

A Study on /·/, a Sound of Cheju Dialect in Korean

-With Special Reference to English Sound Education-

Kim Soon-Taek*

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| 1. Introduction | 3. In View of English Sound Education |
| 2. Korean Sound /·/ | 4. Conclusion |

1. Introduction

It's an undeniable fact that efforts were made, in general, for students to only perform correct pronunciation, in sound teaching and in foreign language education. As a matter of practical concern, however, the problem of communication has become a subject of much discussion, with the advent of an age when great importance is attached to speech communication.

It is my opinion that foreign language learners need not master all variants of all sounds for language use as a practical purpose. In other words, the writer would like to build the hypothesis that it is not necessary to master both all variants of a sound and the exact pronunciation of the sound of the target language.

The writer thinks it is necessary to reflect upon how much time has been given to pronunciation drill for effective communication by foreign language teachers and learners. It also occurs to me that a new model of teaching pronunciation must be established in foreign language education.

* Professor, Ph. D. English Education Department.

This is because speech is a prime medium, from the viewpoint of communication.

Therefore the writer will attempt to answer the following questions, considering the Korean sound /./ as a real sound:

1. What is the English sound corresponding to the Korean sound /./?
2. What is the space of sound in the Korean sound /./ and the English corresponding sound?
3. What model can be drawn up in the performance of the two sound?

The purpose of this paper is to study the above aspects of speech communication.

2. Korean Sound /./

The Korean sound /./ has long been obsolete and is said to be of some value only as a vestige of Middle Korean, but it is still partially alive. It is an interesting phenomenon that some people, especially Cheju Islanders, are still using the sound naturally in everyday life.

Some views of the Korean linguists on the sound are as follows.

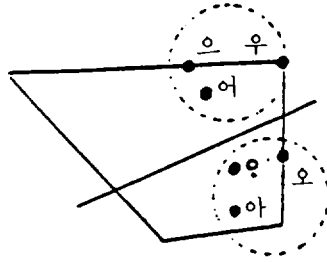
2.1. A view on the sound /./ (1)

Lee says, "Therefore the sound /./ can be defined as a back vowel from the viewpoint of tongue position and tongue height and a conclusion may be drawn that the sound belongs to the same class with the vowels /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/ among the similar vowel sounds....., that is to say, an assertion can be made that /./ is a back vowel and is situated between the sounds /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/ in terms of the tongue position....."¹⁾ Lee also adds the following interpretation in the same book, quoting from *The Korean Linguistics* (p.497) by Hyun Bae Choi. There are two sounds that are similar to /./ in their pronunciations ; they are /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/. /./ can be said to be really

1) Seung Nyung Lee, *A Study on the phonology*, Seoul: Eulyoo Publishing Company, 1949, p.31.

A Study on /·/, a Sound of Cheju Dialect in Korean

a mid-sound between /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/. Between the two linguists, Hyun Bae Choi expresses an opinion of his own on the point, saying that the sound /·/ is similar to /-/. The following chart shows the positions of the sounds above.



2.2. A view on the sound /·/ (2)

- (1) Views of the period that did not see the original copy of *Huminjungum* 'the Korean script'.²⁾

Shie Kyung Chu: a combination of the sounds /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/

Neung Wha Lee: a mid-sound among the sounds /ㅏ/, /ㅑ/, /ㅓ/, and /ㅕ/

Kokurasynpei: a sound between /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/

Keuk No Lee: /·/ is equal to /ㅓ/.

- (2) Views of the period that saw the original copy of *Hunminjungum* 'the Korean script'

Hyun Bae Choi: /·/ is equal to /ㅓ/.

Konorokuro: /·/ is equal to /ㅓ/. (/ㅓ/ is a sound between /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/.)

Seung Nyung Lee: /·/ is a sound between /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/.

As is seen above, we know most of the views support the point that /·/

2) Seung Nyung Lee, *Phonology and Grammar of the Ancient Korean Language*, Seoul: Munwha Publishing Company, 1949, p.34.

is a sound between /ㅏ/ and /ㅑ/. This sound began to oscillate in the seventeenth century and is assumed to have become obsolete in the eighteenth century. However, the sound is retaining some value in Cheju regional dialect, as mentioned above.

