

## PHONOLOGICAL ERRORS OF KOREAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BAGUIO CITY

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**ABSTRACT** The study was conducted to determine the phonological errors of Korean senior high school students in Baguio City and to find out the variables that affect the pronunciation of the respondents. Data were taken from nine private high schools in Baguio City involving 62 respondents whose oral reading of three selections were tape recorded, transcribed and analyzed.

The findings revealed that in phonology, the greatest errors are in consonant quality and the least are in word stress. Among all the variables studied, media exposure and educational materials have the greatest influence to the respondents' pronunciation. The helpful variables in descending order on media exposure are English movies, American TV shows; on educational materials are English audio tapes, English books are the most helpful and Korean books related to English have the lowest influence to the respondents pronunciation. Among the types of teachers, the native English speaker tutor and the English school teacher are the most influential in enhancing the pronunciation of the students followed by school teachers but not English teachers, and the least helpful are the tutors, who may come in varied background of education. The two least variables in deepening the students' pronunciation are local English variation and the respondents' first language. Local variation of English is English spoken by professional workers, classmates and ordinary workers like salesgirls and vendors. It was drawn from the study that phonological errors are committed by students in their oral reading especially in consonant quality and vowel quality. Also, the most significant variables in enhancing the respondents' pronunciation are English movies and English TV shows, English audiotape, English books. Native English tutors and English school teachers are moderately influential to the respondents, followed by school teachers but not English teachers and tutors who are the least helpful. The students' first language interferes with their pronunciation and local variations of English are not helpful.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Today's global community reaches every aspect of modern living and can only reach deeper into our lives as we step further into the 21st century. English is the language of the global community and thus no longer a choice but a necessity to communicate in English for the modern man. The ability to communicate in English provides people with the gateway to the many rich and fulfilling opportunities that the future can hold (Oldham, 2005).

Educational, business, and social circles demand that people communicate in English. A person's success in his chosen profession or field of endeavor is invariably linked with his ability to express and project his thoughts, not only in written but also in spoken English (Mata and Soriano, 1967). The effect creates a whole new mass of people wanting to learn English, not for the pleasure or prestige of knowing the language but because English was the key to currencies of technology and commerce. As English became the 'Lingua Franca', it created a new generation of learners who knew specifically why they were learning a language-businessmen and women who wanted to sell their products, mechanics who had to read instruction manuals, doctors who needed to keep up with developments and a whole range of students whose course of study included textbooks and journals only available in English (Hutchinson and Waters, 1990).

The study was conducted to determine the problems of Korean students along English pronunciation and to look into the variables affecting these errors. It aimed to:

1. Find out the phonological errors of Korean students in (a) consonant quality (b) vowel quality (c) word stress (d) omitted and extended sound.
2. Determine the effects of the following variables on the phonological errors of the students: (a) first language (b) teacher (c) media exposure (d) educational materials (e) local English variations.

