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Helping Korean Adult L2 Learners Improve Their Intelligibility with Explicit Pronunciation Instruction

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To ascertain whether pronunciation instruction can help adult Korean learners of English improve their intelligibility, this study conducted a quasi-experimental study by teaching ten pronunciation rules in Yoo (2011) to two groups of students taking a conversation class in a two-year college in Seoul. The results of the study revealed that the progress made by participants was statistically significant, albeit the increase in intelligibility was relatively small. Of the ten rules, the reduction of unstressed vowels to schwa was perceived to be most helpful for both speaking and listening, while the least helpful was the deletion of /h/ and /v/ in *have* in sentences such as *I should have done that*. The flapping rule was perceived to be most helpful for speaking, followed by the pronunciation of /tr/ and /dr/ in words such as *truck* and *dry* and the deletion of /n/ after /t/ in words such as *international*. As for pronunciation instruction in general, participants seem to possess a conflicting attitude for improving their pronunciation. On the one hand, they are eager to improve their pronunciation, even to the degree of native-like pronunciation; on the other hand, they recognize that improving pronunciation may be difficult because of their age.

Keywords: explicit pronunciation instruction, Korean adult learners, intelligibility, segmentals, suprasegmentals

Introduction

One of the few things that both teachers and researchers in the fields of applied linguistics and TESOL agree on is the fact that all learners should first strive not for nativeness but for intelligibility in pronunciation. This of course has not always been the case as the well-known audiolingualism in the mid-20th century emphasized accurate, native-like pronunciation (Derwing & Munro, 2015). With the advent of English as an International Language (EIL), however, native-like pronunciation has taken a back seat, many scholars that learners of English should strive to attain an accent intelligible not only to native speakers of English but also to non-native speakers of English. Most notably, Jenkins (2002, p. 96) emphasized the importance of teaching "the Lingua Franca Core (LFC)" of phonetic features, which is shared by many varieties of English spoken by non-native speakers of English, in order to help learners improve their intelligibility in the context of EIL.

One obvious reason for supporting Jenkins' argument is the fact there are a lot more nonnative speakers of English than there are native speakers of English. Crystal (2003, p. 61) estimates that only 320-380 million native speakers are in the inner circle, whereas 500-1,000 million non-native speakers are in the

expanding circle. Moussu and Llurda (2008, p. 318) go so far as to argue that native speakers of English "can be far less intelligible in global settings" than proficient non-native speakers of English. Thus, it is only natural that many scholars in Korea have also adopted the importance of teaching EIL pronunciation modelled on Jenkins' LFC features (e.g., Ko, 2007; Park & Son, 2015). Despite this rise in awareness of the importance of intelligibility in the past two decades, one fact curiously remains unchanged: pronunciation is rarely taught in L2 classrooms.

There are a number of reasons that might account for the fact that "many instructors are hesitant about systematically teaching pronunciation" (Derwing & Munro, 2015, p. 78). One obvious reason is that many teachers have not received proper training to teach pronunciation (MacDonald, 2002). Another reason is that very few institutions offer stand-alone pronunciation classes. If pronunciation is taught at all, it is usually integrated in a multi-skill curriculum and very little time is devoted to pronunciation instruction. Foote et al. (2016), for example, found that only about 10% of the instruction time in a grade six classroom consisting of francophone learners of English in Quebec, Canada, is devoted to pronunciation, while 20% was devoted on grammar and 70% on vocabulary. Yet another reason, specifically for ESL contexts, is that it is difficult to find common pronunciation problems that students from different L1 backgrounds experience (Foote et al., 2011).

An EFL context like that of Korea does not present this challenge of figuring out common pronunciation problems shared by students; however, there is also a challenge specific to EFL contexts: the common misconception that native speaking teachers will be better at teaching pronunciation than non-native speaking teachers. Many advantages of non-native speaking teachers have well been documented (Medgyes, 2001), and as Kang (2001) points out, native speaking teachers do not necessarily make better pronunciation teachers as most of them are unable to explain how English phonemes are pronounced. Nevertheless, the aforementioned misconception prevails in Korea, and given this added challenge, it is no wonder that pronunciation is commonly taught in Korea. A survey conducted at a university in Korea, for example, found that although only two of the 110 participants said that they were satisfied with their English pronunciation, none of the eight instructors offered any systematic pronunciation instruction (Park & Son, 2015). Many studies, including Park and Son (2015), point to the necessity of pronunciation instruction. To the best of knowledge, however, there are no studies that offer what specific rules should be taught to help Korean college students improve their intelligibility. This paper tries to fill this gap in the current literature by discussing the effectiveness of explicit pronunciation instruction, as well as the students' reactions thereof, specifically selected to help Korean students improve their intelligibility. The specific research questions are as follows:

