



TEACHING METHODS ACCORDING TO THE STAGES OF KOREAN PRONUNCIATION EDUCATION

Kyung Ae Kim

Teacher in the Department of Korean Philology

Uzbekistan State World Languages University;

good1017@gmail.com

Abstract

In teaching Korean as a foreign language, pronunciation instruction is the most important aspect of speaking and listening education. No matter how accurately a learner uses Korean grammar or expresses themselves with appropriate vocabulary, if they speak with incorrect pronunciation, their intended meaning may not be properly conveyed to the listener, potentially causing major misunderstandings in communication. As such, pronunciation plays a crucial role in communication, and in Korean language education, pronunciation instruction can be considered the foundation of teaching Korean. Similar to the process of language acquisition, in foreign language learning, pronunciation tends to become fixed in the early stages. Therefore, if pronunciation is not properly taught early on, it becomes difficult to correct later. This paper presents teaching methods according to the stages of Korean pronunciation education, along with specific types of pronunciation training activities.

Keywords: Korean, Korean language education, standard pronunciation, pronunciation education, pronunciation errors, pronunciation teaching methods, pronunciation assessment.

Introduction

Foreign language proficiency is determined by how well a person can speak that language. In foreign language acquisition, there is often confusion about whether the goal should be to produce accurate pronunciation and grammatically error-free sentences (accuracy), or to focus on natural and fluent language use (fluency). Fluency is the goal of communicative language teaching methods, while accuracy is also crucial, as it encourages learners to pay attention to their pronunciation,

grammar, and discourse features during interaction. In the end, both accuracy and fluency are undeniably important goals that cannot be overlooked.

Among the various factors influencing foreign language learning, a learner's mother tongue is one of the most significant. The fact that different issues arise depending on the learner's native language supports this. In other words, interference from the native language in foreign language learning is an unavoidable reality. Pronunciation, in particular, is the area most influenced by the learner's native language. So why is pronunciation education important in language instruction? Just as in the process of acquiring a first language, pronunciation in foreign language learning tends to become fixed in the early stages. Therefore, if proper pronunciation instruction is not provided early on, it becomes difficult to correct later. This phenomenon, where incorrect forms become fixed, is known as **fossilization**. Although fossilization is a natural part of language acquisition, it becomes problematic in the process of learning a foreign language if the learner's language fossilizes into an **interlanguage**—a form that is neither the target language nor the native language—and fails to fully develop into the target language.

Korean language learners have a variety of goals. Therefore, if a learner's goal is basic communication, then pronunciation that is understandable to others may be sufficient. However, if the learner aims to use Korean professionally—for example, as a diplomat or interpreter—then it is necessary to master pronunciation at a native-like level. This is because pronunciation typically gives the first impression of a speaker's fluency in a language. As such, the degree of pronunciation instruction may vary depending on the learner's goals.

Nevertheless, there are minimum objectives that all Korean pronunciation education should aim for. Not only in Korean language education, but in language education in general, pronunciation instruction should have the following essential goals:

1. Focus on communication.

Since language is a tool for communication, pronunciation instruction should aim for a level that is intelligible when speaking Korean.

2. Focus on comprehensibility.

For communication to occur, the listener must be able to understand what the speaker is saying. Therefore, the goal should be to maintain a level of pronunciation that ensures the listener understands well and that the conversation flows naturally without interruption.

3. Build confidence.

Confidence is crucial in language use. If learners lack confidence in their pronunciation, they may not be able to speak comfortably, making it even harder for listeners to understand them. Thus, pronunciation instruction should help learners gain the confidence to speak freely.

4. Enable error correction.

Ultimately, learners should develop the ability and strategies to listen to native Korean pronunciation, evaluate their own speech, and self-correct their errors.

In Korean language education, the pronunciation teaching model can be divided into three stages: **presentation** → **practice** → **production**.

