Problems of Discrepancy between English Vowels and Spelling

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\<Contents\>

\<내용 요약\>

영어 모음과 철자간 대응성 결여 문제

兪萬根(성균관대)

음성 영어교육에서 각 음소(모음·자음) 음가 인식이 중요한 것은 물론이지만, 실제로 영어를 듣고 말하는 데는 강세모음과 약음(주로 ə 음)이 번갈아들며 엮어내는 영어 특유 말씨 박자에 대한 이해가 오히려 더 중요한 면이 있다.

그런데 영어 철자가 자음 정보는 비교적 잘 보여주지만, 모음 정보는 정확히 알려주지 못한다. 이를테면 iː / ɪ / ɔː / uː / ɑː 를 적는 철자가 각각 20가지 이상이며, 특히 쭉정모음(schwa) ə를 적는 철자는 무려 90가지가 넘는다. 이 ə는 강세 그늘에서 비록 짧고 약하게 발음되지만 영어에서 딴 어느 모음보다도 훨씬 높은 빈도를 보이기 때문에 [ə] 음가와 그것이 있는 자리, 즉 철자 밑에 숨어 그 존재를 알기 어려운 ə 음의 소재를 철저히 파악하는 것은 영어를 잘 듣고 영어답게 말하는 데에 필수 요체라 할 수 있다.

이 글에서는 쭉정모음(schwa) [ə]를 포함한 영어 주요 모음 철자 다양성을 고찰하여 우리나라 음성 영어 교육(TEFL/TESOL)에 귀중한 참고 자료를 제공하고, 이를 통한 올바른 영어 발음 학습 태도를 제언한다.

0. Introduction

There are two kinds of pronunciation difficulties that the learner of English has to surmount. One is the difficulty of English sounds themselves. In this case a lot of systematic and practical phonetic training is needed. The other kind of difficulty, which the writer intends to discuss now, is the discrepancy between sounds and spelling.

In order to learn the correct pronunciation of English it is necessary, to a certain extent, to ignore the general phenomenon of letter-to-sound correspondence which is usually seen in the phonemic writing systems of the Greek, Roman, and Korean/Corean alphabets.

Corean learners of English who are accustomed to the use of the phonemic alphabet of their own which is called Hanngul (see Youe. 1997:2) have a strong tendency to spelling pronunciation even when they read English.

Surveys over a couple of decades (Youe. 1976:169~183, 1998:83~87, etc.) show their English vowel discrimination ability remains around 30 marks out of 100 full marks. That may be said to be no wonder if we see the extent of discrepancies between English vowels and spelling, as partly listed below.

Examples of various sound values of one and the same letter or digraph

\<letter a\>	\< letter o\>	\<digraph ou\>
1. ɑː (f<u>a</u>ther)	1. əʊ (h<u>o</u>me)	1. əʊ (s<u>ou</u>l)
2. eɪ (n<u>a</u>me)	2. ɒ (b<u>o</u>x)	2. ɔː (f<u>ou</u>r)
3. æ (c<u>a</u>t)	3. ɔː (c<u>o</u>rd)	3. ʊə (t<u>ou</u>r)
4. e (m<u>a</u>ny	4. ʌ (sp<u>o</u>nge)	4. aʊə (<u>ou</u>r)
5. eə (sp<u>a</u>re)	5. ɜː (att<u>o</u>rney)	5. ɜː (j<u>ou</u>rney)
6. ɒ (w<u>a</u>nt)	6. ʊ (b<u>o</u>som)	6. ɒ (Gl<u>ou</u>cester)
7. ɔː (<u>a</u>ll)	7. uː (d<u>o</u>)	7. aʊ (s<u>ou</u>th)
8. ɪ (vill<u>a</u>ge)	8. ə (meth<u>o</u>d)	8. ʌ (y<u>ou</u>ng)
9. ə (oper<u>a</u>)	9. ɪ (w<u>o</u>men)	9. ʊ (c<u>ou</u>ldn't)
10. wɒ (Q<u>a</u>ntas)	10. juː (D<u>o</u>uglas-H<u>o</u>me)	10. uː (gr<u>ou</u>p)
11. *silent* (tot<u>a</u>l)	11. *silent* (butt<u>o</u>n)	11. ə (fam<u>ou</u>s)···

These examples stand out in striking contrast to Corean *Hanngul* spellings in which the vowel letters are used nearly like phonetic symbols as can be seen in the list of Corean Basic Syllables in *Appendix* at the end of this paper.

