

**The Priority Method for Korean ESL Students:  
Consonants and Vowels**

by

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THE PRIORITY METHOD FOR KOREAN ESL STUDENTS

CONSONANTS AND VOWELS

by

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# The Priority Method

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## Preface

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## Introduction



The Priority Method evolved from first and second language acquisition theories and child language development. Its significant variation from all previous SLA, second language acquisition, pedagogy is that it concentrates on areas of weakness, prioritizing areas of transitional errors from the L1, the first language, to the L2, the second language, that are common in the phonetic performance and production of the ESL student and focuses on the key areas that have significant sociolinguistic and linguistic effects on the ESL student. Why prioritize errors over other aspects of second language learning? Because errors are the significant areas where the students self-confidence and progress come into play.

Because negative aspects of either or both of the above will impede and stigmatize the ESL student and can be a major factor in having the student quit. Many errors are common to each ESL language group giving that group a preliminary map of errors that can be expected before the student arrives at that point. The specific phonetic area covered will be common consonant errors in the ESL student. An abstract of The Priority Method is in the appendix section of this text.

Chapter 1  
History

The study of a second or 'foreign language' is by no means a modern phenomena as man has almost always needed or desired the tools of communication with other men and as man has expanded beyond his local boundaries the need to acquire the knowledge and use of a 'new tongue' pushed him into language learning. The ancient Greeks used the study of language as a tool for rhetorical practice. The first world language in the western hemisphere was Latin but by the Seventeenth Century it had failed from regular use and became a dead language. The study of Latin was used through the Nineteenth Century as a tool to study grammar and rhetoric as a foreign language and was thought that the study of Latin was an end in itself as it was for developing the intellect rather than a vehicle for communication.

The modern languages, French, Spanish and German, began to enter the curriculum in the Eighteenth Century and as with the study of Latin was learned by rote with little stress on oral practice. By the Nineteenth Century this form of foreign language study had become standard being codified with rules and became known as the Grammar-Translation Method and was in use to the Nineteen Forties. A school of dissent arose during the Mid-Nineteenth century which questioned the validity of the Grammar-Translation Method. Such men as C. Marcel, 1793-1896, modeled language learning on that of children and stressed the importance of meaning in

language and F. Gouin, 1831–1896, also a Frenchman, who believed that a language must be taught with a clear context of meaning reinforced by an action or event.

Far from the static Grammar-Translation Method, the Gouin series was a physical, interactive way of language learning. It was during the later part of the Nineteenth Century that the study of Phonetics, the scientific analysis and description of sound systems of languages, was used to reorient language as primarily a spoken rather than a written system of communication. During this time a new school of thought arose proposing that the second language was learned like the first language. This 'natural method' of language learning would in turn lead to the Direct Method.

The Direct Method popularized the natural method in France and Germany while a Swiss, L. Sauveur, 1826–1907, and a German, Maximilian Berlitz opened successful commercial schools in the United States. The principles of the method was instruction conducted in the target language and practical sentences and vocabulary were taught. Although popular in Europe England had its own school of thought developed from studies starting in the Nineteen Twenties. Two British applied linguists Harold Palmer and A.S. Hornby developed a methodology that involved systematical principles of selection, gradation and presentation.

This system was referred to as the Oral Approach and although used oral emphasis like the Direct Method, was systematic in theory and practice. America would finally add to the language learning studies in the Nineteen Fifties primarily from the behaviorist school of psychology and what would be called structural linguistics. The behaviorist theories on language learning where than children are born with general learning potential, that behavior is shaped by reinforcement of particular responses to particular stimuli and that learning occurs entirely through environment. The structural linguists viewed language as a system of structurally related elements for encoding meaning. These elements would be phonemes, morphemes, words and sentence types. The emphases was on oral. A child learns to speech before it can read or write and speech is the 'priority' in language teaching as it is the 'priority' in language learning.

The Audiolingual method enjoyed popularity late into the next decade but it was the publication of Syntactic Structures in Nineteen Fifty Seven by MIT linguistics professor Noam Chomsky that brought into question the validity of many of structural linguistics principles of language processing and acquisition. Chomsky questioned why the structural linguists could not account for the creative aspect of individual sentences, many that are grammatically unsound yet convey meaning. Although Chomsky was not interested in applied second language acquisition, he would stay with

theoretical linguistics and his theory of 'universal grammar' that proposed innate systems in the human brain that function as language processors, he did open the door for what would be called Communicative Language Teaching.

