



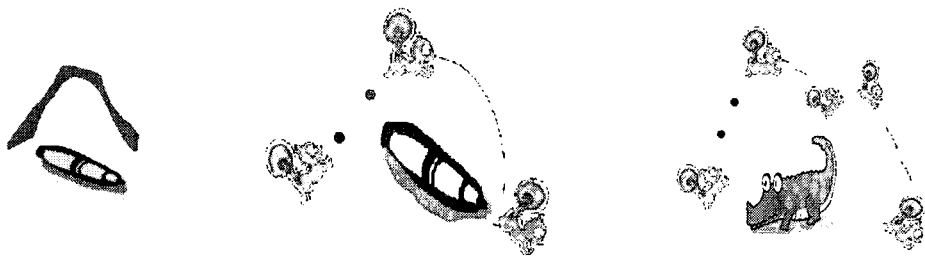
<Figure4>



<Figure5>

### 3.2 Vocabulary with a visual display

When we teach students new words, we can visualize the pronunciation of them as in fig 6.



<Figure6> Pen

Pen

Alligator

Students can feel that the sound of stress gets louder, higher, and longer through pictures.

### 3.3 Visualized communicative expressions

When we instruct students some communicative expressions in a conversation class, we can visualize these useful expressions as well. Dialog (1) in 'Gogo Loves English I' has many useful expressions in a situation of asking for information and giving affirmative and negative answers.

(1) A: What's this?

B: It's bird.

A: Is this a bird?

B: Yes, it is.

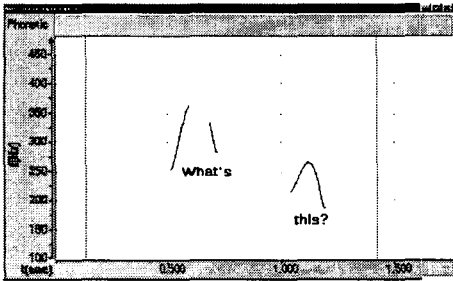
A: Is this a bird?

B: No, it isn't. It's a dog.

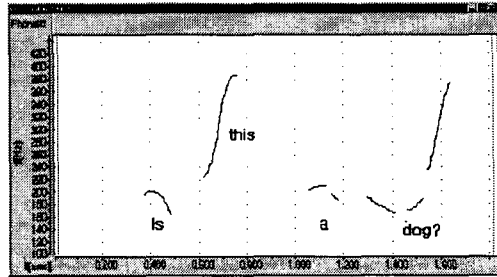
A: Is this a dog?

B: Yes, it is. His name's Spot.

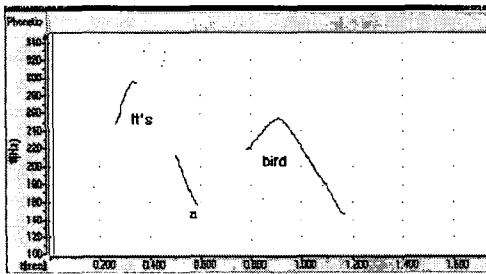
The sound patterns of these expressions can be visualized as in fig. 7-12.



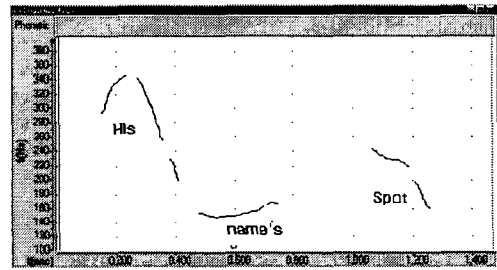
<Figure7> When you ask for information using WH-word



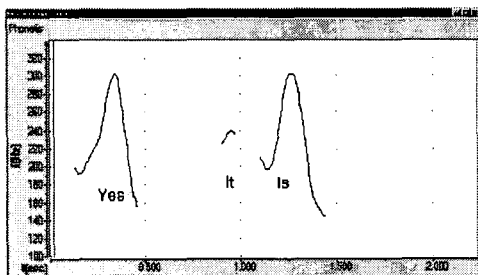
<Figure8> When you give someone's name



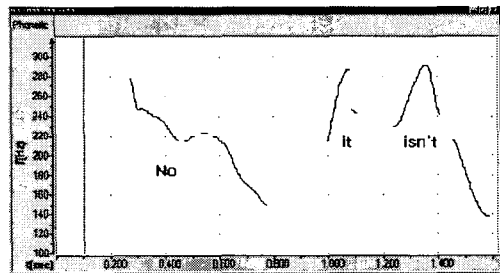
<Figure9> When you give information



<Figure10> When you clarify



<Figure11> When you give an affirmative answer



<Figure12> When you give a negative answer

## **4. Pronunciation on the web**

### **4.1 Web sites on English pronunciation**

All the current trends in the implementation of multimedia technology in English language instruction have focused on how computer programs and Internet can be successfully integrated into the English language classroom. Could there be a way for us to help students improve pronunciation, using the web technology? The search engine, <http://www.yahoo.com>, shows many web sites related with English pronunciation. Among them are:

<http://www.jps.net/jhalbert/PronunciationSite/resources.html>;

<http://classweb.gmu.edu/classweb/swidmaye/sounds/links.htm>;

<http://www.engl.polyu.edu.hk/MATERIALS/Pronunciation/>

<http://www.worldenglish.org/engsoul.html>

<http://www.americanaccent.com>

Most web sites focus on vowels and consonants in details, using different design for the audio output. But the current ideas on the teaching of pronunciation is not reflected.