Examples of numerous spellings for one and the same vowel sound.

(British English/RP is transcribed here for the examples.)

1. / iː /

1. *aint*	St. Maur	'siːmɔː	(cf. Seymour)
2. *aiu*	Caius	kiːz	
3. *(u)ay*	quay	kiː	
4. *e*	even	'iːvn	
5. *ea*	sea	siː	
6. *eau*	Beauchamp	'biːtʃəm	
7. *ee*	tree	triː	
8. *e'e*	e'en	iːn	
9. *eet*	Teetgen	'tiːdʒən	
10. *egh*	Legh	liː	

11. *ehe*	Cotehele	kə'tiːl	
12. *ei*	receive	rɪ'siːv	
13. *eig*	Teign	tiːn	
14. *eigh*	Keightley	'kiːtlɪ	
15. *el*	Belvoir	'biːvə	
16. *eo*	people	'piːpl̩	
17. *ey*	key	kiː	
18. *i*	pizza	'piːtsə	
19. *ie*	field	fiːld	
20. *ig*	Vignes	viːnz	

21. *igh*	Altsigh	'ælt'ʃiː
22. *oe*	Phoebe	'fiːbɪ
23. *u*	Sulwen	'siːlwən
24. *y*	Bampfyld	'bæmfiːld
25. *ye*	Margolyes	'mɑːgəliːz
26. *zea*	Gilzean	gɪ'liːn ⋯

2. / ɪ /

1. *a*	village	'vɪlɪdʒ
2. *ai*	Ardrishaig	ɑː'drɪʃɪg

3. *ay*   Barclay   'bɑːklɪ
4. *dwi* Childwickbury 'tʃɪlɪkbərɪ
5. *e*   pretty   'prɪtɪ
6. *ea*   Breadalbane   brɪ'dælbɪn
7. *ee*   coffee   'kɒfɪ
8. *ehea* forehead   'fɒrɪd
9. *eig* foreign   'fɒrən
10. *eigh* Ardleigh   'ɑːdlɪ

10. *ew*   Carew   'keərɪ
12. *ey*   Boleyn   bə'lɪn
13. *hei* Blenheim   'blenɪm
14. *house* Muirhouses 'mʌrɪz
15. *i*   fizzy   'fɪzɪ
16. *ie*   cities   'sɪtɪz
17. *ieu* Beaulieu   'bjuːlɪ
18. *ight* Kirkcubright kə'kuːbrɪ
19. *ioch* Garioch   'gɪərɪ
20. *o*   women   'wɪmɪn

21. *(u)oy* Norquoy   'nɔːkɪ
22. *u*   busy   'bɪzɪ
23. *ui*   building   'bɪldɪŋ
24. *wi*   Anwick   'ænɪk
25. *wy*   Alswyck   'æsɪk
26. *y*   symbol   'sɪmbl
27. *ye*   Adye   'eɪdɪ···

3. / ɔː /

1. *a*   all   ɔːl
2. *aa*   Braal   brɔːl
3. *aha* Brahan   brɔːn
4. *al*   talk   tɔːk
5. *ar*   warm   wɔːm
6. *as*   Arkansas   'ɑːkənsɔː
7. *au*   author   'ɔːθə

