Integrating Pronunciation into a Classroom and on the Web Courseware

Hekyung Kim (Dongseo University)

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The aim of this paper is to suggest possible methods of integrating the teaching of pronunciation into a typical communicative classroom and consequently on English learning web courseware. It is hoped that this paper will prompt teachers to understand the current role of pronunciation in communicative English programs and that the web technology can help students improve their pronunciation, which will 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 paper, I will discuss these questions to suggest possible methods of integrating the teaching of pronunciation into a normal conversation class and on the English learning web courseware.

2. Current perspectives

2.1. Pronunciation

Pronunciation includes vowels, consonants, linking, reduction, stress, rhythm, intonation, and many other prosodic cues. Among these elements, 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 & Brinnton & Goodwin, 1996). The roles of intonation support the argument by Clennell (1997:117) that the successful use of intonation could well be the key to effective cross-cultural communication.

Most of research on pronunciation since 1990s shows 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. Pronunciation, listening, and speaking are interdependent and that intonation among pronunciation elements should, thus, 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 intonation of an utterance. The pitch, length, and loudness of the sound of an utterance can be simultaneously heard and seen on a computer 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 have shown that audio-visual feedback is more effective than an audio feedback.

2.3. English learning and pronunciation Web courseware

The web technology finds itself an important role in English language instruction. The search engine, www.yahoo.com, shows many web sites related with English pronunciation or English learning: www.americanaccent.com;   www.manythings.org; www.donnahope.com; www.englishclub.net; www.freeenglish.com; www.globalenglish.com; www.englishtown.com and many more. www.yahoo.co.kr shows many national web sites dealing with English learning or pronunciation such as www.eboyoung.com; www.eflkorea.com; www.winglish.com, and www.konglish.net. Typical speaking or listening activities of most English web courseware are designed as in <Fig. 1>.

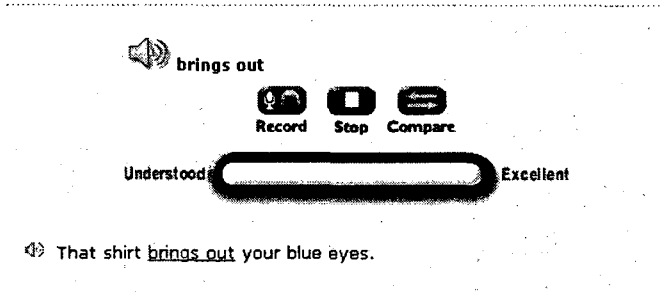<Fig. 1> Everyday English on www.winglish.com

A dialog or communicative expression is usually displayed or hidden with a speaker button for a learner to click on to listen to it, or a record button is provided for a learner to click on to record his or her voice. Pronunciation practice is also provided as in <Fig. 2>. Although the pronunciation practice is dealt with in a speaking activity, intonation of an expression is not provided.

연습과정 **3**: 발음 연습

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[발음연습방법] **Example**

이 과에 새로 나오는 단어와 구의 발음을 연습하십시오. 녹음 기술에 관한 자
세한 정보를 원하시면 여기를 누르십시오.

마이크를 조정하십시오.

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🔊 **brings out**

[🎤] [⏹] [⬅]
Record **Stop** **Compare**

Understood[══════════════════]**Excellent**

🔊 That shirt brings out your blue eyes.

<Fig. 2> Pronunciation practice of www.globalenglish.com

Most pronunciation web courseware focuses on vowels, consonants, linking, or reduction in details, intonation is not dealt as in <Fig. 3>.

오라인 특강
발음클리닉

💡 Lesson ✏ 　📷 발음보기
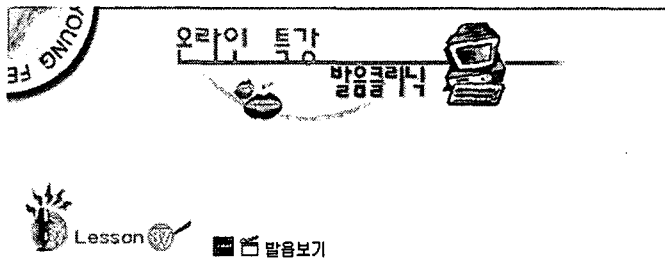
[연음 현상 3]

자음에서 모음으로의 전이를 보죠. 우리말에서와 같이 연음 현상이 자연스럽게 일어나 앞의 자
음은 뒤의 모음에 붙어서 소리나게 됩니다.
1) at all / I don't like it **at all**.
2) at any rate / **At any rate** he won't come.
3) a cup and an orange / I bought **a cup and an orange**.
4) bread and egg/ I had some **bread and egg** this morning.