1. Will pronunciation instruction using ten core pronunciation rules presented in Yoo (2011) help adult Korean learners of English improve their intelligibility?
2. What are the perceptions of those learners of English on the ten core rules and pronunciation instruction in general?

Literature Review

Previous studies on pronunciation instruction can be categorized into two groups. The first group concerns itself with the question whether pronunciation instruction is effective or even necessary at all. The fact that many college instructors in Korea almost never teach pronunciation seems to be rooted in their belief that college students will not benefit from explicit pronunciation instruction as they have already passed their critical period of language acquisition. Lending support to this argument is Lee (2015, p. 342), who asserts that pronunciation instruction should be limited to early English education in Korea as "there is a critical period when learning a second language, at least for the part of phonology." There is, however, a plethora of research studies that report a strong positive effect of pronunciation instruction, which is shown by a meta-analysis of 86 studies on pronunciation instruction (Lee et al., 2015). A more recent study by Kim (2021) also shows a

significant positive effect of explicit pronunciation instruction on helping college students in Korea improve their intelligibility. Among the few studies that show no significant differences before and after pronunciation instruction is Kennedy and Trofimovich (2010), who report that college students who took a pronunciation course did not improve on their accentedness, comprehensibility, or fluency.

Acknowledging the necessity of teaching pronunciation, the second group of researchers on pronunciation concerns itself with what to teach. When teaching pronunciation, many instructors emphasize segmental features more than they do suprasegmental features (Foote et al., 2011). This is an unfortunate fact as many studies pointed out the importance of suprasegmental features in helping learners improve their intelligibility (e.g., Derwing et al., 1998; Derwing & Rossiter, 2003). According to Saito (2011), teaching only segmental features to 20 college students in Japan resulted not only in no significant improvement on the learners' intelligibility but also in accentuating their non-native accent. The rise in popularity of EIL also confounds the picture as prominent scholars such as Jenkins (2002) propose a set of pronunciation features to be taught for global contexts, which might not be helpful to learners with a particular language background. Jenkins, for example, discourages the use of a flap as an allophonic variation of the phoneme /t/ in words such as *water*. Given the fact that much of the English that Koreans are exposed to is the variety of North American English and that a flap exists as a phoneme in the Korean sound system, there is no reason why Korean learners of English should be discouraged from using a flap in words like *water*. As Szpyra-Kozlowska (2014) aptly points out, Jenkins' lingua franca core of features offer theoretically appealing arguments, but its implementation in actual classrooms pose many challenges.

Even if a consensus is reached with regard to the necessity of pronunciation instruction in EFL classrooms, the stark reality is that virtually no teacher will ever devote one whole course on teaching pronunciation alone. To do so goes against the current trend of teaching English as a communication tool, so pronunciation will always be taught in conjunction with other important strategies for improving speaking and listening skills. Not many resources on teaching pronunciation, however, offer a small set of rules that can be taught as part of a larger syllabus for a speaking, a listening, or an integrated-skills class. Fitting this bill is a book by Yoo (2011), written in Korean for the general public, which consists of ten core pronunciation rules for improving the intelligibility of Korean learners of English and of movie scripts for practicing these 10 rules. Following Ko's (2007) finding that many Korean learners believe that using the Korean alphabet to represent English pronunciation will be helpful, the rules also make appropriate use of the Korean sound system—for example, asking the learners to produce '빠, 따, 까' when the voiceless stops are not aspirated in words such as *happy*, *actor,* and *walking*, respectively. English translation of the 10 core rules are summarized in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1
Ten Core Pronunciation Rules