2.3. Vowel chart related to the sound /ㅑ/

As we see above, the sound /ㅑ/ was presumed to be lost, but there were many arguments over the sound among the Korean linguists. Furthermore, we must pay attention to the sound again, on the actual assumption that Koreans are still using the sound in a practical sense. Hence the writer would like to examine the sound again. A vowel chart related to this sound is as follows.³⁾

			lips		tongue front central back	
VOWELS	closed vowels	voiced	ㅏ, ㅑ			
	semi-closed vowels		ㅓ, ㅕ			
	semi-open vowels					
	open vowels					

(Sounds which glide from one vowel to another are transcribed into the combination of the two vowels' symbols, but the ones that are not established are parenthesized.)

From the above chart we can see that the sound /ㅑ/ is a semi-open and back vowel, and because the tongue is retracted when the sound is produced, its tone feels profound, and its value is identical with that of Cheju regional dialect.⁴⁾ Keuk No Lee also shows the following diagram to make clear the sound's relationship to other vowels.

3) Keuk No Lee, *Korean Phonetics*, Seoul: Amun Publishing Company, 1947, p. 41.

4) *Ibid.*, p.18.

So far we have examined the Korean sound /ɔ/ from various aspects. In particular /ɔ/ could be described as a sound between /ɔ̄/ and /ɔ̄̄/. Now the writer would like to examine what position this sound may occupy in the English vowel chart. The writer has asserted in the paper *Comparison of Korean and English Vowel Charts* that there are no other English sounds, except /o/ and /ɔ/, that correspond to the Korean sound /ɔ̄/.⁸⁾ The writer would like to begin this task by surveying the English adjacent vowels /o/, /ɔ/ and /ɒ/ in their relationship to one another. The writer restricts this survey to the limits of which of the above three sounds corresponds to the Korean sound /ɔ/, and the writer would like to draw a humble conclusion by comparing the three sounds.

2.5. English sound /o/ and its adjacent vowels

Dong Whie Yang defines /o/ as a mid, back, tense, round vowel by citing Kenyon's vowel chart.⁹⁾ According to this description, /o/ appears not to correspond to /ɔ/ in that /o/ is a mid vowel. Bronstein also describes /o/ in the same manners as Dong Whie Yang.¹⁰⁾ Ladefoged deals with /o/ in the same area of sound with /ɔ/.¹¹⁾ Gimson compares /ɒ/ with /o/ and treats /o/ as a sound connected with /ɒ/ and shows some examples of /ɒ/.¹²⁾

Examples of /ɒ/:

o.....dock, dog, holiday, sorry, gone
a.....was, what, swan, want, watch, quality
ou, ow.....cough, trough, Gloucester, knowlede

8) Soon Taek Kim, "Comparison of Korean and English Vowel Charts", *The Journal of the English Language and Literature*, vol 2, ed., Cheju Branch of the English Language and Literature Association of Korea, 1980, p.111.

9) Dong Whie Yang, *op cit.* p.54.

10) A. J. Bronstein, *op cit.* pp.137-41.

11) Peter Ladefoged, *A Course in Phonetics*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1975, p.34.

12) A. C. Gimson, *An Introduction to the Pronunciation of English*, London: Edward Arnold, Ltd., 1980, pp.114-18.

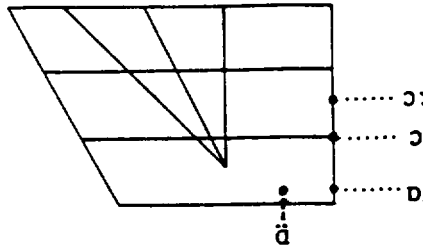
au...because, sausage, laurel, Austria, Australia, cauliflower (note: ɔ in 'yacht'/jɔt)

Compare /ɒ/ and /ɑ/.....lodge:large, cot:cart, cough:calf, impossibele:impassable

/ɒ/ and /ɔ/.....cod:cord, don:dawn, stock:stalk

[ɪ] following.....doll, involve, revolver, solve

As is seen above, Gimson describes /ɒ/ as a shorter vowel than /o/ and /ɔ/, and in terms of open lip-rounding and full back of the tongue. The writer cites here from him the following chart that shows the variants of /ɒ/.