이때 문장의 전체 리듬을 잘 생각하면서 자연스럽게 연음을 하며 발음하는게 중요합니다.

<Fig. 3> Pronunciation clinic on www.eboyoung.com

2.4 The teaching of pronunciation

The growing interests in links, reduction, and the relation of pronunciation skills with receptive and productive skills since 1990s 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* (Richards, 1997), *Interactions One* (Tanka & Most, 1996), *Gateways One* (Kimbrough & Frankel, 1998), linking, reduction, and stress are practiced through listening discrimination activities. But as for intonation, it is mostly restricted to sentence types: WH-questions; yes-no questions; tag-questions; exclamatory statements; alternative questions. 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.

3. Pronunciation in a communicative class: suggestions

Considering the current perspectives of interdependence of pronunciation, speaking, and listening, intonation as a key feature in cross cultural communication, and the effectiveness of audio-visual feedback, possible methods to integrate pronunciation, especially intonation, into a conversation class should be sought. One possible way is to employ computer technology system to visualize the sound of communicative expressions and introduce these visualized communicative expressions in a conversation class when their usage is being taught.

3.1 From the early stage

3.1.1 Visualized alphabet

Students should unconsciously acquire different patterns of English sound. It can be done from the early stage of learning as in <Fig. 4>. A letter with different sound patterns can be presented to help students perceive that each letter can have different sound patterns. Each figure can be made to a flash card for a game.

<Fig. 4 > Intonation contours over a letter 'A'
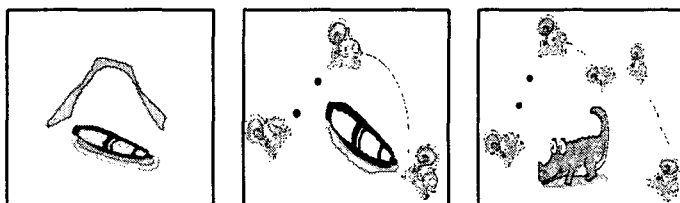
For little students, the sound patterns of English can be presented with characters they like as in <Fig. 5>.

<Fig. 5> Animated intonation contour over the letter 'A'

3.2 Vocabulary with a visual display

When students acquire new words, the pronunciation of them can be visualized as in <Fig. 6>.

<Fig. 6> Intonation contour over the word 'pen'

3.3 Communicative expressions

When students learn a communicative expression in a conversation class, the sound pattern of it can be visually presented during speaking drills. Dialog (1) is commonly found expressions (Gogo Loves English I, p. 31: 1994) in any children's English books.

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.
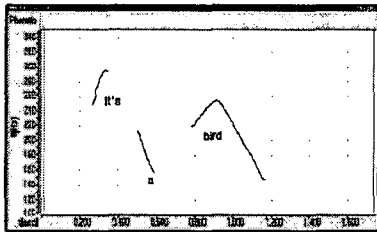
These expressions can be presented as in <Fig. 7-12>.
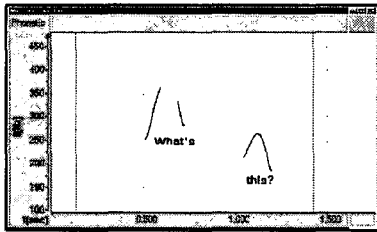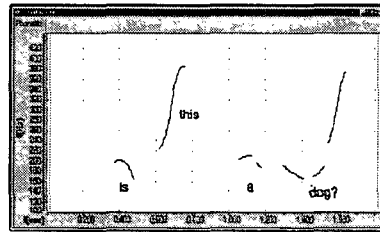

