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Teaching English Pronunciation and Listening Skills

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The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of systematic teaching English pronunciation and listening in English. Focusing on phonemes and words in pairs and sentences, the sound systems of the English and Korean languages are dealt with in conjunction with the test data. This paper first discusses the *systemic,* or *primary interference* and the *habitual,* or *secondary interference* that hinder comprehension of certain English sounds. Second, the analysis of input and output test data on the contrasting vowels and consonants shows statistic significance in terms of the probability (*p* value) of *t*-test. Third, the comparative data by means of percentile of right answers on contrasting vowel and consonant sounds expound the different sound systems of the English and Korean languages. With this data, problems in pronunciation of and listening to English, and the factors that may cause these problems are analyzed so that they can be used as a guideline for a systematic approach in teaching English learners, thus leading to more satisfactory performance.

[Sound system/Pronunciation/Listening/Interference]

I. INTRODUCTION

It may be presumptuous to claim that among the four language skills one skill is more important than others, and that one skill should precede the others in learning a foreign language. As far as oral communication is concerned, the ability to listen is as much a key factor in keeping a conversation flowing as the ability to speak. For example, if you say *beach* and the listener hears *bitch*, you may ruin the dialogue

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and leave the listener confused or embarrassed. In a flow of speech, unambiguous pronunciation in the way a (near) native speaker of English employs and the proper capacity of listening to words concerned are considered to be the starting points for proper communication with others.[1)]

Several years ago, a fluent Korean-English bilingual and this author dropped by a cosmetics store in a university neighborhood in Seoul. The following is part of the dialogue between the sales lady in the store (S), the bilingual (Y) and me (J):

1(a). Y: Sample [s'æmpəl] isseyo?
'Do you have a sample?'
(b). S: ???
(c). J: Sample[sæmpl] yo.
(d). S: Ne, yoki isseyo.
'Yes, here it is.'

The unstressed schwa between consonants and the stress on the first syllable make a big difference in understanding the speaker. Koreans usually pronounce the word without a schwa and a stress as well as transcribe the word without it. This habit interferes with understanding what the native speaker says and may stall communication. It seems that a word itself may not be a big factor for the overall flow of speech comprehension, but as we can see in 1, a little element can affect the overall dialogue.

For this reason, the author decided to teach an English pronunciation and listening class. The lesson starts from phonemes, individual words to phrases and sentences. The main goal of this class is to attain an ability to distinguish similar sounds of English and to identify words in the context among the many micro skills in conversational listening and speaking for enhancing college student's communicative competence (Richards, 1983).

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1) Unambiguous pronunciation is used for comprehensible production of vowels and consonants and of suprasegmental features of stress, rhythm and intonation as well. It does not necessarily mean native-like mastery of the sound system, which is extremely difficult for second language learners to acquire after puberty as the critical period hypothesis claims (cf. Agar, 1991, p. 175; Brown, 1987, p. 42; Nunan, 1998, p. 101; Pinker, 1994). It may mean near native-like acquisition of the sound system in the sense that the speaker and hearer are mutually understandable on what is being spoken and heard.

First, this paper argues for the systemic and habitual interference using some words of which many Koreans pronounce on their own, which is deviant from that of English speakers. Second, the input and output tests of students' performance on the contrasting sounds in a sentence attest the meaningful progress as a result of the systematic approach to the sound systems of Korean and English. Third, the points students earned between the input and output tests are discussed in terms of the systemic, or primary interference and the habitual, or secondary interference.

II. AN OVERVIEW ON LISTENING AND PRONUNCIATION

An important part of listening is being able to comprehend words and phrases we hear. If learners do not have many chances to listen to English, they often fail to recognize words or phrases they already know (Doff, 1988, p. 204). An appropriate aural comprehension program is essential for second/foreign language competence since aural comprehension lays the foundation for the development of oral language within the "speech chain" of listening and speaking (Denes & Pinson, 1963, p. 1; Morley, 2001, p. 70). Unless understood by another person, speaking is not equated with communication (Rivers, 1981, p. 151). It is essential that learners of English understand English spoken by (near) native speakers, and pronounce it so that they can in turn be understood (Robson, 1979, p. 3). Ur (1984) notes that "it is certainly true that if he learns to pronounce the sounds accurately himself, it will be much easier for him to hear them correctly when said by someone else" (p. 12). The goal of learning a foreign language is to attain communicative competence. To get to this goal, listening is considered a skill to be taught before speaking (Krashen, 1982; Peterson, 2001), since the former is utilized the most compared to other language skills in normal daily life (Morley, 2001, p. 70; Rivers & Temperly, 1978). Along with writing, listening was considered a receptive skill in that the language user is receiving spoken language. A good listener is able to process what he hears on the basis of the context in which it occurs (Harmer, 1983, p. 15). However, the new trends in second/foreign language (S/FL) education view listening and reading as non－passive and very complex receptive processes. Listening for aural comprehension in S/FL acquisition is recognized as a fundamental skill to attain communicative competence (Morley, 2001, p. 69). There is a significant relationship between listening ability and oral skills/L2 Proficiency (Feyten, 1991).