The theory behind Communicative Language Teaching is that language is primarily communication and that meaning in language is paramount. This brief history of language learning emphasizes two points, that language learning has evolved from mechanical to spoken and that despite all the theories and applications on language learning, people still learn to communicate regardless, and at times , inspite of them.

Although there is little concensus about the exact origins of the Korean language, two schools of thought have developed over the years to explain the origins of this language. The Southern view holds two theories. The first is that the Korean language is related to the Davidian languages of India and the second that it is related to the Austronesian languages of Polynesia. The Northern view has Korean related to the Altaic family of languages such as Turkic and Mongolian. There are two official dialects existing in modern Korea. The Seoul dialect in South Korea and the Phyeong'yang dialect in North Korea.

Chapter 2  
Methodology

The Priority Method prioritizes common errors that traditionally occur in the transition from L1 to L2 in the ESL student. The Priority Method's goal is to have the ESL student recognize, understand and produce correctly articulated speech in themselves and in others. Only when the student has obtained these abilities can the manner of the students speech be considered correct.

The student must be able to comprehend the structural details of the sound pattern for it to be perceived, not just the meaning of a word or a sentence, and although good speech form will not substitute for content, it is a given that good form compliments content. Because speech is used by the individual to communicate at a greater frequency than writing, by a factor of over ten to one, the accuracy of pronunciation will greatly aid in the clear delivery of the desired meaning.



Chapter 3  
Physiology

There are four stages in the production of sound respiration, phonation, resonance and articulation. The respiratory mechanism includes the diaphragm, the lungs, the bronchi and the trachea. The diaphragm is the main muscle for breathing and is the foundation for tones. The lungs are air sacks that hold a volume of air that is expelled through the bronchi and up the trachea. Air travels through the larynx where the air is modulated and vibrated by the vocal folds and this is where voice is produced. The air is then next given depth and amplitude to make it audible by the use of resonators.

There are six resonators; laryngopharynx, pharynx, oral cavity, nasal cavity, oro-pharynx and naso-pharynx. The main resonators are the mouth and pharynx. Size and shape of these cavities can be modified by adjusting the mandible and the tongue. Sound is next articulated into intelligible sounds by the articulators. There are six articulators; lips mandible, tongue, soft palate, hard palate and alveolar ridge. The lips are used in producing two types of sounds, bilabial sounds when the lips are in contact with each other, and labiodental sounds when lips contact teeth.

Articulation is accomplished by the adjustment of the mandible or jaw and tongue that is divided into five parts beginning with the tip, blade, front, back and root. The soft palate is used to control air from the nasal cavity

and the hard palate is the roof of the mouth. The alveolar ridge is behind the upper teeth, also a part of the articulatory process, and next to the hard palate. The timing, placement and overall movement of articulators determine the sharpness and clarity of production.

Chapter 4  
Phonetics

Phonetics is the study of sounds when speaking. The smallest unit of sound is the phoneme. These phonemes are grouped together in what is called the phonemic system. These phonemes are represented as symbols of the sound and are written as a phonemic transcription. Phonology is the study of how these phonemes interact with each other as syllables. Other aspects of phonology are stress and intonation.

Stress is the relative strength of the syllable and intonation is the pitch of the voice to imply meaning. The vocal tract is the region which is between the larynx and the mouth and nostrils and is made up of various parts called articulators. Correct placement of these articulators during pronunciation are crucial to the accurate production of the target language sound.

Because of this each phoneme is depicted by a diagram of a human head depicting the correct placement of the articulators for each phoneme.

## Chapter 5

### Errors

A consonant is a sound produced with an obstruction in the oral cavity. Traditional Korean ESL consonant trouble areas are: [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], [g], [f], [v], [θ], [ð], [h], [ʃ], [ʒ], [s], [z], [ç], [j], [m], [n], [ŋ], [l], [r], [w], and [y].

[p] as in 'spot'.

Substitution error.

[p] will be substituted by [pʰ]



[b] as in 'bet'.

Substitution error.

[b] will be a problem in the final release and will be substituted by [E].