A Technology-Enhanced Korean Pronunciation Course

Kyujin Lee, Dr. Ok-Sook Park, & Dan Isbell

I. Project Description

This project has aimed to develop and investigate a focused Korean pronunciation course that integrates technological affordances in a teacher-led classroom. An 8-hour extracurricular pronunciation course was offered to 19 students in the first and second year of the Korean program at MSU. The course involved explanation of Korean pronunciation features, listening discrimination practice, individual shadowing of audio models, and communicative activities designed to elicit target pronunciation features. Technology was used by learners to record and compare their speech with models, and to provide feedback on listening discrimination. Teachers also provided feedback to students on an individual basis during activities.

To investigate the effectiveness of the project, the 19 students in the pronunciation course and 17 other students in the Korean program completed two speaking tasks (a picture description and a read-aloud) 1 week before and after the course. These speech samples were then judged by 10 native speakers of Korean who attend MSU in terms of comprehensibility (how easy/difficult it is to understand one's speech) and accentedness (how foreign one's speech sounds). Currently, the speech samples are being analyzed on a phonemic level by trained coders.

II. Outcomes

Completed

Pronunciation Course:

The course was offered in February and March of 2016. The 19 students showed considerable enthusiasm, with an average attendance rate of 88% (7 out of 8 sessions). Responses to a course-end survey were quite positive: all students felt that they learned something about Korean pronunciation, improved their pronunciation to at least some degree, generally found the activities helpful, and gained in confidence. Additionally, 70% of the students would "definitely" recommend the course to a classmate, and 70% expressed at least some interest in taking a 3-credit Korean pronunciation course.

Investigation of Effectiveness:

The before and after speech samples were judged by 10 native speakers and these scores were analyzed statistically. Keeping in mind that these are *global* measures of comprehensibility and accentedness and may not be sensitive to specific or subtle changes in pronunciation, the following findings were obtained:

- Comprehensibility scores were consistently higher than accentedness scores, though they were highly correlated (r = .93). These finding is in line with most L2 speech research.
- First year students improved their comprehensibility and reduced their accentedness regardless of the treatment. We attribute this to the rapid development of L2 phonology at early stages of language learning as well as any pronunciation instruction already occurring in the first year classroom.
- Second year students who did not take the course showed no changes in their comprehensibility or accentedness over the 11 weeks. This suggests that second year students have relatively stabilized L2 pronunciation.
- Second year students who did take the course showed improvement in their comprehensibility (but not accentedness). This suggests some specific benefit of the treatment at a noticeable, global level, at least for learners who have relatively stabilized L2 pronunciation.

Forthcoming

Investigation of Effectiveness:

Currently, the before and after speech samples are being coded at the phonemic level to investigate how targeted features developed as a result of the pronunciation course. Here we expect that first year students may all show some improvements to some features, but that the first year students who took the pronunciation course will show larger improvements on a broader range of features. We also expect that second year students who took the course will also show some improvements, while the other second year students will show little change.

III. Impact

In terms of learning, 19 students in the Korean program at MSU received enriching supplementary instruction in pronunciation. Even though global gains were not statistically significant for all students in the course, everyone showed improvement after the course, and most students felt more confident in their knowledge and abilities.

In terms of teaching, Kyujin Lee and Dr. Ok-Sook Park, who currently teach courses in the Korean program, gained experience in applying technology to pronunciation instruction. In addition, they developed lessons and activities that could be used in several ways in the future: offering the extracurricular course again, integrating the material into existing Korean courses, or potentially expanding on to develop a new for-credit course.

In terms of transferability of the research findings, the findings are expected to make contributions to the literature on L2 pronunciation. First, very little research on Korean pronunciation instruction exists. Thus, our findings provide some much-needed information to practitioners and researchers. Second, the findings that global pronunciation qualities can stabilize after 3 semesters of L2 study should motivate future research, and may have implications for when to introduce focused pronunciation instruction in the university foreign language curriculum. This project will be presented at the 8th Pronunciation in Second Language Learning and Teaching conference (August 2016) and the team is working towards publication in order to disseminate the findings more broadly.