

English speaking skills

This seminar focuses on problematic issues of English pronunciation for Koreans, such as palatal consonants, fricatives, long vowels, lexical stress, compound stress, and sentence intonation; vocal delivery will also be briefly discussed.

1. Vowel system

English makes clear distinctions between short and long vowels¹. The short vowels are not just shorter, but are different sounds altogether than the long vowels.

short		long (glided)	
/ɪ/	bit	/i:/ or /iy/	beet
/ɛ/	red	/ei/ or /ey/	raid
/ɔ/	taught	/ʊʊ/ or /ou/	tote
/ʊ/	look	/u:/ or /uw/	Luke

The schwa /ə/ is extra-short compared to normal short vowels like /ʌ/; the /ə/ only occurs in unstressed syllables, and /ʌ/ in stressed syllables, but otherwise they sound almost the same.

ʌnfɔrɡɛtəbəl /,ʌnfɔr'ɡɛtəbəl/ or /,ʌnfər'ɡɛtəbəl/

2. Consonants

The following consonants are often problematic for Koreans.

1. /p/- /f/ and /b/ - /v/ distinctions, e.g., *fullness* sounds like *pullness*
2. /l/- /r/ distinction, e.g., *Crown* / *Clown Hotel*
3. /z/² mispronounced so that it sounds like ㅈ
4. /ð/, /θ/ sound like ㅈ, ㅊ, /s/
5. English palatal consonants /ʒ dʒ tʃ/ sound like ㅈ, /ʃ/ as in ㅈ³

1 The short vowels should not be written /i/, /e/, /o/, /ɔ:/, /u/ as they are in some dictionaries published in Korea; the the long /ei/ and /ou/ should not be written as /e:/ or /o:/. These incorrect symbols can be confusing, as it misleads people about the pronunciation.

2 The /z/ is produced just like /s/ with the tongue in the very same position as /s/, but with vocal vibration. To practice, start with /s/ and vibrate the vocal cords to produce /z/.

3 For the English palatal consonants, the tongue is curled up, with the tongue tip touching or pointing toward the palate (the roof of the mouth, 구개, 口蓋). In Korean, the tongue is flat, with the upper surface of the tongue near the tongue tip contacting or coming close to the palate.

6. Extra /i:/ after /z ʃ ʒ dʒ tʃ/ at the end of words [받침], e.g., *cheese, English, beige, judge, church* (e.g., *fish* sounds like *fishy*)
7. Extra ㅡ vowel after word-final consonants, e.g., *gas* pronounced like 가스
8. Consonant clusters: extra vowels inserted, leading to extra syllables (see next section)
9. /wu:/ sounds like /u:/, /yi:/ like /i:/ as in *woo, year*
10. Voiced vs. voiceless consonants: **voiced** sounds are made with clear vocal vibration

s - z	ㅍ - ㅍ	p - b
f - v	ㅌ - ㅌ	t - d
ʃ - ʒ	ㅋ - ㅋ	k - g
θ - ð		

Note how many native speakers may pronounce these sounds differently.

North American dark /l/	The jaw is not as open, so /l/ is less clear and harder to hear; especially common at end of words, & after vowels /a, ɔ, u, ʊ, ou/	bull, ball, mollify
/t/ → /D/	/t/ before unstressed syllables in North America (& some Aussie) sounds somewhat like /d/	a little bit of bitter butter
/t/ + /n/	/t/ “nasalized” or “swallowed” before /n/ of unstressed syllables, and thus, less clear	the button on a carton

3. Stress and rhythm

Stressed syllables are longer and louder, and have intonation changes (rise, fall, or rise+fall). **Content words** (nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs) have more stress than **function words** (minor words). [ˈ] = primary (main, strongest) stress; [ˌ] = secondary (minor) stress; [˘] = unstressed.

3.1. Typical problems of Koreans:

1. Monotone – no clear word stress, sentence stress, or intonation
2. Swallowing or cutting off syllables, e.g., *energy* → *energ-* /ɛnɜrdʒ/
3. Extra syllables inserted for consonant clusters, e.g.,
somatoform disorder⁴ cf. smartphone disorder
4. Incorrect word stress, e.g., *Willy* pronounced like *Will Léé*. Incorrect word stresses can lead to unclear expressions, e.g., when the adjective *appropriate* is pronounced like the verb *appropriate*.

apprópriate [adjective] /əpróupri.ət/ cf. apprópriàte [verb] /əpróupri.èit/

4 신체형장애, 身體型障礙

3.2. Word stress

English syllables have at least three different stress levels.