First, the **presentation stage** is where learners are introduced to specific sounds and their related characteristics, helping them recognize and become familiar with those sounds. This stage typically includes explanation, analysis, and discrimination (listening and identifying) activities. The teacher provides clear explanations about when and how certain pronunciations and phonological rules appear. Additionally, learners are exposed to natural native pronunciation through listening and discrimination activities. By intensively exposing learners to sounds they may not have noticed before, they are guided to discover and understand the rules on their own. Various games can be used where teachers and learners or learners among themselves engage in discrimination and reaction-based tasks. Next, in the **practice stage**, learners should be guided not only to imitate the target pronunciation through repeated practice, but also to internalize it as part of their own speech. Since the practiced pronunciation has not yet become firmly established, structured texts such as dialogues, explanations, or scripts are used. This stage involves active practicing based on the presentations given earlier. In the early phases, the focus is on specific sound patterns or contrasts, using elements embedded in context. Activities such as reading aloud, repeating sentences, poems,

or dialogues are effective. Then, as learners progress, the focus broadens from form alone to include meaning, grammar, and communication. Pre-written texts such as role-plays based on drama scenes or prepared storytelling presentations are used. It's important for learners to apply the pronunciation they've practiced in communication situations that resemble real life.

Finally, the **production stage** aims to help learners spontaneously and creatively produce speech using the new pronunciation they have acquired through the previous stages, in natural contexts. The focus here is on developing the learners' linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies. Activities in this stage include surveys, role-plays, interviews, impromptu speeches, and panel discussions—all without relying on fixed texts, encouraging learners to use both form and meaning in speech.

A key point is to avoid overwhelming learners with too many elements at once, which could dilute learning goals or scatter their attention. It's important to guide learners to focus on just one or two pronunciation features during communicative activities. For example, if the target pronunciation activity focuses on assimilation phenomena and the practice involves a role-play, learners should complete the task while paying attention to assimilation. To enhance the effectiveness of pronunciation instruction, pronunciation should be assessed occasionally, with appropriate praise or feedback. Regular dictation activities help learners naturally absorb Korean's complex phonological rules. To help them speak fluently, learners should begin by speaking slowly to ensure accuracy and then gradually practice increasing speed. There are various types of activities for pronunciation education:

First, listening and repeating: Learners are exposed to native speakers' pronunciation as much as possible and repeat what they hear. Teachers attach commonly used vowels to consonants and change the consonants systematically during instruction.

Second, phonetic training: Learners practice each sound used in Korean in various ways. Each segmental sound is explained along with its place and manner of articulation. Learners are encouraged to pronounce the same sounds in different phonetic environments and discover the principles on their own. They learn all the allophones of Korean letters. For example, when teaching /ㄷ/, the differences

between final sounds (like in *dal*, *kkul*, *sul*) and intervocalic sounds (like in *sori*, *nara*, *dari*) are explained, with accurate pronunciation provided to help learners clearly recognize the differences.

Third, phoneme recognition with picture cards: This activity focuses on identifying the initial phonemes accurately. Cards have a picture on one side and a word (with the initial consonant in red) on the other. Learners listen to the accurate pronunciation while focusing on the initial consonant rather than the vowel or final consonant. Although explaining the meaning isn't essential, it's helpful for vocabulary expansion.

Fourth, listening and choosing the picture card: Learners listen to a word while looking at illustrated cards and repeat the word to practice individual sounds. Once learners have some understanding of Korean phonemes, the teacher lays out multiple word cards and has the learners pick the correct one based on the sound they hear, turning it into a game.