8. *augh* Brad**laugh**   brædlɔː

9. *augha* M**augha**m   mɔːm

10. *augher* M**augher**sbury   'mɔːzbərɪ

11. *ave* **Ave**ton   'ɔːtn

12. *aw* l**aw**   lɔː

13. *ea* S**ea**n   ʃɔːn

14. *eor* Col**eor**ton   kɒ'lɔːtn

15. *oa* br**oa**d   brɔːd

16. *oar* r**oar**   rɔː

17. *oha* L**oha**n   lɔːn

18. *oor* d**oor**   dɔː

19. *or* l**or**d   lɔːd

20. *ore* m**ore**   mɔː

21. *ough* b**ough**t   bɔːt

22. *ougha* Y**ougha**l   jɔːl

23. *our* p**our**   pɔː

24. *ower* P**ower**scourt   'pɔːzkɔːt

25. *oy* Chys**oy**ster   tʃaɪ'sɔːstə···

4. / uː /

1. *(e)au* b**eau**ty   'bjuːtɪ

2. *euch* Buccl**euch**   bə'kluː

3. *ew* cr**ew**   kruː

4. *ewe* Car**ewe**   kə'ruː

5. *ewoo* Br**ewoo**d   bruːd

6. *o* m**o**ve   muːv

7. *oeu* man**oeu**vre   mə'nuːvə

8. *ohu* B**ohu**n   buːn

9. *oe* sh**oe**   ʃuː

10. *oo* f**oo**d   fuːd

11. *ou* s**ou**p   suːp

12. *oud* Bert**oud**   'bɜːtuː

13. *ough* thr**ough**   θruː

14. *ougha* **Brough**am   bruːm
15. *oul*   **Boul**mer   buːmə
16. *oux*   Cad**oux**   kəˈduː
17. *u*   **r**ule   ruːl
18. *ue*   tr**ue**   truː
19. *ui*   fr**ui**t   fruːt
20. *ul*   C**ul**ross   ˈkuːrəs
21. *w*   Aberffr**w**d   ˌæbəˈfruːd ⋯

5. / ɑː /

1. *a*   f**a**ther   ˈfɑːðə
2. *agha* **Agha**nloo   ɑːnˈluː
3. *agher* M**agher**amorne   ˌmɑːrəˈmɔːn
4. *ah*   **ah**   ɑː
5. *aha*   C**aha**n   kɑːn
6. *aho*   McM**aho**n   məkˈmɑːn
7. *air*   Sh**air**p   ʃɑːp
8. *al*   c**al**m   kɑːm
9. *ald*   C**ald**more   ˈkɑːmə
10. *ar*   f**ar**   fɑː

11. *arre* M**arre**   mɑː
12. *aru* B**aru**gh   bɑːk/f
13. *ath* McGr**ath**   məˈgrɑː
14. *au*   l**au**gh   lɑːf
15. *awar* H**awar**den   ˈhɑːdn
16. *awi* Bl**awi**th   blɑːð
17. *ear* h**ear**t   hɑːt
18. *earr* C**earr**   kɑː
19. *er*   s**er**jeant   ˈsɑːdʒənt
20. *oir* mem**oir**   ˈmemɑː ⋯

Lastly, for the schwa [ə], the empty vowel or the weak neutral vowel, more than 90 spellings are listed here. It has taken the writer over 20 years, on and off, to collect these examples. The number may reach one hundred in later years. So, the first thing to do for improving foreign accent of English may be to identify this weak

vowel schwa, and pronounce it properly whatever spelling it may be hidden in.

6. / ə /

1.	*a*	opera	ˈɒprə
2.	*aa*	Isaac	ˈaɪzək
3.	*a'a*	ma'am	məm
4.	*ac*	MacGregor	məˈgregə
5.	*ach*	Margach	ˈmɑːgə
6.	*adh*	Monadhliadh	ˌməʊnəˈliːə
7.	*ae*	St. Dogmaels	sntˈdɒgməlz
8.	*aer*	Caernavonshire	kəˈnɑːvnʃə
9.	*ai*	mountain	ˈmaʊntən
10.	*ag*	Monaghan	ˈmɒnəhən
11.	*agh*	Ardagh	ˈɑːdə
12.	*ah*	Hannah	ˈhænə
13.	*aha*	Wilbraham	ˈwɪlbrəm
14.	*air*	Alastair	ˈælɪstə
15.	*ar*	leopard	ˈlepəd
16.	*arr*	Bessacarr	ˈbesəkə
17.	*au*	Mauritius	məˈrɪʃəs
18.	*auer*	Warschauer	ˈwɒʃə
19.	*augh*	Healaugh	ˈhiːlə
20.	*aw*	Ushaw	ˈʌʃə
21.	*ay*	Islay	ˈaɪlə
22.	*c*	McGuire	məˈgwaɪə
23.	*e*	moment	ˈməʊmənt
24.	*ea*	Eleanor	ˈelənə
25.	*ear*	Winearls	ˈwɪnəlz
26.	*eau*	bureaucrat	ˌbjʊərəˈkræt
27.	*eha*	Wykehamist	ˈwɪkəmɪst
28.	*ei*	Blabhein	ˈblɑːvən
29.	*eo*	luncheon	ˈlʌntʃən
30.	*er*	concert	ˈkɒnsət