primary stress	e.g., [á] or ['a]:	accéntuàte the pósitoive, elímínate the négative, látch on to the affírmative
secondary stress	e.g., [â] or [,a]:	accéntuàte the pósitoive, èlímínàte the négative, látch on to the affírmative
unstressed	/ə/ or /ɪ/	accéntuàte thə pósitoive, èlímínàte thə négative, látch on tə thə æffírmative

Furthermore, there are several kinds of stress in English.

word stress	clear stresses, especially on content words	accéntuàte the pósitoive
compound stress	Usually, main stress on first element of compound words; also: on last letter of abbreviations on family name / surname	báckbone, fiéld mòuse, the White Hòuse, ónion chòpper, gréenhouse, bád-mòuth FBI, SAT, CSI, ENT Morgan Freeman
phrasal stress	More important word in phrases stressed: [1] adj. + noun [2] adverb + adj.	a white hóuse it's vèry ínteresting
sentence stress	In a clause or sentence, the most important word is stressed	I grew up in a white house , but I doubt I'll ever live in the White House.

3.3. Sentence stress

Within sentences or clauses, the major words, called content words (nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs) are more strongly stressed than the minor words (function words). Usually the last content word in a clause is more important for the meaning, particularly if it has not been mentioned before. Otherwise, other content words (often, one in the predicate) or other important words are emphasized. These words have noticeably more stress than other words.

3.4. Intonation

Minor (function) words are often very short and hard to hear for non-native speakers. The levels of word stress (primary stress, secondary stress, unstressed) and the fact that content words have more stress than minor words gives English a distinctive rhythm. Intonation also indicates the flow of thought, as in this example of an ambiguous letter with no punctuation.

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is all about you are generous kind thoughtful people who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior you have ruined me for other men I yearn for you I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart I can be forever happy will you let me be yours Gloria

3.5. Example

[...] Now our education system is **predicated** on the idea of academic ability. And there's a **reason**. The whole system was **invented** – around the world, there were no public systems of education, really, before the 19th **century**. They all came into being to meet the needs of **industrialism**. So the **hierarchy** is rooted on two **ideas**. Number **one**, that the most useful subjects for work are at the **top**. So you were probably steered **benignly** away from things at school when you were a kid, things you **liked**, on the grounds that you would never get a **job** doing **that**. Is that **right**? Don't do **music**, you're not going to be a **musician**; don't do **art**, you won't be an **artist**. **Benign** advice – now, **profoundly** mistaken. The whole world is **engulfed** in a revolution. And the **second** is **academic** ability, which has really come to dominate our view of **intelligence**, because the universities **designed** the system in their image. If you **think** of it, the whole **system** of public education around the world is a **protracted** process of university **entrance**. And the **consequence** is that many highly **talented, brilliant, creative** people think [that] they're **not**, because the thing they were **good** at at school wasn't **valued**, or was **actually stigmatized**. And I think we **can't** afford to go **on** that way⁵.

3.6. Linking (liaison)

Between words, the same or similar consonants are linked together, and vowels are linked together with no breaks.

We_ɹ all live_ɹ in_ɹ a yellow submarine.

3.7. Reductions

Minor words are often reduced and pronounced quickly.

a = /ə/	for = /fɔr/, /fɔ/, /fə/	or = /ɔr/	to = /tʊ/, /tə/
an = /ən/, /n/	have = /əv/[=auxiliary verb]	the = /ðə/	you = /yʊ/, /yə/
and = /ænd/, /ən/, /n/	he = /i:/	them = /ðɪm/	your = /jɔr/
because → 'cuz	him = /ɪm/	them = /əm/, /ɪm/	
can = /kæn/	her = /ɜr/		

Note the difference between *can*, *can't*; for *can*, the vowel is usually a very short /ə/, while a full short is always heard in *can't*:

can /kæn/ → /kən/ can't = /kænt/

4. Notes

1. In British English, the /r/ at the end of syllables and words is often omitted, or changed to a /ə/; in some cases, extra /r/ sounds are inserted elsewhere, especially between vowels between words.

> hard, harbor, sort = /hɑ:d/, /hɑ:bə/, /sɔ:t/

> hire, here, there, hair = /haɪə/, /hi:ə/, /ðɛə/, /heə/

> no idea[r] of it; we saw[r] and conquered

5 From a speech by Sir Ken Robinson on TED.com [http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/en/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity.html].