Fifth, minimal pair practice in context: Words like *dal-ttal-tal* (which differ in just one sound) are effective for distinguishing problem phonemes. While simple word-level minimal pair practice is suitable for beginners, it lacks context. For intermediate or advanced learners, it's better to use minimal pairs in full sentence contexts, such as:

- “우리 딸은 달을 좋아한다” (My daughter likes the moon)
- “굴 맛이 꿀맛 같다” (The oyster tastes like honey)
- “방에 들어가서 빵을 먹자” (Let's go into the room and eat bread)

Sixth, tongue-twister practice: Repeating sentences with similar sounds that are hard to pronounce helps learners become more fluent. While this may not greatly improve practical pronunciation, it helps them distinguish similar sounds and can be made fun through games. Examples include:

- ㄱ - ㅋ - ㆁ: “거기 그 강낭콩 콩깍지는 깐 강낭콩 콩깍지이고, 여기 이 강낭콩 콩깍지는 안 깐 강낭콩 콩깍지이다.”

- ㄷ - ㅌ - ㅎ: "동그란 통에 든 떡은 꿀떡이고, 동그랗지 않은 통에 든 떡은 찰떡이다."
- ㅅ - ㅆ - ㅅㅅ: "밥그릇에 빠진 과리는 프랑스 과리인가? 브라질 과리인가?"
- ㅅ - ㅆ: "새로 산 신은 싸구려 신이 아니고, 새로 사지 않은 신은 싸구려 신이다."

Seventh, dictation: The teacher says a word, and the learner writes it down. This is a useful activity to combine listening practice with checking how learners perceive individual phonemes.

Eighth, reading sentences: Learners read sentences that contain words they practiced previously, helping them pronounce naturally in real speech. While learners may pronounce words carefully in isolation, they tend to make more mistakes at the sentence level, so teachers should guide them to maintain accurate pronunciation within sentences.

Ninth, reading aloud and performing role-plays: Learners receive a script to read. They are encouraged to memorize it and act it out using body language, facial expressions, and other non-verbal elements. The difficulty of the script depends on the learner's level:

- Beginners: Use textbook dialogues
- Intermediate: Use real-life ads or fun comic strips
- Advanced: Use real scripts from popular dramas or films

Tenth, recording learners' speech: Learners record themselves during pronunciation practice, free talking, impromptu speeches, or role-plays. These recordings are used for self-evaluation, peer feedback, and teacher evaluation.

Eleventh, drama dubbing: Suitable for advanced learners. After selecting a drama and distributing the script, learners practice their roles. They record their voices over a muted video. This activity is engaging and helps with rhythm and pauses in Korean speech.

Twelfth, singing activities: Songs are used to teach pronunciation in a fun and motivating way.

For

산토끼

토끼야

어디를

example:

가느냐?

깡충깡충

뛰면서

어디를

가느냐?

산고개

고개를

나

혼자

넘어서

토실토실 알밤을 주워서 올 테야.

Pronunciation assessment should fundamentally be integrated with listening and speaking activities. When learners can read Hangul, assessments can also be connected with reading, allowing for a variety of evaluation methods. Broadly, pronunciation assessment can be divided into two categories: **assessment using listening** and **assessment using speaking**.

1. Assessment Using Listening

This type of evaluation assesses the learner's listening ability regarding Korean letters and various phonological phenomena.

Listening and repeating: Learners repeat sentences that contain the pronunciation elements to be evaluated. Important considerations include:

- Use clear instructions, but keep them simple.
- Each sentence should assess only one pronunciation element.
- Sentences should be read at a natural speed and rhythm.

Listening and distinguishing: For beginner learners, visual aids are used to help them distinguish between words that sound similar in pronunciation but differ in meaning.

- **Minimal pairs** can be used to evaluate understanding of the semantic differences caused by one segmental phoneme.
- If appropriate pictures are unavailable, a pair of example sentences can be used instead.

Examples:

- 오 ^ㅅ (cucumber) – 아 ^ㅅ (child)
- 자 ^다 (to sleep) – 사 ^다 (to buy)
- 새 ^ㅣ (bird) – 개 ^ㅣ (dog) – 해 ^ㅣ (sun)
- 발 ^ㅣ (foot) – 팔 ^ㅣ (arm)
- 달 ^ㅣ (moon) – 딸 ^ㅣ (daughter)

2. Assessment Using Speaking

This type of evaluation assesses individual phonemes, rhythm, intonation, and the learner's overall ability to convey meaning effectively through pronunciation.