Rule	Explanation
1	Unstressed vowels are reduced to schwa /ə/, e.g., *Japan, I can do it.*
2	/p/, /t/, /k/ are not aspirated (pronounced as '빠, 따, 까') when they are not placed at the beginning of a stressed syllable, e.g. *speak, actor, walking*.
3	If a word ends in a consonant and is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, link the consonant with the vowel, e.g., *pop up, pop art.*
4	If a word ends in a consonant and is followed by a word beginning with 'y', link the consonant with the 'y' sound, e.g., *miss you, need you*.
5	Do not pronounce the middle consonant in a cluster of three consonants, e.g., *Christmas, exactly*.
6	If 't' and 'd' are placed between vowels and are not stressed, they become a flap (are pronounces as '르'), e.g. *writer, rider*.
7	'h' at the beginning of a function word is not pronounced; /v/ at the end of a function word is not pronounced if followed by a word beginning with a consonant, e.g. *I should have told her.*
8	If followed by /r/, /t, d/ are pronounced as /tʃ, dʒ/ (or as '추' and '주'), e.g. *try, dry*; /t/ coming after /n/ is not pronounced, e.g. *winter*.
9	If /t/ is followed by another consonant, just stop your breath for a second (or use a glottal stop), e.g., *department, definitely*.
10	'qu-' is pronounced as the consonant cluster /kw/, e.g. *queen, quick, question.*

Methodology

Participants of the study

Two groups of first-year students majoring in tourism at a two-year college in Seoul, Korea, participated in this study. All of them were enrolled in an English conversation course for two credits. As shown in Table 2 below, the first group consisted of 30 students and the second group 21 students. The participants were mostly 19 years old, and the majority of them were female students. The level of their English proficiency is best described as low intermediate, except for three students in the first group and one student in the second group who scored six or better on a scale of two to nine on the pretest. The first group received pronunciation instruction on all 10 rules introduced in the following section and will thus be referred to as the full group; the second group received pronunciation instruction on only the first four rules and will thus be referred to as the partial group.

TABLE 2
Summary of the Participants of the Study

	Gender	Age	English level
Full Group (n = 30)	26 females 4 males	19 - 20	Low intermediate
Partial Group (n = 21)	15 females 6 males	19 - 23	Low intermediate

Pronunciation Instruction

Pronunciation instruction took place in the spring semester of 2016. The class met once a week for two hours, including a 10-minute break. Each pronunciation lesson took about 30 minutes. First, the rule was explained to the participants, which took about 10 to 15 minutes; then, the participants practiced reading out loud phrases and sentences that contain examples of the rule; and finally, they watched movie clips that contained examples of the rule and practice the dialogue. The full group learned the first five rules before the midterm and the next five rules after the midterm. The partial group learned the first four rules in the same weeks as the full group, thus completing all the pronunciation instruction before the midterm.

We had entertained the possibility of not teaching any rules to the second group, thus making it a partial group. However, the decision was made to teach the first four rules based on two reasons: one theoretical and the other practical. Theoretically, the first four rules are different from the other six rules in that they are concerned with more suprasegmental issues, which have been found to be more helpful than segmental issues in increasing learners' intelligibility and fluency (Derwing & Rossiter, 2003). On the surface, Rule 2 may be considered segmental as it pertains to the aspiration of voiceless stops. To apply this rule, however, one has to pay attention to word stress, and Rule 2 plays an important role in both Rules 3 and 4, where the final consonant in the first word is unaspirated even when it is linked to the initial vowel of the second word, e.g. *pop up* and *thank you*. Practically, not teaching any pronunciation rules to one class while the other class receives full pronunciation instruction would result in a group of discontented students. Thus, in the final analysis, the decision was made to teach the second group only the rules that have been found to be more effective in helping learners improve their intelligibility and fluency.

Data Collection

In order to answer the first research question, i.e., whether learning pronunciation rules will help learners improve intelligibility, the participants were asked to record their voices reading a passage before the pronunciation instruction began (pretest) and after it was completed (posttest). For both times, they

were asked to read the same reading passage, the diagnostic passage in Celce-Murcia et al. (2010, p. 481) (see Appendix A). As for the assessment of these recordings, we decided to use the IELTS rubric (see Appendix B), whose scores range from two to nine, following the recommendation made by Yun (2012). Two female native speakers of English rated the recordings: an American and a Canadian in their mid-20s. They both have EFL teaching experience in Korea. Each rater independently rated all the recordings, and their scores were averaged to calculate the final grade of each recording. The raters were not told which of the recordings were done before or after pronunciation instruction in order to guard against bias towards giving a higher score for posttests. Upon completing the semester, the full group were asked to fill out a survey on their perception of the pronunciation instruction that they had learned during the semester. Of the 30 participants in the full group, 27 returned their survey.