Kim (2004) shows that vowels and consonants are two of the five factors relating to the intelligibility of English spoken by Korean university students. Thus, teaching pronunciation is important for English learners. Jung and Oh (2005) show that poor pronunciation is one of the several factors inhibiting communication as well. The studies attest that unambiguous pronunciation is significant to get the communicative competence in English. Listening is of no less consequence than pronunciation in that lack of the listening ability results in misinterpretation or misunderstanding on what the speaker intends to deliver as seen in 1 above. If an L1 speaker's utterance is uninterpretable by an L2 speaker or vice versa, which is another factor that hinders communication as shown in Jung and Oh (2005), it can be said that both pronunciation and listening functions share the common cause for the problem.

III. TRANSFER AND INTERFERENCE

Transfer is the process in foreign language learning whereby learners carry over the particular system, such as phonetic and grammatical, of their native language to their performance in their target language. Interference refers to the mistakes that result from this process (Choi, 1984; Crystal, 1980; Di Pietro, 1971). Besides the systematic difference between L1 and L2, improper practices of the target language may cause interference as well. Hereby we assume that there are two kinds of interference in listening to and pronunciation of English. *Systemic interference,* or *primary interference,* and *habitual interference*, or *secondary interference*.[2] The first one is due to the systematic differences between the native language and the target language and the differences contribute to the comprehension problem for the language learners. English sounds which do not exist in Korean and sounds which exist in both languages but which pattern differently are problems in learning English pronunciation (Robson, 1979). The second one results when the faulty practices of the target language become habitual. The way Koreans pronounce many used/borrowed English words is different from that of native speakers of English. English sounds which are not equivalent to those of Korean are transcribed with a phonetically similar sound by using the transcription model established by the Korean government. Many Koreans tend to use these interpretations or create their own pronunciations, which become habit and hard to correct. For example, they say /rokpelə/ for *Rockefeller*,

2) The first set of interference and that of the second will be used alternatively in each set.

believing it to be the correct pronunciation. The habitual or secondary interference seems more serious than the systemic or primary interference since the habit tends to fossilize quickly without remedial training.

The habitual or secondary interference is attested as shown in Table 1 (See Appendix 1 for the test items). The author chose eight words for the subjects to fill out the blank in the given sentences as they hear. These words are frequently used in Korean accent. At the beginning of the regular course, thirty two students (male 15; female 17) participated in the test, first hearing English as pronounced by a native speaker (EP), followed two weeks later by English spoken with a Korean accent (KP). The tests focus on whether there is any habitual interference stemming from the faulty practice of English.

TABLE 1
Listening Accuracy between EP and KP

EP		KP		Gain	t	p
M	SD	M	SD	M		
10.50	6.76	30.12	2.99	19.62	8.34***	.000

$t(7) = 8.34$, $^{***}p < .001$

The test result of the EP and KP shows statistically very significant ($p<.001$). Table 1 shows that KP earned as much as about three times higher mean score than that of EP. The fact tells that the ordinary use of KP hinders listening comprehension and this may not due to the systematic difference between Korean and English sound systems, but rather an erroneous use of some English words by Koreans, which develops into habitual interference.

IV. METHODOLOGY AND STUDENT PERFORMANCE

Thirty-two students (male 15, female 17) enrolled in one of the author's classes participated in the study during the 2006 Spring semester. Of these, three were intermediate and two were high beginner students on the basis of TOEIC scores. The rest did not take the TOEIC test and were regarded as high beginners.

Twenty-eight students took the input test on March 8, 2006 and thirty two students took the output test on June 14, 2006, about three months apart from the other. The tests consisted of twenty sets-nine sets for contrasting vowel sounds and eleven sets

for contrasting consonant sounds, each with five different sentences in which the students were given two words to choose from. The two words were related in regard to the place/manner of articulation, and voicing (See Appendix 2 for the example sentences tested).