31. *ere* **were*** wə
32. *erg* Wyb**erg** ˈwaɪbə
33. *h* Syz**ergh** ˈsaɪzə
34. *eu* Ratch**eu**gh ˈrætʃəf
35. *eur* amat**eur** ˈæmətə
36. *ewa* Alr**ewa**s ˈɔːlrəs
37. *eyr* Le Lach**eyr** lə ˈlæʃə
38. *gh* Edinbur**gh** ˈedɪnbərə
39. *gha* Seber**gha**m ˈsebərəm
40. *ghe* Roxbur**ghe** ˈrɒksbərə

41. *ha* Dur**ha**m ˈdʌrəm
42. *(u)har* Sanq**uhar** ˈsæŋkə
43. *her* Am**her**st ˈæməst
44. *ho* Bur**ho**p ˈbʌrəp
45. *hol* Chis**hol**m ˈtʃɪzəm
46. *how* Torpen**how** trɪˈpenə
47. *i* horr**i**ble ˈhɒrəbl
48. *ia* parl**ia**ment ˈpɑːləmənt
49. *iar* White Fr**iar**gate ˈwaɪtfrəgeɪt
50. *ier* Bouch**ier** ˈbaʊtʃə

51. *ieu* l**ieu**tenant ləˈtenənt (*Br. navy. Cf.* lefˈtenənt *in Br. army*)
52. *ir* V**ir**ginia vəˈdʒɪnɪə
53. *ire* Berksh**ire** ˈbɑːkʃə
54. *iu* Ag**iu**s ˈeɪdʒəs
55. *o* meth**o**d ˈmeθəd
56. *o'* **O'**Grady əˈgreɪdɪ
57. *oa* Heathc**oa**t ˈhiːθkət
58. *oar* cupb**oar**d ˈkʌbəd
59. *oe* d**oe**s* dəz
60. *oh* Mendelss**oh**n ˈmendlsən

61. *oi* tort**oi**se ˈtɔːtəs
62. *oir* Belv**oir** ˈbiːvə
63. *ol* Linc**ol**n ˈlɪŋkən

64. *old*	Ingoldmells	ˈɪŋgəmelz
65. *olqu*	Colquhoun	kəˈhuːn
66. *or*	effort	ˈefət
67. *ou*	famous	ˈfeɪməs
68. *ough*	bor**ough**	ˈbʌrə
69. *our*	Melb**our**ne	ˈmelbən
70. *o(u)re*	labo**(u)r**ed	ˈleɪbəd
71. *ow*	Wig**tow**nshire	ˈwɪgtənʃə
72. *to*	Uzmaston	ˈʌzməsən
73. *re*	massacre	ˈmæsəkə
74. *rie*	Ruth**rie**ston	ˈrʌðəstən
75. *te*	of**te**n	ɒfən
76. *u*	focus	ˈfəʊkəs
77. *ue*	g**ue**rilla	gəˈrɪlə
78. *ur*	survival	səˈvaɪvl
79. *ure*	pleas**ure**	ˈpleʒə
80. *urgh*	Baw**burgh**	ˈbeɪbə
81. *ul*	Uff**cul**me	ˈʌfkəm
82. *wa*	Bur**wa**sher	ˈbʌrəʃə
83. *wai*	boats**wai**n	ˈbəʊsən
84. *war*	Rus**war**p	ˈrʌsəp
85. *ward*	Bear**ward**cote	ˈbærəkət
86. *wer*	ans**wer**	ˈɑːnsə
87. *wor*	Clap**wor**thy	ˈklæpərɪ
88. *y*	Mynachdy	məˈnækdɪ
89. *yr*	mart**yr**	ˈmɑːtə
90. *yre*	mart**yre**d	ˈmɑːtəd
91. *ywor*	penn**ywor**th	ˈpenəθ
92. ·	Arcedeckne	ɑːtʃˈdiːkən (= Archdeacon)