<Fig. 7> Asking for information
using WH-word
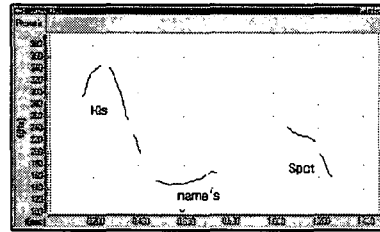
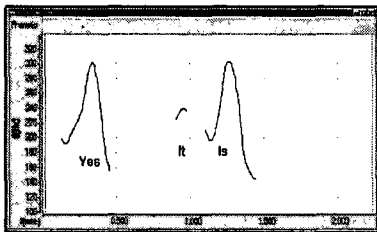<Fig. 8> Giving someone's name
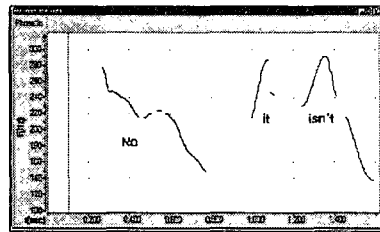

<Fig. 9> Giving information
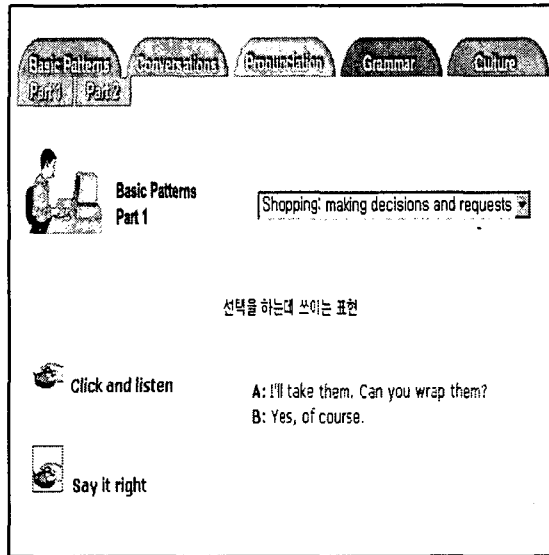

<Fig. 10> Clarifying

<Fig. 11> Giving an affirmative answer

<Fig. 12> Giving a negative answer

4. On web courseware

The suggested integration of pronunciation in a normal conversation class can also be introduced on English learning web courseware. Pronunciation activities can be designed as a part of a speaking or listening activity not as an independent section as in <Fig. 13>.

<Fig. 13> Speaking practice on Dongseo Univ. Web Courseware, HeyYou@DSU[1]

Students can click on the Click and listen' button to listen to the conversation. Students can continue to click on the Say it right' button to see a visualized expression as a separate window with it pops up as in <Fig. 14>.
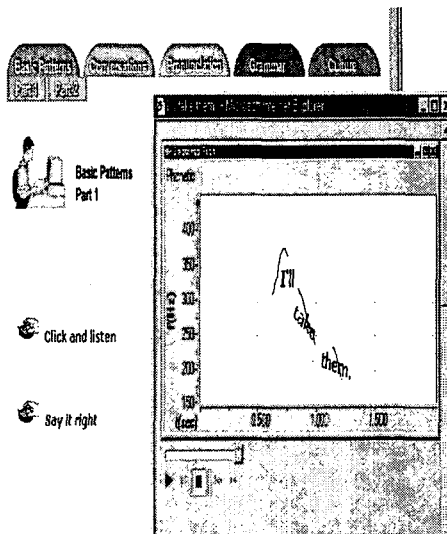
<Fig 14> Pronunciation practice in HeyYou@DSU

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1) HeyYou@DSU(Kim, 2001) is English Learning Weg Courseware used in Dongseo University
   for freshmen. This courseware, named as 'Internet English 1', can be accessed at
   dcu.dongseo.ac.kr

Students can see the pronunciation of the expression as they click on the 'play' button to listen to it.

# 6. Conclusion and further implications

An expression, which carries a specific communicative intention, changes its sound pattern when spoken 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, useful expressions can easily visualized. But common users, both teachers and students, might face a problem of operating speech analyzers. 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.