The class ran three hours a week. The textbook the students used and was used as the basis for the input and output test formats was *Pronunciation Pairs* (Baker & Goldstein, 1990). The book is designed for a beginning－to－intermediate level pronunciation, to teach students to recognize and produce English sounds. It utilizes an engaging, visual approach for making sounds and sound processes discernable and learnable. It also assists students to differentiate between sounds that might often cause confusion. Each unit starts with illustrations of sound systems of both vowels and consonants, and practices a different sound through a variety of activities in both listening and speaking. The activities included evolve from practice of a sound at the word level to the practice of the sound in connected speech, employing more communicative activities, including dialogues, puzzles, games, and activities for pair and group work. Suprasegmental elements such as stress, pitch and length, as well as individual sounds essential for communicating in English, are practiced in almost every unit. The practices include Sandhi variation as well. In this way, class activities include not only teaching and practicing pronunciation and listening as an integral part of oral language use, but also longer-term goals towards communicative competence. [3)]

For each unit, students are first asked to listen to the audio tape with their books closed and write down the individual word as they hear it and then choose the appropriate word from the two words with similar sounds given in the sentence. Before listening and repeating the sounds, and practicing exercises and dialogues second time with their books open, the author explains the manner/place of articulation of the related sounds. Then they are allowed to listen and repeat after the audio tape with their books open while checking how good they are at listening. In the

3) Peterson (2001) notes that "the overload of task demands on the learner produces anxiety, which further inhibits learning (p. 98)." Therefore, instead of inducing guilt-feelings when failing at their attempts at proper usage of the English language (Choi, 1984, p. 107; Joos, 1967, pp. 4-5) and having undue concern to second language errors, which are not by nature different from those made by children learning English as a mother tongue (Richards, 1974, p. 32), the teaching aim and methodology in the study would help students get rid of those feelings during the course of the study and instill confidence in the end. Many of them expressed that they found the course very useful.

process, the author pinpoints those sounds which Korean speakers frequently mispronounce, or have difficulty pronouncing correctly.

We have two kinds of prognostic and achievement test analyses, which are based on class activities.[4] One is based on the average points individual students earned on the input and output tests when asked to choose a word for the contrasting vowel and consonant sounds. In this way, we can see whether students' performance improved after listening and pronunciation exercises. The other one is the percentage of the number of students who answered correctly for the contrasting words in the context. Thus, we can determine which group earned higher points, and which pair of contrasting words in a group shows high interference. These results are discussed in terms of the cause of interference.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The test format is based on the contrasting words and sentences in the class textbook. Table 2 shows the mean score, standard deviation, the gain score and the probability level of the *t*-test using the points students earned. The SPSS program is used to obtain the results as shown in Table 2 below.

TABLE 2
Students' Performance on Vowels and Consonants

Test	Pre-test		Post-test		Gain Score	t	p
focused on	M	SD	M	SD	M		
1. Vowels	70.66	10.03	74.79	7.41	4.13	1.812	.081
2. Consonants	75.01	7.08	78.2	4.97	3.19	4.37***	.000
3. Vs + Cs	72.84	6.82	76.49	4.64	3.65	2.57*	.016

1. $t(27) = 1.812$, $p \leq .10$
2. $t(27) = 4.37$, * **$p \leq .001$
3. $t(27) = 2.57$, *$p \leq .05$

4) The author uses the prognostic test, input test, and pre-test alternatively, and the achievement test, output test and post-test alternatively.

In row 1 of Table 2, where the test results of contrasting vowel sounds are shown, we have probability of 8.1% ($p \leq 0.10$), which is statistically meaningful, if not significant enough, considering that the significance level of a test within "a 5 percent or even a 10 percent ($p \leq 0.10$) level may suffice" (Bulter, 1985, p. 71). In row 2 of Table 2, where the test results of contrasting consonant sounds are shown, we have a significance level of 0.1% ($p \leq 0.001$), which is statistically very highly significant. In row 3 of Table 2, where the test results of the contrasting vowels and consonants combined shown, we have probability of1.6% ($p \leq 0.05$), which is said to be significant .

From Table 2, it may be said that the students' performance is meaningful, considering the mean scores of the input and output tests and the significance level of the *t*-test using SPSS. One thing to mention from the result is that the students find it a bit easier to comprehend consonant sounds than that of vowels. The mean scores of the input and output tests are a little higher for the contrasting consonant sounds compared to that of vowels, while the gain score is bigger for the vowel sounds. This in turn narrows the gap between the two, which is desirable.

Tables 3 and 4 reflect the percentile of the number of students who have the right answers for the contrasting vowels (Table 3) and consonants (Table 4), respectively. Using the data in Tables 3 and 4, we will explore problems that may cause interference in learning English.