(/ɒ/ and its variants)

He also explains the variants of /ɒ/ as follows:

- (1) In the phonetic environment of /ɒ/ + /f, s, θ/, /ɔ/ is also used as an alternative pronunciation of /ɒ/, and this occurs frequently in English RP, in southern England and among the youth; Examples: off, cloth, cross.
- (2) /ɒ/ and /ɔ/ are used alternately in London speech (Cockney); Examples: dog, gone, Australia, fault, salt.

As is seen above, the sound /o/, /ɔ/ and /a/ are closely interrelated with one another.

2.6. Other views on the sound /./

The English sounds connected with the above-mentioned Korean sound /./ are low back lax vowels. The writer would like to cite here some other

13) *Ibid.*, p.115.

A Study on /ɔ/, a Sound of Cheju Dialect in Korean

phoneticians' vowel charts which support the opinion that the sound most closely connected with /ɔ/ is /ɒ/.

14)

i		u
ɪ	ɨ	ʊ
e	ɜ̃	o
ɛ	ə	ɔ
æ	ʌ	ɔ
	ɑ	ɒ

15)

i	i	u
ɪ		ʊ
e	ə	o
ɛ	ʌ	
æ		ɔ
	ɑ	ɒ

16)

i				u
ɪ				ʊ
e		ɜ̃	ɜ̃	o
ɛ		ə	ə	ɔ
			ʌ	
				ɔ
æ	ɑ		ɒ	ɒ

- 14) Kenyon and Knott, *A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*, Springfield: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1951, xiii.
- 15) K. L. Pike, *Phonemics*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1964, p. 5.
- 16) C. K. Thomas, *Phonetics of American English*, New York: The Ronald Press, 1958, p. 128.

According to the above three vowel charts, the English sound /ɒ/ is lower than /o/ or /ɔ/ and is assumed to be the most analagous to the Korean sound /./.. The writer thinks this can be made more reliable by surveying the distribution of /ɒ/ that has been studied in section 4.

2.7. Comparison of the Korean sound /./.. with the English sounds /o/, /ɔ/ and /ɒ/

The writer would like to contrast the Korean sound /./.. with the English /o/, /ɔ/ and /ɒ/, and look for allophones of each of them. but the writer thinks there is some difficulty in this task.

(1) The distribution of the Korean sound /./..

Phoneme allophone	Phonetic description	environment	examples
/./.. /o/	voiced rounded mid back	# ——— C	ok, gem
		C ——— V	taroi, separately
		V ——— C	piokhan, fertile
		C ——— C	nogojiri, skylark
		V ——— V	ioi, this cucumber
		C ——— #	cho, candle
/ɔ/	voiced rounded low back	C ——— C	koth ta, be similar
/./..	voiced rounded full low back	C ——— C	m.l, horse
		C ——— V	k.ul, autumn

A Study on /ɔ:/, a Sound of Cheju Dialect in Korean

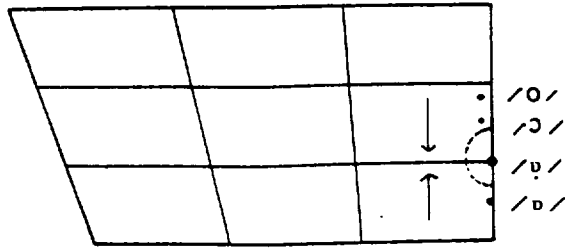
(2) The distribution of the English sound /o/, /ɔ/ and /ɒ/

phoneme allophone	phonetic description	environment	examples
/o/ /ɔ/	voiced rounded mid back	# — C C — V C — #	ɔ:t, ought kɔ:t, caught sɔ:, saw
/ɔ/ /ɔ/	voiced rounded low back	# — C	ɔ'fis, office
/ɑ/ /ɒ/	voiced rounded full low back	C — C C — C	lɒt, lot kɒd, cod; dɒn, don; stɒk, stock

As is seen above, there is great similarity in phonetic environments between /ɔ:/ and the English corresponding sounds, on the point of their distributions. In other words, we can see that the distributions of each of them are # — C, C — V, C — C, V — V, V — # and so on. The articulatory area does not matter, since all of the sounds are back and rounded, and below mid position in terms of phonetic description.