To reduce these problems, phoneticians can construct a database of visualized communicative expressions. For the start of database construction, *Classroom English Web Courseware*(Kim, 1999) is developed for elementary school English teachers. This courseware has expressions in 14 different classroom situations.
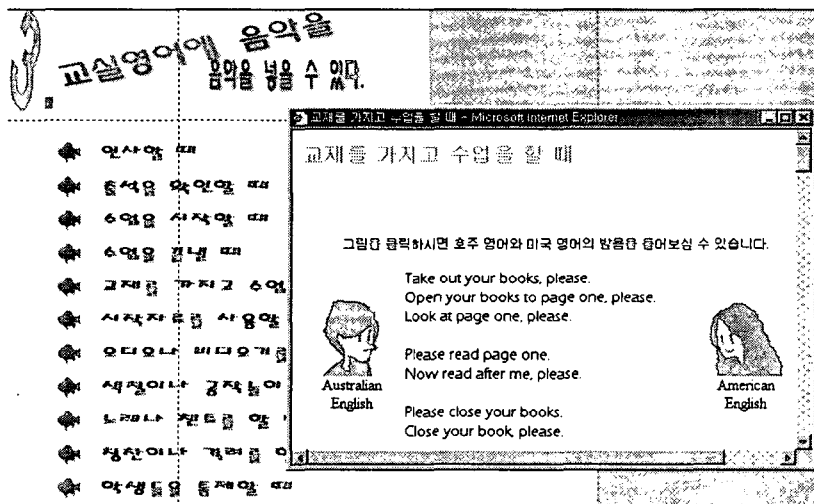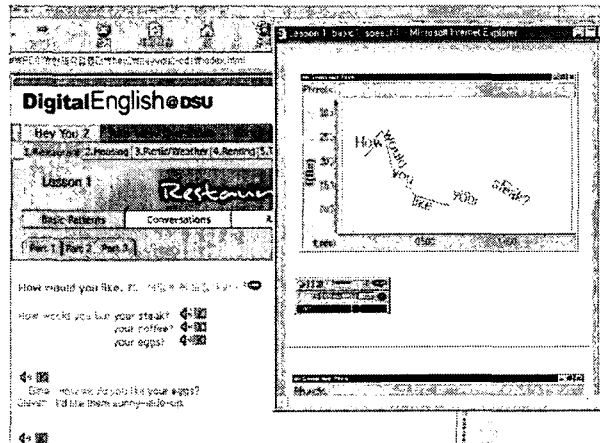

<Fig. 15> Classroom English Web Courseware(Kim, 1999)

As learners scroll down the screen, they can practice pronunciation as in <Fig. 16>.
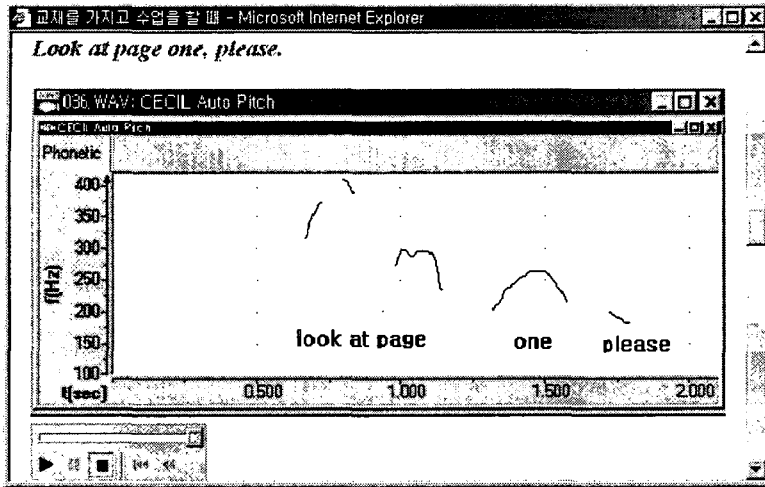
<Fig. 16> Pronunciation practice in Classroom English Web Courseware

The sound pattern of over 300 communicative expressions in different situations are visually displayed in HeyYou@DSU(Kim, 2001) as <Fig. 14> and DigitalEnglish@DSU(Kim, 2002) as in <Fig. 17>.

<Fig. 17> Pronunciation practice in DigitalEnglish@DSU2)

Whether the integration of pronunciation into a classroom or on web courseware brings progress in students' speaking or listening ability or helps students soften their

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2) DigitalEnglish@DSU will be published in January, 2002. It is English Learning Courseware for sophomores in Dongseo University.

foreign accent has not been experimented yet. But it helps students perceive that the sound of English is different from that of Korean, and that an expression changes its sound pattern when spoken in a different situation.

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▶ Hekyung Kim
address: san 69-1, Jurye 2-dong, Sasang-gu, Pusan, Korea
affiliation: Department of Foreign Languages, Dongseo University
E-mail: hekkim@hanmail.net