TABLE 3
Percentile of Right Answers on Contrasting Vowel Sounds

Group No	Phonetic symbols	Pre-test	Post-test	Words contrasted
I-1	ɪ/i	0.75	0.781	ship/sheep
I-2	ɪ/i	0.5	0.843	hills/heels
I-3	ɪ/i	0.642	0.75	chicks/cheeks
I-4	ɪ/i	0.285	0.562	fill/feel
I-5	ɪ/i	0.964	1	live/leave
II-1	ɪ/ɛ	0.821	0.906	pin/pen
II-2	ɪ/ɛ	0.785	0.906	bill/bell
II-3	ɪ/ɛ	1	1	bitter/better
II-4	ɪ/ɛ	0.75	0.843	Ginny/Jenny

II-5	ɪ/ɛ	0.964	1	chicks/checks
III-1	ɛ/ey	0.857	1	pepper/paper
III-2	ɛ/ey	0.785	0.906	pen/pain
III-3	ɛ/ey	0.785	1	sell/sail
III-4	ɛ/ey	0.964	1	test/taste
III-5	ɛ/ey	0.821	0.906	shed/shade
IV-1	ɛ/æ	0.785	0.906	men/man
IV-2	ɛ/æ	0.678	0.75	pen/pan
IV-3	ɛ/æ	0.678	0.75	left/laughed
IV-4	ɛ/æ	0.178	0.437	said/sad
IV-5	ɛ/æ	0.464	0.625	dead/dad
V-1	a/ɔ	0.107	0.375	Don/Dawn
V-2	a/ɔ	0.968	1	far/four
V-3	a/ɔ	1	1	card/cord
V-4	ə/ ɔ	0.968	1	cut/caught
V-5	ə/ ɔ	0	0.25	bus/boss
VI-1	ɔ /oʊ	0.428	0.531	hall/hole
VI-2	ɔ /oʊ	0.107	0.343	saw/sew
VI-3	ɔ /oʊ	0.678	0.812	ball/bowl
VI-4	ɔ /oʊ	0.5	0.687	walk/woke
VI-5	ɔ /oʊ	0.392	0.625	called/cold
VII-1	ɔ /ʊ	0.928	0.906	talk/took
VII-2	ɔ /ʊ	0.642	0.781	ball/bull
VII-3	ɔ /ʊ	0.535	0.687	wall/wool
VII-4	ɔ /ʊ	0.535	0.656	fall/full
VII-5	ɔ /ʊ	0.892	0.906	Paul/pull
VIII-1	ʊ/u	0.714	0.812	pull/pool
VIII-2	ʊ/u	0.285	0.625	look/Luke
VIII-3	ʊ/u	0.678	0.875	soot/suit

VIII-4	ʊ/u	0.875	0.875	full/fool
VIII-5	ʊ/u	0.928	1	bull/boob
IX-1	ə/ər	0.285	0.437	gulls/girls
IX-2	ə/ər	0.75	0.843	buds/birds
IX-3	ə/ər	0.714	0.75	ward/word
IX-4	ə/ər	0.678	0.875	walk/work
IX-5	ə/ər	0.714	0.812	buns/burns

TABLE 4
Percentile of Right Answers on Contrasting Consonant Sounds

Group No.	Phonetic symbols	Pre-test	Post-test	Words contrasted
X-1	p/b	1	1	pears/bears
X-2	p/b	1	1	path/bath
X-3	p/b	1	1	pills/bills
X-4	p/b	0.892	1	cap/cab
X-5	p/b	0.857	0.906	rope/robe
XI-1	v/b	0.357	0.625	vine/bine
XI-2	v/b	0.464	0.625	vend/bend
XI-3	v/b	0.464	0.5	curve/curb
XI-4	v/b	0.357	0.468	dove/dob
XI-5	v/b	0.464	0.468	vroom/broom
XII-1	p/f	0.285	0.5	puffy/puppy
XII-2	p/f	0.857	0.906	fail/pail
XII-3	p/f	0.5	0.781	fill/pill
XII-4	p/f	0.857	0.938	laugh/lap
XII-5	p/f	0	0.219	cap/calf
XIII-1	t/d	1	1	try/dry
XIII-2	t/d	1	1	time/dime
XIII-3	t/d	1	1	cart/card

XIII-4	t/d	0.607	0.75	writes/rides
XIII-5	t/d	0.928	1	sent/send
XIV-1	ð/d	0.642	0.687	they/day
XIV-2	ð/d	0.642	0.718	breathe/breed
XIV-3	ð/d	0.857	0.937	that/dat
XIV-4	ð/d	0.321	0.468	bathe/bade
XIV-5	ð/d	0.535	0.843	leather/ladder
XV-1	k/g	1	1	coat/goat
XV-2	k/g	0.785	0.906	back/bag
XV-3	k/g	1	1	classes/glasses
XV-4	k/g	0.464	0.625	clocks/clogs
XV-5	k/g	0.857	0.968	curl/girl
XVI-1	s/z	1	0.968	c/z
XVI-2	s/z	1	0.968	bus/buzz
XVI-3	s/z	1	1	sip/zip
XVI-4	s/z	0.678	0.781	race/raise
XVI-5	s/z	0.214	0.562	price/prize
XVII-1	s/š	0.785	0.937	Sue's/shoes
XVII-2	s/š	0.821	0.906	seats/sheets
XVII-3	s/š	0.785	0.937	sign/shine
XVII-4	s/š	1	1	lease/leash
XVII-5	s/š	1	1	sell/shell
XVIII-1	s/θ	1	1	sick/thick
XVIII-2	s/θ	0.821	0.875	sink/think
XVIII-3	s/θ	0.892	1	sank/thank
XVIII-4	s/θ	0.857	0.937	sought/thought
XVIII-5	s/θ	0.142	0.437	bass/bath
XIX-1	m/n	0.964	1	mine/nine
XIX-2	m/n	0.714	0.815	combs/cones