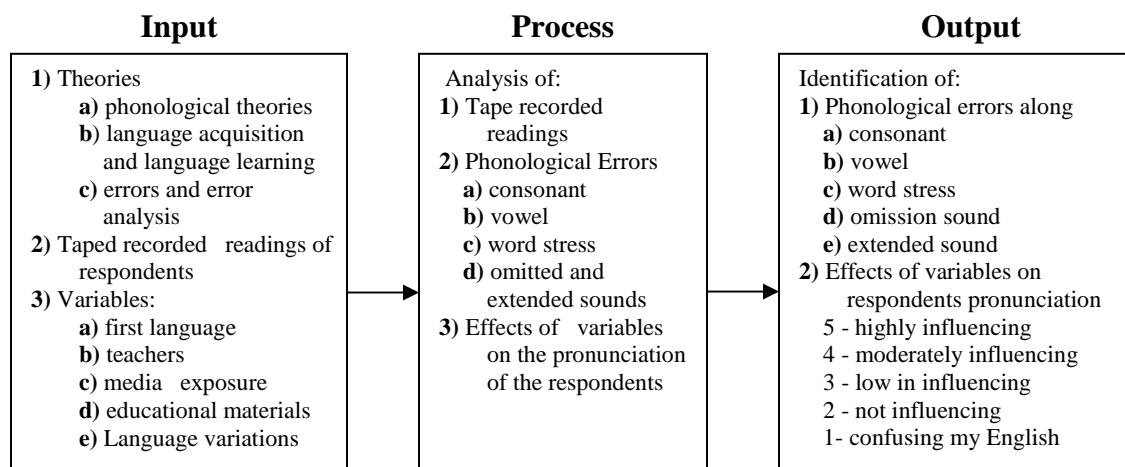
### **Importance of the Study**

If education is going to have a serious function, then it must do its best to ensure good pronunciation knowledge among learners especially the teachers. Pronunciation must not be simply left to chance, for it has a high value in being globally competitive. Results of this study shall serve as a basis for school administrators and curriculum planners to identify better English approaches and methods in teaching Korean students. They can improve and modify teaching methodologies and materials that are relevant in meeting the students' learning goals. To English directors and supervisors, this can serve as an evaluation of the performance of its staff, tutors, and teachers in the English language. Furthermore, the findings can help teachers improve and enrich speaking activities. Teachers, especially non-English majors will be able to give proper guidance and reinforcement to these students. To other researchers, the findings could be an additional source of information, especially on a similar topic.

### **Conceptual Framework**

English is an international language. It is used in education, diplomacy, commerce, economics, business, science and technology. For this, Koreans realize the importance of the English language; it has always been part of the Korean system of education. Its significance is unquestionable (Zu Yo, 1994). As such the Koreans deem it necessary to learn the language for international communication and globalization. However, learning the language is coupled with practice and usage. Thus, Koreans find much difficulty in speaking in English as a second language. Thus, this study is concerned to identify their phonological errors.

As illustrated in the paradigm of the study, (Figure 1), the interplay between the variables brought about the expected output of this project. The first phase, input, establishes the theories that support the study. The second phase, the process, treated the analysis of the tape-recorded utterances of the subjects. The treatment focused on the phonological errors in consonant quality, vowel quality, word stress, omission and extended sounds. Furthermore, the cited variables were analyzed to determine their influence on the respondents' pronunciation skills and the phonological errors they commit. The third and final phase of the study was the output. It covers the identification of the phonological errors of the subjects according to the given classifications. It also includes the identification of the variables affecting the respondents' pronunciation skills.



**Figure 1.** Paradigm of the study

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Baguio City. The focus was the senior high school Korean students from October 2006 to March 2007. There were 62 senior year high school Korean respondents, 29 of whom are male and 33 are female. The descriptive method of research was employed in this study. The primary data gathering tool were the tape recorder and a questionnaire. However, the investigation focused primarily on the transcribed recorded utterances of the respondents to find the phonological errors committed by the respondents. The survey questionnaire was used as an instrument in gathering the data needed for the variables affecting the linguistic errors of the respondents.

Subsequently, data were tallied, tabulated and analyzed. Data were subjected to the Chi-Square (goodness-of-fit) test, the t-test, and the F-test for analysis of variance. In addition, to describe the variables (a) first language, (b) teacher, (c) media exposure, (d) educational materials, and (e) local English variations affecting the respondents' pronunciation, frequency, percentage, and ranking were employed. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the weighted means.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Under phonology, the greatest number of errors were in consonant quality with 3287 errors out of 297 words specifically on the following sounds [ð], [v], [θ], [f], [ɔ̃], [s], which becomes a source of difficulty especially to new learners, followed by past tense consonant cluster, in medial position along extended sound with 11.6 errors per word and omission of sounds in medial position with an average of 11.25 errors per word. The least errors were drawn from the initial sound along consonant cluster with range of errors from zero to 11 errors along extended and omitted errors.

The greatest number of errors committed in vowel quality was in diphthong with an average of 23.5 errors per word (114 errors from 6 words) saying /I/ instead of /ai/, followed by back vowels with an average of 17.83 errors per word (713 errors from 40 words) saying /o<sup>k</sup>/ instead of /), /u/ or /ou/, then front vowels with 10.85 errors per word (369 errors from 34 words)

saying /e/ instead of /I/; /e/ instead of /i/. Central vowels registered with the least error average of 10.34 per word (579 errors from 56 words) saying /ʌ/ instead of /æ/ and /u/ instead of /æ/.

