

## The Ten Phonetic Commandments for English Teachers in Korea

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- I. Phonetic Comparison of Korean and English.
- II. Phonetic Joke about Japanese Mispronunciation.
- III. The Role of Phonetics in Teaching and Learning Pronunciation
- IV. The Ten Phonetic Commandments for English Teachers in Korea

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### I. Phonetic Comparison of Korean and English

< Korean >	:	< English >
1) Triple Contrast of Consonants b/ph/p, d/th/t, g/kh/k, j/ch/c		Binary Contrast b/p, d/t, g/k, t/f, dr/tr, dz/ts
2) Fricatives: sh, s, h		f/v, θ/ð, s/z, ʃ/ʒ, h
3) [l/r] = allophonic variants		l/r = separate phonemes
4) lax/tense contrast indistinct i/i:, u/u:		lax/tense contrast i/i:, u/u:
5) Rounded/Unrounded Back u/ʊ, o/ʌ		Rounded Back only ɔ / ɔ / u
6) back vowel /ʌ/		schwa /ə/, /ɜ/
7) mainly strong forms		strong and weak forms

## II. Phonetic Joke About Japanese Mispronunciation

Let me quote a phonetic joke. It is about the Japanese speakers' failure to distinguish /r/ and /l/. Here goes the story :

[A Japanese American was a long time customer at his Greek restaurant because he'd discovered that they made especially tasty fried rice. Each evening he did come in, he would order 'f lied lice'. This always caused the Greek restaurant owner to nearly roll on the floor with laughter. Sometimes he had two or three friends stand nearby just to hear the Japanese customer order his 'f lied lice'. Eventually the customer decided to teach them a lesson. He took a special diction lesson just to be able to say 'fried rice' correctly. The next time he went to the restaurant he said very plainly, "fried rice, please." Unable to believe his ears, the Greek restaurant owner said, "Sir, Would you repeat that?" The Japanese American replied, "you heard what I said, you flucking Gleek.]

I have no idea whether this is a true story or invented one. But it certainly is a highly plausible story, considering the usual Japanese phonetic practice with [r] and [l]. This story also tells us the importance of linguistic phonetics in speech correction, i.e., what it can do to improve pronunciation. I would like to warn you that Koreans are no exceptions in this matter. They are destined to suffer from the l/r confusion just like Japanese people; fortunately in a slightly less serious manner.

## III. The Role of Phonetics in Teaching Pronunciation.

No doubt the science of linguistic phonetics can play an important role in linguistics, language teaching, speech pathology, music, stage arts, broadcasts, and criminal investigation, etc. Recently, the importance of phonetic science has been even more acutely felt in the fields of signal processing, speech synthesis and recognition. Today, I would like to limit my talk, however, to the role of phonetics in teaching pronunciation.

Many phoneticians have expounded the importance and advantages of phonetic sciences in teaching the pronunciation of foreign languages.

Let me quote some of them:

3.1 \*Eugène Ionesco, the famous French writer touched on the difficulty of learning to pronounce and the role of phonetics in pronunciation learning in his well-known work *La Leçon*:

"Pour apprendre à prononcer, il faut des années et des années. Grâce à la science, nous pouvons y parvenir en quelques minutes."

[It takes years and years to learn to pronounce. Thanks to science(of phonetics), however, we can do it only in a few minutes.]

3.2 \*1908, Henry Sweet, a great British phonetician and the undisputed father of modern phonetics, made a very impressive remark about the usefulness and advantages of phonetics in "The Sounds of English." (also included in English Phonetic Text edited by D. Abercrombie under the title "Advantages of Phonetics"). Some of the important points that Sweet made in his work are as follows:

1) Independence of residence abroad: The most evident advantages of phonetics is the independence it gives us. In the first place, it makes us independent of residence abroad. Even if the learner intends to go to the country where the language is spoken, it is a great advantage to him to start with a thorough practical knowledge of the sounds in which he is to practise himself.