XIX-3	m/n	1	1	mice/nice
XIX-4	m/n	0.964	1	gum/gun
XIX-5	m/n	0.928	0.906	name/mane
XX-1	ℓ/r	0.785	0.906	long/wrong
XX-2	ℓ/r	0.857	0.843	collect/correct
XX-3	ℓ/r	0.75	0.843	glass/grass
XX-4	ℓ/r	0.285	0.843	light/right
XX-5	ℓ/r	0.321	0.312	pilot/pirate

In Table 3, contrasting words distinguish neighboring vowel sounds classified by jaw/tongue/lip positions, as well as other classifications, such as tense/lax, close/open, narrow/wide, and long/short of English vowel phonemes.[5)]

In Group I, words with high-front vowel /i/ and lower high-front vowel /I/ are contrasted. The percentile of right answers from the subjects ranged from 0.285 to 0.964 in the pre-test and from 0.562 to 1.000 in the post-test. The subjects' performance shows improvement in the displayed data. The lowest rate shows 0.285 in the pre-test and 0.562 in the post-test for the pair of words *fill/feel*. The second lowest rate is 0.500 in the pre-test and 0.843 in the post-test for the pair of words *hills/heels*. As the contrast between the short and long /i/ is disappearing in most dialects of Korean, Korean speakers most often do not make a distinction between the two vowels, whereas the contrast between the short and long /i/ is fairly distinctive in English. Thus, Koreans find it difficult to differentiate between the two varieties of /i/ in English (Chu & Park, 1968; Robson, 1979). The reason for the lowest rate for the pair of words seems to be the secondary interference as well as the primary interference. Under the transcription model of English into Korean, both *fill* and *feel* are written as /pil/ and pronounced the same. There is no distinction in the first sound and by means of tense/lax and long/short of the vowel sounds when transcribing in Korean. The ear and mouth of Korean learners of English get used to the same sound and the same pronunciation of the words and this habitual use causes interference, resulting in the poor scores shown in the table. For the contrasting pair of words *hills* and *heels*, the interference is not as bad as the former: the post-test shows much improvement. It seems that for the latter pair of words Korean speakers are hindered

5) Classifications of vowels and consonants are referred to Stageberg (1981).

only by the contrasting vowel sounds compared to the former pair of words that have two kinds of interference.

In Group II, words with lower high-front /I/ and lower mid-front /ɛ/ are contrasted. There seems to be little primary interference since the vowels in these words do not share same tongue positions. Regardless, we would like to discuss the pair of words *Ginny/Jenny*. This pair earned a slightly low percentile in the tests compared to others in the group. The reason seems that voiced velar stop /g/ is always transcribed /g/ in Korean and not voiced alveo-palatal affricate, /dž /.

In Group III, where the higher mid－front /ey/ and lower mid－front /ɛ/ are concerned, there seems to be no big problem. The former has two tongue positions, from mid to high, different from the Latter in which the tongue position remains the same.

In Group IV, in which lower mid－front /ɛ/ and low－front /æ/ are dealt with, the factor of secondary interference seems to be greater than that of the primary for IV-4 and IV-5, even though both factors hamper the correct pronunciation for Korean speakers. In practice, many Koreans tend not to make the distinction between the two vowel sounds since the contrast between the two is lost in many of the dialects spoken in Korea. Thus, it is very hard for Korean speakers to discriminate between the two sounds in listening and speaking (Robson, 1979). The pair of *men/man* has the highest percentile and this seems to be a familiar sound due to the frequent use and possibly the audio voice /æ/ helps the students choose the correct one in the post-test. The lowest rate goes to the pair, *said/sad*. Strangely enough, many Korean learners of English continue to say /seyd/ for *said*, because of their familiarity with the word *say*. The audio voice pronounces /sɛd/ and many subjects chose the word *sad* instead of *said* because of this habit. There is no alternative but to pick *sad* and not *said* since /seyd/ is not being heard. For the pair, *dead/dad*, the voice says /dæd/ and the subjects thought it was *dead*, making it the second lowest rate in the group.