The respondents got the highest correct stress in two-syllable words with primary stress on the first syllable and weak stress on the second syllable with an average of 57.16 per word. The students registered the highest errors with an average of 37.25 per word along words with the tertiary stress on the first syllable and primary stress on the third syllable.

The students were prone to error of extending and omitting sound in the medial position especially in the past tense consonant form. The students were often extending the last syllable in past form especially with words ending in *ded* and *ted* only. In addition, the students are prone to extend words with /sh/, in initial position, /dʒ/ and /d/ in medial position and /tʃ/, /d/, /dʒ/, and /s/ in the end sound. In addition, it was also gleaned from the study that many of the students omitted the /w/, /r/, /k/, /i/, /e/ in the medial position and /d/, /t/, /i/ and /s/ in plural words for end sound.

Moreover, along the variables influencing the respondents' pronunciation: first language, teacher, media exposure, educational materials, and local variation, media exposure topped the list in helping the students improve their English pronunciation with 3.78 general weighted mean. English movies were found to be most helpful with 4.27 weighted mean followed by American TV shows with 4.06 weighted mean and Philippine TV shows in English ranked last with 3.02 weighted mean.

Educational materials, as a set, was found to be the second most helpful to the respondents in influencing their English pronunciation. English audio tape was best along educational materials with 3.87 weighted mean, followed by English books with 3.56 weighted mean and Korean books related to English with weighted mean of 3.21 was the least helpful in helping the students improve their pronunciation.

Along teacher variable, the teachers moderately help the respondents' in improving their English pronunciation. The native English speaker tutor registered the highest influence in improving the respondents' pronunciation with 4.05 weighted mean, followed by English school teacher, with 3.52 weighted mean, moderately influencing the learners' pronunciation. Third is school teacher, but not an English teacher with 3.05 weighted mean, and tutors registered the lowest weighted mean of 2.95, which means that school teacher but not an English teacher and tutors were low in influencing the students in improving their pronunciation.

The local variants of English and the first language of the respondents were neither helpful to the students with an average of 2.88 weighted mean. They were also low in influencing or improving the respondents' English pronunciation.

In general, among the five variables, (first language, teacher, media exposure, educational materials and variation of English), the variables media exposure and educational materials had the greatest influence on the respondents' English pronunciation. The other factors, in descending order, teacher, first language and variation of English had low influence to the respondents' English pronunciation.

## CONCLUSIONS

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are formulated:

1. Phonological errors are committed by the respondents in their oral reading especially in consonant quality and past form consonant cluster, vowel quality, stress quality and in extension and omission of sound.

2. Among the selected variables, media exposure and educational materials have the greatest influence on the respondents' pronunciation in English, influencing them moderately. The other factors, teachers, first language and variants of English have low influence. In general,

the said variables have no significant difference with respect to their effects on the respondents' pronunciation and to their phonological errors.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are given:

1. If education is going to have a serious function, then it must do its best to ensure good pronunciation knowledge among learners especially to teachers. Pronunciation must not be simply left to chance, for it is a market value in being globally competitive.

2. There is a need for English teachers to provide good modeling in the pronunciation of English words and enough time should be provided for pronunciation drills to enhance learners in articulating English sounds.

3. It is suggested that since there is a high percentage of errors in both consonants and vowel qualities, there is a need for teachers to clearly define and illustrate distinctions between the sounds represented by consonant and vowel symbols. In this regard, it is suggested that instructional materials for pronunciation exercises be designed and developed for Korean students' need.

4. There is a need to enhance teachers' competence, especially tutors in teaching English by providing trainings, seminars and workshops specifically in teaching pronunciation or phonics and to improve their teaching strategies and techniques in language teaching.

5. Since we are in an advance- technology age, school administrators ought to provide sufficient access to computer and internet to enhance communicative competence.

6. Teachers themselves should be interested in enhancing their pronunciation skills, to have the confidence in modeling language use inside or outside the classroom.

7. This study does not assume refinement in all aspects. It is suggested that other approaches and strategies be employed in evaluating linguistic errors of students' oral reading so that further discoveries or approaches and methods of evaluation would reinforce the findings of this study.

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