2) Independence of native teachers: Phonetics makes us independent of native teachers. It is certain that a phonetically trained Englishman who has a clear knowledge of the relations between French and English sounds can teach French sounds to English people better than an unphonetic Frenchman who is unable to communicate his pronunciation to his pupils, and perhaps speaks a vulgar or dialectal form of French himself.

3) Capable of acquiring basic knowledge of the sounds of foreign languages without any outside help: Phonetics enables an intelligent adult to get a sound elementary knowledge of the sounds of a foreign language without any help from outside - that is, if he has an adequate phonetic analysis and transcription to work with.

4) Free of confusion about form and meaning: A secure grasp of the sounds of a language is a great strengthening of the mastery of its form and meanings. A minute discrimination of similar sounds in closely allied languages is the surest safeguard against otherwise inevitable confusions.

5) Literary and aesthetic use: Phonetics alone can breathe life into the dead mass of letters which constitute a written language; it alone can bring the rustic dialogues of our novels before every intelligent reader as living realities, and make us realize the living power and beauty of the ancient classical languages in prose and verse.

6) Essential part of grammar: Phonetics is not merely an indirect strengthener of grammatical associations, it is an essential part of grammar itself. A knowledge of sentence-stress and intonations is not only an essential part of elocution and correct pronunciation, but is also an integral part of the syntax of many languages. In short there is no branch of the study of language which can afford to dispense with phonetics.].

3.3 \*Daniel Jones enumerated five kinds of difficulties related to pronunciation and suggested the remedies for them. They are:

Difficulty No. 1. is a matter of ear-training or more accurately cultivation of the auditory memory. No one can hope to be a successful linguist unless he has a good ear. If his ear is unsensitive by nature, it may be made more sensitive by ear training; and if his ear is good by nature, it can be made still better by training.

The possession of a good ear is necessary to a linguist for two reasons. 1) If he has a good ear, he would be able to tell whether he pronounces the foreign sounds correctly or not 2) a good ear helps him to understand the language readily when spoken by natives; he recognizes words instantly, and does not mistake one word for another. The possession of a good ear involves 1) ability to discriminate between sounds, 2) ability to remember the acoustic qualities of foreign sounds, and 3) ability to recognize foreign sound with ease and certainty. In other words, the student must be able 1) to hear the differences between the various sounds of the foreign languages, and between foreign sound and sounds of his mother tongue.

To cultivate a good linguistic ear requires systematic practice in listening for sounds. There is only one effective exercise for this purpose, namely, dictation of isolated sounds and meaningless words by a teacher who can pronounce the foreign sounds accurately. The pupil should write down these sounds and words phonetically. If he makes a mistake in his transcription, it shows that he has confused one sound with another. The

teacher will in his case repeat the sounds a number of times in order to impress on the pupil's mind the difference of acoustic quality.

Difficulty No. 2 is a matter of gymnastics of the vocal organs. In order to learn to form the speech-sounds of a foreign language, the student has to learn how to put his tongue, lip, and other parts of the organs of speech into certain definite positions, or to perform with them certain actions. He will learn to make such sounds with the greatest accuracy and in the shortest time if he is told precisely what to do with his organs of speech, and 2) he is given, as far as may be necessary, exercises which help him to carry out the instructions.

In other words, the language learner should 1) study phonetic theory, and 2) do, when necessary, exercises based on that theory.

Difficulty 3: To learn what is the appropriate order in which to place the sounds so as to make intelligible words and sentences.

Difficulty 4: prosodic features, length, stress, pitch

Difficulty 5: To catenate properly.

### 3.4. Need for Oral Instruction

Some features of pronunciation can only be learnt with the aid of a teacher; other can be learnt from books. The services of a teacher are required mainly in connection with Difficulties 1 and 2. "The teacher 1) should act as a model of pronunciation, 2) to give the pupil ear-training exercises, 3) to tell him whether his attempts at the pronunciation of the foreign sounds and sound sequences are successful or not, 4) to devise means which help the pupil to improve his pronunciation.