In Group V, words with low-back rounded /ɔ/ versus low-central /a/ and mid-central /ə/ are contrasted. There are two pairs of words that received low percentages. For the pair *Don/Dawn*, many Koreans are used to saying /don/ for both. Accordingly, it is very hard for them to make a distinction between the two, due to habitual interference. For the pair *bus/boss*, the poor performance seems to be rendered by systemic interference because Korean lacks the phoneme /ɔ/. Therefore, the distinction between a schwa and an open "o" is hard for them to make.

In Group VI, where low-back rounded /ɔ/ and mid-back rounded /oʊ/ are contrasted, there exists habitual interference besides systemic interference. For the pair, *hall/hole*,

the transcription in Korean is /hol/ for both, and the sound is similar enough to the Korean's ear that making a distinction between the two words is difficult. The same interference occurs in the pair, *saw/sew*, commonly transcribed and pronounced in Korean as /sʊ/ for both words. The pair, *called/cold* follows the same interference in which /kold/ is generally transcribed and used by Koreans. The data shows that habitual interference is greater than that of systemic.

In Group VII, low-back rounded /ɔ/ and lower high-back rounded /ʊ/ are contrasted. There seems to be systemic interference; however, those beginning with voiceless stops are likely to pose fewer problems (VII-1, 5) than others in the group.

In Group VIII, in which lower high-back rounded /ʊ/ and high-back rounded /u/ are involved, the subjects seem to be confused with the pair, *look/Luke*. The word *look* contains double "o" and they think it has a long vowel and the word *Luke* a short vowel, which has a single vowel before a consonant, while in reality it is the other way around. Incorrect background knowledge causes misinterpretation here. For the pair, *soot/suit* the two different vowels /ui/ in *suit* are thought to have a longer sound than that of *soot*, which contains the same vowels.

Group IX contains the contrasting vowels of lower mid-central /ə/ and higher mid-central /ər/. The subjects earned low percentiles for the pair, *gulls/girls*. It seems that they do not make a clear distinction between the two since the vowels occur in the same mid-central position. In addition, the alveolar glide /r/ is embedded between a vowel and a cluster of the alveolar lateral /l/ and an alveolar-fricative /s/. This cluster hinders the subjects in distinguishing the two vowel sounds in pair.

Table 4 contains eleven groups of contrasting consonant sounds. Group X, where voiceless and voiced bilabial stops are involved, gives no distinctive systemic or habitual problem. One thing to mention is that when the phonemes come in the word-final position after a vowel as in X-4,5, the subjects find it slightly difficult to distinguish a subtle difference between a voiced bilabial plosive /b/ and voiceless bilabial plosive /p/. It seems that the final plosives are not distinctly released and this makes Korean speakers difficult to discriminate the two sounds in the final position.

In Group XI, in which a voiced labio-dental fricative /v/ and a voiced bilabial stop /b/ are concerned, there seems to be systemic interference on the two phonemes. The phoneme /v/ is rendered to a systemic interference due to the lack in the Korean sound system. In Korean transcription, the two phonemes are represented with a single notation /b/, causing habitual interference. Since the two contrasting phonemes have systemic and habitual interferences, the pair received a relatively low percentage rate.

In Group XII, there are a voiceless bilabial stop /p/ and a voiceless labio-dental fricative /f/ in contrast. Korean does not have a p/f distinction and thus Korean learners of English often have difficulty identifying the difference between the two (Chu & Park, 1968; Robson, 1979). Both are different in terms of the place and manner of articulation and they cause a systemic and a habitual interference as well. Both phonemes are transcribed as an aspirated /p/ in Korean causing a habitual interference which comes from a lack of the phoneme /f/ in Korean. The pairs in XII-1 and XII-5 received low percentage rates. The former has the intervocalic /p/ and /f/, and the latter puts the consonants at the word-final position. From this, we can assume that the consonant positions in a word affect the subjects' sound discrimination.[6)]

In Group XIII, in which alveolar stops /t/ and /d/ are involved, there is no occurrence of habitual interference. In XIII-4 though, consonant clusters /ts/ and /dz/ in the final position of the words seem to play an affective factor that causes relatively low percentile compared to others in the group. It is the voiceless ending /ts/ versus voiced ending /dz/ that confuses the learners. This trouble stems from the lack of these in the Korean sound system, and can be said to be systemic interference.

In Group XIV, a voiced inter-dental fricative /ð/ and a voiced alveolar stop /d/ are contrasted. Korean lacks the phoneme /ð/ and this is rendered to primary interference resulting in low percentile as a whole.