### **4.2 Pronunciation onto a textbook -integrated web model**

Instead of having a separate section of pronunciation as in normal conversation textbooks or on the web site, pronunciation can be introduced on a textbook-integrated English language program along with the speaking or listening activities as in fig 13. The expressions in Dialog (2) in *New Interchange 1A* are commonly used when meeting a person.

(2) Sarah: Hi, Tom. How's everything?





Tom: Not bad. How are you?

Sarah: Pretty good, thanks.

[HOME]

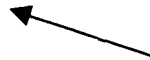
Part seven: CONVERSATION -Asking about someone

- 1 Please call me Chuck.
- 2 How do you spend your day?
- 3 How much is it?
- 4 Do you like jazz?
- R Review of Units 1-4
- 5 Tell me about your family.
- 6 How often do you play?
- 7 We had a great time!

- Direction A 
- Conversation A 
- Direction B 
- Conversation B 

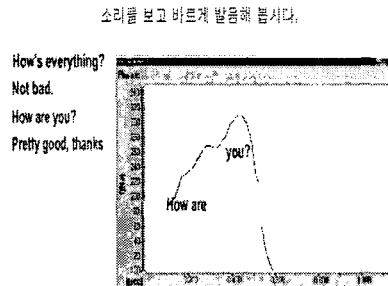
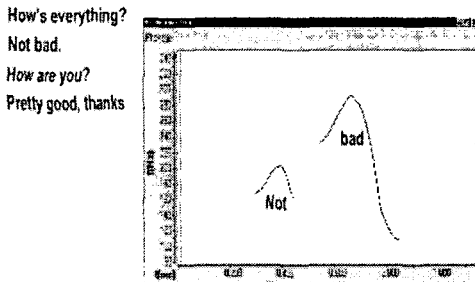
소리를 보고 바르게 발음해 봅시다.

How's everything?  
 Not bad.  
 How are you?  
 Pretty good, thanks



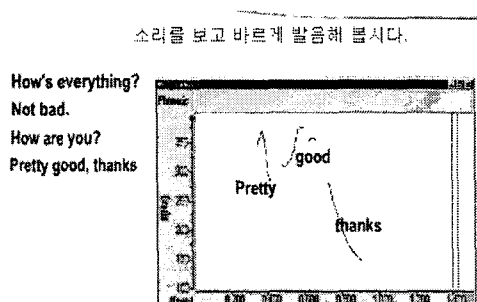
<Figure13>

Students can see the sound pattern of each expression as it pops up as in fig. 15 when they put a mouse on the expression. The sound can be heard when clicked. The visual displays of these expressions can be show as in Fig 14.

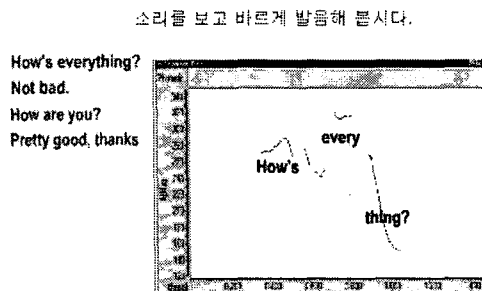


소리를 보고 바르게 발음해 봅시다.





&lt;Figure 14&gt;



&lt;Figure14&gt;

Students listen to the conversation and see some visualized expressions to say them appropriately. Visualization helps students understand that the sound of same expression can change in a different situation as in the expression ‘How are you?’, where the normal sentence stress is put on the word ‘are’

## 5. What teachers need to know

### 5.1 Intonation, links, and reduction

Students can easily perceive the visualized sound pattern of English. Many speech analyzers draw the intonation contour of an utterance. The intonation contour shows how links and reduction are pronounced. Linking and reduction involves the changes in the height, loudness, and length of sound. This sound change is easily spotted in visualized intonation. Visualized English integrates intonation, links, and reduction otherwise would be individually treated.

### 5.2 Checklist

Teachers need a checklist to assess the pronunciation of their students. Checklists on pronunciation usually check major problems students make when they pronounce vowels, consonants, stress and prominence, adjustments in connected speech, and

intonation. As for intonation, the intonation features of sentence types are mostly dealt. We can provide a checklist that checks the sound pattern of a communicative expression.