<div align="center">* a weak form.</div>

In phonology, English schwa is usually excluded from the vowel phoneme list because all the other vowels can become schwa in an unstressed position. In

phonetics, however, it is one of the 12 English simple vowels and one of the most important and difficult vowels for foreigners to learn correctly.

7. Conclusion

The above examples for the six English vowels may be enough to show foreigners' problems in learning correct English pronunciation, especially vowels. The main reason for these discrepancies is that English spellings has actually stopped changing for centuries although pronunciation has been changing all the time. This makes it easy for the descendants to read the language of their ancestors and follow tradition, while making it difficult for foreigners to learn English pronunciation.

When we learn the pronunciation of a new word in English, we are recommended to memorize it(word by word) like Chinese character pronunciation. While learning Chinese characters, we come to know that the similarity of character shapes does not necessarily tell the similarity of pronunciation. For instance, one character ±(meaning 'soil', where the bottom stroke is longer) pronounced [tʰo] and another ±(meaning 'gentleman', where the bottom stroke is shorter) pronounced [sʰaː] in Corean are similar to each other in shape, but there is no similarity at all in their pronunciation. So, if there were a new character in which the two horizontal strokes were of the same length, nobody could tell or guess the pronunciation of that new character.

Likewise, learners of English, being quite different from learners of Italian, Spanish or Corean, are strongly recommended to look up every new word in the dictionary for its pronunciation without relying on its spelling too much. Prior to that, it is needless to say that a full understanding of the vowel system of Modern English is indispensable.

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\<Appendix>

Basic Syllables of Seoul Corean

	a	ai	au	e	o	ou	uh	u	i/y	
	a	**ɛ**	**ɒ**	**e**	**o**	**u**	**ɤ**	**ɯ**	**i**	
	아	애	어	에	오	우	:어	으	이	
m	마	매	머	메	모	무	:머	므	미	
n	나	내	너	네	노	누	:너	느	니	
r/l	라	래	러	레	로	루	:러	르	리	
b	바	배	버	베	보	부	:버	브	비	
d	다	대	더	데	도	두	:더	드	디	
g	가	개	거	게	고	구	:거	그	기	
j	자	재	저	제	조	주	:저	즈	지	
s	사	새	서	세	소	수	:서	스	시	
h	하	해	허	혜	호	후	:허	흐	히	
ph	파	패	퍼	페	포	푸	:퍼	프	피	
th	타	태	터	테	토	투	:터	트	티	
kh	카	캐	커	케	코	쿠	:커	크	키	
ch	차	채	처	체	초	추	:처	츠	치	
p	빠	뻬	뻐	뻬	뽀	뿌	:뻐	쁘	삐	
t	따	때	떠	떼	또	뚜	:떠	뜨	띠	
k	까	깨	꺼	께	꼬	꾸	:꺼	끄	끼	
cz	짜	째	쩌	쩨	쪼	쭈	:쩌	쯔	찌	
ss	싸	쌔	써	쎄	쏘	쑤	:써	쓰	씨	
y	야	얘	여	예	요	유	:여	·	(의)	
w	와	왜	워	웨/외	·	·	:워	·	위	
	암	앰	엄	엠	옴	움	:엄	음	임	m
	안	앤	언	엔	온	운	:언	은	인	n
	앙	앵	엉	엥	옹	웅	:엉	웅	잉	ng
	알	앨	얼	엘	올	울	:얼	을	일	l
	압	앱	업	엡	옵	웁	:업	읍	입	b
	앋	앧	얻	엗	옫	욷	:얻	읃	읻	d
	악	액	억	엑	옥	욱	:억	윽	익	g

(Youe 1997. p.2)