In Group XV, in which velar stops, /k/ and /g/ are involved, there seems to be no significant interference except in XV-4. This shows a somewhat low percentile, where consonant clusters of /-cks/ and /-gs/, which do not occur in Korean, play a role as in XIII-4.

In Group XVI, alveolar fricatives /s/ and /z/ are contrasted. Korean has no equivalent to /z/, and yet Korean speakers do not seem to have much difficulty discriminating between the two sounds. It is assumed that the former is distinctly voiceless while the latter is distinctly voiced (Chu & Park, 1968, p. 14). The reason that XVI-4 and XVI-5 have relatively low percentages in the group is due to the final

6) Unlike the pair in XII-5, XII-4 has a higher percentage rate than the former. It seems that the voice from the audio could be a factor. It is *lap* in XII-4 and *calf* in XII-5 being heard from the audio. A stop sound seems to be easier for the subjects to understand than a fricative consonant in the word-final position. Robson (1979) also mentions that some final consonants which do not occur in Korean cause Korean speakers to mis-hear and mis-pronounce. They are final /b/, /d/, /v/, /th/, /s/, /š/, /z/, and so forth (p. 8).

position of the two phonemes as seen in X-4 and X-5 and XII-5 above, the position being a factor affecting the learner's performance.[7)]

Group XVII involves the alveolar fricative /s/ and the alveo-palatal fricative /š/, which occur in different places of articulation. This set of phonemes does not seem to be a big problem in listening for the Korean subjects as shown in the data.

Group XVIII, in which a voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ and a voiceless inter-dental fricative /θ/ are concerned, does not present a significant problem where the phonemes come in the word-initial position. However, when they are placed at the word-final position as in XVIII-5 the subjects have difficulty in listening. The same problem is seen in X-4, 5, XII-5 and XVI-4, 5.

In XIX, in which a bilabial nasal /m/ and an alveolar nasal /n/ are contrasted, there seems to be no notable problems with them even though they occur in different places of articulation as in XVII and XVIII. One thing to mention is that a set of contrasting words in XIX-2 has a slightly low score compared to others in the group. It seems that the word-final clusters cause the problem as seen in XIII-4 and XV-4.

Group XX contains contrasting phonemes of /l/ and /r/, the former being an alveolar lateral and the latter an alveolar glide. The /l/ and /r/ distinction is hard for Koreans due to the different sound systems produced between Korean and English, in addition to the Korean transcription model in which the two phonemes are represented by a single phonetic symbol in Korean. The two sets, XX-4 and XX-5, especially have lower percentages than other sets. Koreans usually transcribe the first set as /raɪt/ for both and the word *pilot* as /paɪrot/, which sounds similar with the word *pirate* to the ear of some Koreans. This adds to the confusion distinguishing the two sounds correctly in each set.

VI. CONCLUSION

We have explored the sound systems of English and Korean with phonemes in singles and clusters, and words in pairs and sentences. Prognostic and achievement tests based on the textbook used in class illustrate the *p*-value significance statistically. Test scores demonstrate that contrasting consonant sounds are a bit

7) In case of XVI-2, unlike XVI-4 and 5, the high score seems to be the familiar word, *bus*, which is borrowed from English. XVI-5 receives lower score than XVI-4 and it seems that the consonant cluster "pr-" causes the problem.

easierfor the subjects to comprehend than vowel sounds. Gain scores are higher for vowels than consonants so that the gap of mean scores between vowels and consonants is reduced, which is desirable. The test results show that those who participated in the study improved their ability in listening to English in a relatively short period of time, after about three months of exposure to a systematic approach to the sound systems.

We have proposed two kinds of interferences: systemic, or primary, and habitual, or secondary. The examples and data show that habitual, or secondary, interference poses problems in listening and speaking along with systemic, or primary, interference. The former can develop into a fossilized habit, causing misinterpretation without remedial lessons.

The factors that cause the systemic, or primary, interference between English and Korean are English sounds that are lacking in Korean; English sounds that pattern differently from Korean, and so on. Some consonant phonemes and clusters create problems as well. Imprecise background knowledge also causes misinterpretation.

The systematic approach to sound systems and practices is proven to enhance the performance of learners. This consequence ought to eliminate students' feelings of guilt over imperfect usage, while encouraging a positive attitude towards developing their English language skills. Hopefully, improved listening and pronunciation skills will have direct impact on students' English language speaking skills development.

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APPENDIX 1

Listening Test of EP and KP

Fill out the blank in the following as you hear.

	No. of students EP KP
1. Can I see the (sample)?	20 vs. 32
2. Have you been to the (Rockefeller) center?	6 vs. 23
3. How do you like the (opera)?	5 vs. 32
4. There's no (label) on this.	2 vs. 30
5. Do you have a (film)?	11 vs. 31
6. Do you like the (boss).	16 vs. 30
7. What is the (cost)?	18 vs. 30
8. John is a role (model).	6 vs. 32

APPENDIX 2

Input and Output Test Format

Circle the word in parentheses that you hear in each of the following sentences.