Possible checklist for a communicative expression X:

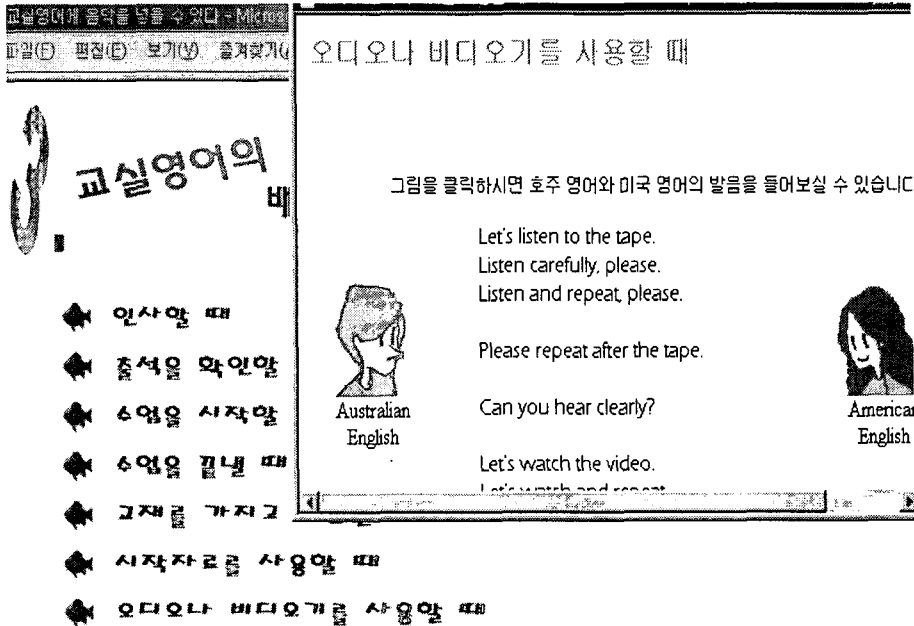
1. The choice of pitch
2. The change of pitch direction
3. When the sound goes up, does it sound longer and louder?
4. When the sound goes down, does it sound shorter and lower?
5. When two words are linked or reduced to one word, does the sound of it get lower and shorter?

### **6. Conclusion and further implications**

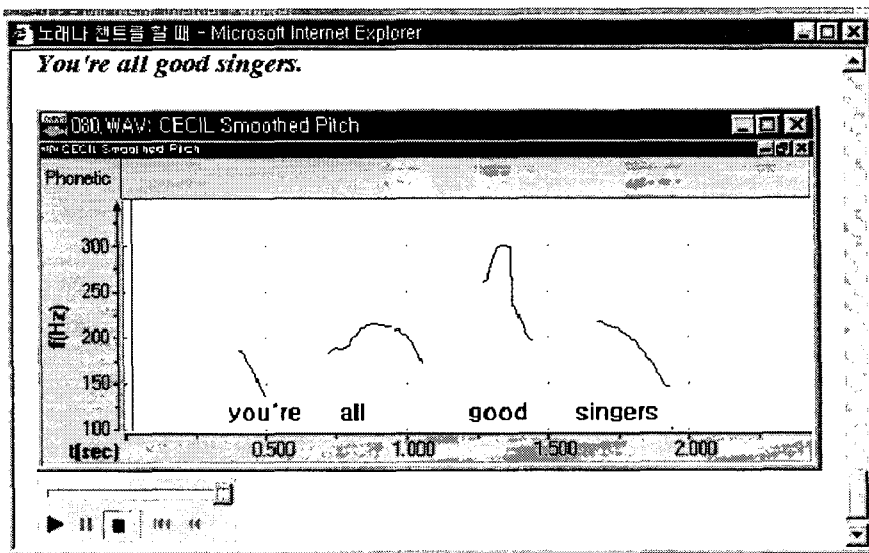
An expression, which carries a specific communicative intention, changes its sound pattern in a different situation. The sound pattern can be visualized for students to feel and say it right in an appropriate situation. With a help of a speech analyzer, we can easily visualize useful expressions. But common users might have a problem operating a speech analyzer. Speech analyzers have their own technical problems and user, both teachers and students, do not possess the phonetic sophistication needed to match visual and auditory signals. To reduce these problems, a database of visualized communicative expressions should be constructed for an easy access. We can classify useful expressions in different situations, analyze their sound pattern with speech analyzers, and develop a web-based program for English learners.

For the start of database construction, I have designed a classroom-English web-based program with a book.(Kim, 1999). I classified classroom English to 14 possible situations, analyzed expressions in different situations with "Speech Analyzer 1.06 as

in fig. 15-16.



<Figure15>



<Figure16>

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