### 3.5 Lesson from Japanese Case

It seems to me that Japanese people seem to have difficulty learning English vowels. For example, English vowels like [æ] as in "cat", "mad" and schwa [ə] as in "about", "account", and [ɜ:] as in "earn", "heard" are specially difficult vowels for Japanese speakers to pronounce. Therefore, many

Japanese fail to distinguish these vowels and tend to pronounce them all as one and the same, i.e., [a]. So all the words given above are usually pronounced as [kat], [mad], [abaut], [akaunt], [a:n], [ha:d]. Similarly, all vowels in the sentence "Her mother was back" would be pronounced as [a], thus the sentence being pronounced as [ha maza wazu bak].

What should be the role of the Japanese teacher here? He should first of all be able to serve as the model of the correction pronunciation for pupils. This means that the teacher should be able to pronounce the troublesome vowels with ease and accuracy so the students can hear and distinguish the vowels auditorily. What is the use of phonetic's lecture by a Japanese professor of phonetics, say, on English vowels, if he can not himself articulate these vowels correctly? I am quite confident that a thorough training using the Cardinal Vowel scale will provide phoneticians and language teachers with the auditory discriminatory power and correct vowel articulation.

### 3.6. Theory and Practice of Phonetics Essential

There is no denying that the knowledge of phonetics will be an enormous asset for people learning and teaching pronunciation of foreign language. But here one must bear in mind that we should be equipped with the real and authentic knowledge of phonetics and not a superficial one. I know there are many quasi-phoneticians everywhere we go, i.e. those who do talk about theories of phonetics but who can not really manage to pronounce the speech sounds of a foreign language correctly.

What I have tried to emphasize in this paper can be summarized as follows:

1. A language teacher, whether he or she is a phonetician or not, should be fairly well trained in speech sounds. He should be able to hear and produce the right sound with accuracy.

2. Phonetic theory alone is not sufficient when it comes to teaching and learning the pronunciation of foreign languages. Theory should be linked to practice. In other words, the teacher should be able to put phonetic theories into practice.

#### IV. Ten Phonetic Commandments for English Teachers in Korea

##### I. VOWELS:

1. /i:/ and /ɪ/ : seat/sit, heel/hill, seek/sick, heat/hit  
Are you ill ? -> Are you eel ?
2. /e/ -> /æ/ : bet/bat, set/sat, dead/dad
3. /ə:/ -> /ɑ/ -> /ʌ/ bird/turn; heart -> hurt,
4. /v/ -> /ɔ/ - lock, hog, ox,
5. Diphthongs : /eɪ/ - paper, say, day, game  
/aɪ/ - buy, site, pipe, sigh, high  
/ɔɪ/ - boy, toy, coin, Lloyd  
/ɛə/ - air, hair, bear, care  
/iə/ - ear, hear, appear
6. Strong and Weak Forms.  
as soon as he came, [ əz su:n əz hi keɪm ]  
I should have done it [aɪ ʃd əv dʌn ɪt]

##### II. CONSONANTS :

7. Fricatives: 1) f/v ; 2) θ/ð ; 3) z -> ʒ ; 4) ts -> tʃ ;  
5) dz -> ʒ ; 6) /l/ and /r/; dark l [ɫ]
8. Vowel Insertion : bird -> [bɜ:dɹ] ; hit [hɪtɹ] ; is [ɪzɹ]  
English [ɪŋɡwɪʃɪ]; course [kɔ:sɹ]
9. Consonant Clusters, /pl, tl, gl/, /tn/, /k/, /ml/, /nl/, etc.

## III. PROSODIC FEATURES :

## 10. Vowel length, Stress and Rhythm

1) Length(shortened): bird/turn/heart

2) Stress(misplaced and weak) :

'computer, de'mocratic, I'taly, u'nilateral

3) Rhythm: He 'wrote to the 'secretary (Eng.)

i Rot tu zi sɛ kRɛ tɛ Ri (French)

He 'wrote 'to 'the sec'retary(Korean)

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