Test I:

1. He wants to buy a (ship/sheep).
2. Those (hills/heels) are very high.
3. Look at those (chicks/cheeks).
4. Did you (fill/feel) the glass?
5. He isn't going to (live/leave)

Test II:

1. You dropped a (pin/pen).
2. Did you get the (bill/bell)?
3. This coffee tastes (bitter/better).
4. Her name is (Ginny/Jenny).
5. Whose (chicks/checks) are these?

Test III:

1. Can I have some more (pepper/paper)?
2. This (pen/pain) is terrible.
3. I want to (sell/sail) the boat.
4. (Test/Taste) the cake and see if it's done.
5. Put is in the (shed/shade).

Test IV:
1. Did you see the (men/man)?
2. Is this (pen/pan) new?
3. Everyone (left/laughed) when I said that.
4. They are (said/sad) to be leaving.
5. Is that man in the picture (dead/Dad)?

Test V:
1. This is my friend (Don/Dawn).
2. Is it (far/four)?
3. I need a new (card/cord).
4. She (cut/caught) the piece of paper.
5. I'm waiting for the (bus/boss).

Test VI:
1. I fell in the (hall/hole).
2. Could you (saw/sew) this for me?
3. Don't drop the (ball/bowl)!
4. I (walk/woke) early in the morning.
5. Were you (called/cold)?

Test VII:
1. They (talk/took) too much.
2. Watch out for the (ball/bull)!
3. This (wall/wool) is dirty.
4. It was (fall/full) then.
5. (Paul/Pull), don't push the door.

Test VIII:
1. The sign on the door says ("Pull"/"Pool").
2. (Look/Luke), I want you to come here.
3. Where did that black (soot/suit) come from?
4. Fill the glass (full/fool).
5. Do you see the (bull/boob)?

Test IX:
1. Look at all the (gulls/girls) on the beach.

2. It was spring, and the tree was covered with (buds/birds).
3. That's a very big (ward/word).
4. Can you (walk/work) faster?
5. Those (buns/burns) don't look good to me.

Test X:
1. There are (pears/bears) in the garden.
2. Could you tell me where the (path/bath) is?
3. She threw away her old (pills/bills).
4. I took a yellow (cap/cab).
5. Put the (rope/robe) in the closet.

Test XI:
1. The (vine/bine) is .growing fast
2. That (vend/bend) in the road is dangerous
3. Please (curve/curb) your temper
4. The kids (dove/dob) in the lake
5. Use the (vroom/broom) to clean up

Test XII:
1. The cloud looked (puffy/puppy)
2. Without (fail/pail) he always went to class
3. (Fill/Pill) the glass with water
4. To (laugh/lap) out loud is to feel good
5. The (cap/calf) is quite beautiful

Test XIII:
1. I want to (try/dry) this shirt
2. Do you have the (time/dime)?
3. That's a good (cart/card)
4. She (writes/rides) very well
5. We (sent/send) all the packages airmail

Test XIV:
1. (Day/They) finally came
2. It is easy to (breathe/breed) in this nice weather
3. What is (that/dat)?
4. Would you like to (bathe/bade)
5. The (ladder/leather) looks good

Test XV:
1. Have you seen his new (coat/goat)?
2. There's a spider on your (back/bag).

3. How many (classes/glasses) do you have?
4. That store sells (clocks/clogs).
5. What a cute little (curl/girl)!

Test XVI:
1. Do you spell that with a (C/Z)?
2. Do you hear a (bus/buzz)?
3. (Sip/Zip) it slowly.
4. They (race/raise) horses.
5. What's the (price/prize)?

Test XVII:
1. Are those (Sue's/shoes)?
2. I'm going to buy some new (seats/sheets).
3. Could you (sign/shine) this, please?
4. Do you have the (lease/leash)?
5. Did you (sell/shell) all the nuts?

Test XVIII:
1. It's very (sick/thick)
2. I always (sink/think) in the pool
3. They (sang/thank) for the goodness
4. She (sought/thought) for a long time
5. Do you like (bass/bath)?

Test XIX:
1. I'll give you (mine/nine).
2. I'd like two (combs/cones), please.
3. I think they're (mice/nice).
4. Be careful - don't step on the (gum/gun)!
5. What a beautiful (name/mane)!

Test XX:
1. That sentence is (long/wrong).
2. I'm going to (collect/correct) the homework.
3. Don't walk on the (glass/grass).
4. Are you carrying the (light/right) suitcase?
5. He was a famous (pilot/pirate).

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College

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