Dialogic (Interactive) Speaking Tasks:

- Pair interviews between learners
- Learners interviewing the teacher
- Role-playing activities

Monologic (Solo) Speaking Tasks:

- Describing a picture or map
- Retelling the content of audiovisual materials
- Giving a presentation
- Interpreting

Discussion-Based Speaking Tasks:

- Participating in discussions
- Engaging in debates

Cautions in Pronunciation Instruction

1. Do not overemphasize distinctions that even native Korean speakers do not make.

For example, vowels such as / ㅏ / and / ㅓ / are rarely distinguished in actual speech. Therefore, pronunciation should not be forced strictly according to orthography.

2. Do not allow double final consonants (겹받침) unless necessary, and once a sound is conveyed to the learner, it should be maintained consistently throughout instruction.

3. The teacher serves as a pronunciation model, so even outside of class, the teacher should speak accurately and pay close attention to whether learners are making efforts to pronounce correctly.

4. Learners must understand the meaning of sentences while practicing pronunciation.

When selecting new sounds to teach, consider their relative difficulty within the entire phonological system and start with easier ones.

5. Use appropriate educational transcription methods and audiovisual aids.

This includes tongue movement diagrams, photos of oral structures and lips, comparison charts between Korean and other foreign languages, and videos aimed at improving communicative ability. Provide plenty of exposure to standard pronunciation.

6. Teachers should have a solid knowledge of phonetics to explain simple articulatory methods effectively.

In accordance with the discussed methods of Korean pronunciation instruction, a three-step approach—**Presentation** → **Practice** → **Production**—has been proposed to enable pronunciation training within a communicative context. The reason why Korean language learners often mispronounce Korean vowels and consonants is not only due to the influence of their native language but also because they often fail to accurately recognize the distinguishing features within the Korean phoneme system itself.

Such pronunciation errors typically occur not because learners are incapable of producing certain vowels or consonants, but because they have not explicitly learned the necessary conditions for pronouncing each sound accurately. To address this issue, Korean language teachers must have specialized knowledge of Korean phonetics in order to anticipate and prevent learners' errors. If teachers are able to predict which vowels and consonants are likely to be confused within the Korean phoneme system and instruct accordingly, pronunciation errors can be significantly reduced.

However, current Korean language curricula in educational settings often do not include sufficient content on pronunciation instruction. As a result, even if teachers are aware of learners' pronunciation errors, they frequently lack the opportunity to address them in class. To resolve this problem, it is necessary to either include pronunciation-specific content in textbooks that teachers can use as instructional material, or design specialized classes that identify and correct learners'

pronunciation errors. **Pronunciation becomes habitual and fossilized in the early stages of learning**, so it must be thoroughly taught during the beginner level of Korean language education. Learners should be trained to recognize the differences between individual vowels and consonants and be able to pronounce them accurately. Furthermore, they should be guided to correct errors that arise from phonological changes or intonation patterns. Korean pronunciation affects all communicative functions, including speaking. Therefore, it is essential to recognize the importance of pronunciation and place equal emphasis on teacher training to ensure accurate instruction.

References

1. 국립국어원 표준 발음법 <http://www.korean.go.kr>
2. 국립국어원(허용 외)저, (여성결혼이민자 대상 한국어교원을 위한) 한국어 교육의 이해, 한국문화사, 2009, P 116~11
3. 강석한 외, 외국어로서의 한국어 발음과 유창성 연구, 이중언어학회 제67호, 2017, P1-29
4. 김선정 외, 외국어로서의 한국어 교육 발음론, 박이정, 2006, P15~17
5. 전나영, 한국어 학습자의 발음 문제와 교수 방법, <<문법연구>> 8, 한국문법교육학회, 2015, P249~276.
6. 전나영, 한국어 학습자를 위한 발음 교육 방안, 새국어생활 제25권 제1호, 2015, P 29-44