Next, the writer would like to devise a new phonetic symbol that will unite /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/, on the basis of argument that /ɔ:/ is analagous to /ɒ/ most closely. Also the writer thinks /ɔ:/ is the symbol that best fits this purpose. In other words, the writer makes this symbol by putting the dot of /ɔ:/ under /ɒ/ on the basis of the above comparison among the sounds. This symbol may serve as a new phoneme of the two sounds.

As mentioned above, /ɔ:/ can be thus established on the hypothesis that there is a close similarity between /ɔ:/ and /ɒ/. If we can accept the sound /ɔ:/, we Koreans will have no difficulty at all in learning this sound. The writer diagrams this sound as in the following chart, blending the two sounds into one.



3. In View of English Sound Education

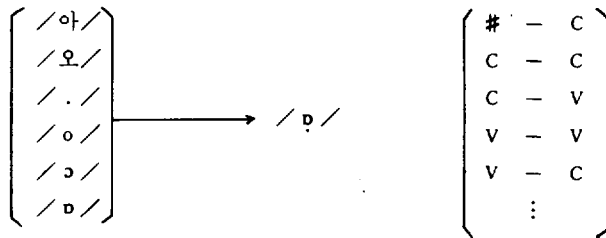
Many problems have been arisen in English sound education, but few solutions to them have been found yet. This fact indicates that there were crucial obstructions to learning foreign languages, especially to mastering speech communication. In the past, a phonetic method was also used, however, in my opinion, it was not a positive teaching method in sound education.

If we teach Korean students the pronunciation of foreign languages, bearing in mind the above hypothetically established sound /ʊ/, we will obtain a good result. In other words, if the sound /ʊ/ is made to be pronounced correctly in the process of learning the sound of British and American English, the corresponding sound of English will be more easily mastered, a better feeling of the sound will be generated to foreigners and an opportunity will be found for the Koreans to make a favorable impression on them. The Koreans could not acquire foreign languages satisfactorily, and many ridiculous phenomena are shown in speech communication, since foreign language education has been performed only by means of the traditional grammar and translation. Therefore, the writer thinks that it is most important to establish a new model of teaching pronunciation for foreigners' speech communication. As mentioned above, for that reason, the writer has attempted to build a new hypothetical model to facilitate the

acquisition of English sounds connected with the Korean sound /ɔ/.

So far, the writer has established a new sound /ɔ/ utilizing the Korean sound /ɔ/ and the corresponding English sound, and now the writer draws up the following tentative plan, thinking this new sound will serve as a guide in learning English sound.

- (1) This tentative plan is possible in the sense of universal production of sound.
- (2) The writer takes the sound /ɔ/ to be established, as mentioned above.
- (3) It is likely that the Korean students can pronounce the above sound /ɔ/.
- (4) Therefore the writer draws up the following model.



4. Conclusion

The writer has come to the conclusion that we can utilize the sound /ɔ/ obtained through comparison of the Korean sound /ɔ/ and the English corresponding sounds, for English sound learning and teaching. As mentioned above, the Korean sound /ɔ/ is in practical use, and on the hypothesis that the sound /ɔ/ is of practical value, we can obtain a phonological form /ɔ/ by contrasting the Korean sound /ɔ/ and approximate English sounds. The writer thinks we can offer Korean students something that may act as a guide in foreign language learning, through building more such models, phonologically.

耽羅文化 7

Finally the writer thinks that in foreign language acquisition, the sounds which are in practical use must be examined in their universal sense.