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of the Pronunciation Instruction

Table 3 below shows the results of a paired samples t-test on the difference between the means of the pretest and posttest of the full group. Overall, the full group made progress as the mean of the posttest increased by 0.2666 from that of the pretest, and this difference was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 3
Paired Samples T-Test of the Full Group's Test Scores

	n	Mean	SD	*t*	df	*p*
Pretest	30	4.3667	1.18855	-2.237	29	0.033
Posttest	30	4.6333	1.41989			

Of the 30 participants in the full group, only about half (14 participants) showed progress, while five participants showed regression. The remaining 11 participants did not show any change (See Appendix C). The participants who showed no change received pretest scores ranging from 2.5 to 5; those who showed regression received pretest scores ranging from 3.5 to 6; and those who made progress received pretest scores ranging from 2.5 to 8. This fact seems to indicate that learning the 10 core pronunciation rules can be effective regardless of the subject's initial level of pronunciation.

Table 4 below shows the results of a paired t-test conducted on the difference between the means of the pretest and posttest of the partial group. Overall, the partial group showed regression as the mean of the posttest decreased by 0.2619 from that of the pretest. This difference, however, was found not to be statistically significant.

TABLE 4
Paired Samples T-Test of the Partial Group's Test Scores

	n	Mean	SD	*t*	df	*p*
Pretest	21	4.0000	1.14018	1.444	20	0.164
Posttest	21	3.7381	1.11377			

Of the 21 participants in the partial group, a little over half (11 participants) showed regression, while three participants showed no change. Only the remaining seven participants made progress (See Appendix D). Table 5 below shows the results of a one-way ANOVA test that was conducted to investigate whether there was a difference between the full group and the partial group before and after the treatment.

TABLE 5
Comparison of the Scores of the Two Groups

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	*F*	*p*
Pretests	Between groups	1.661	1	1.661	1.215	0.276
	Within groups	66.967	49	1.367		
	Total	68.627	50			
Posttests	Between groups	9.900	1	9.900	5.825	0.020
	Within groups	83.276	49	1.700		
	Total	93.176	50			

As shown in the table, the mean difference observed in the pretest between the full group and the partial group was found not to be significant ($p > 0.05$), a result showing that the full group was not different from the partial group at the beginning of the treatment. On the other hand, the mean difference observed in the posttest between the full group and the partial group was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$), a result which suggests that pronunciation instruction did indeed help the participants in the full group improve their pronunciation. This finding, however, needs to be taken with a grain of salt, given the fact that the progress made by the full group is relatively small.

How the Subjects Perceive the Pronunciation Instruction

After completing the experiment, the 30 participants in the full group were given a survey consisting of 20 questions. The first five questions tried to identify which rules the participants felt helpful or unhelpful. Question 1 asked the participants to list the rule(s) most helpful in general; question 2 asked them to list the rule(s) helpful for speaking; question 3 asked them to list the rule(s) unhelpful for speaking; question 4 asked them to list the rule(s) helpful for listening; and question 5 asked them to list the rule(s) unhelpful for listening. Students were asked to list as many rule as they wanted to for each of the five questions, and the results are tabulated in Table 6 below.

TABLE 6
Results of Helpful or Unhelpful Rules

Rule	Q1: helpful in general	Q2: helpful for speaking	Q3: unhelpful for speaking	Q4: helpful for listening	Q5: unhelpful for listening
1	10 (15.87%)	7 (10.94%)	3 (16.67%)	6 (11.32%)	3 (15.00%)
2	6 (9.52%)	8 (12.50%)	2 (11.11%)	4 (7.55%)	0 (0.00%)
3	7 (11.11%)	3 (4.69%)	1 (5.56%)	4 (7.55%)	2 (10.00%)
4	6 (9.52%)	5 (7.81%)	1 (5.56%)	6 (11.32%)	1 (5.00%)
5	6 (9.52%)	4 (6.25%)	2 (11.11%)	8 (15.09%)	1 (5.00%)
6	8 (12.70%)	12 (18.75%)	1 (5.56%)	3 (5.66%)	2 (10.00%)
7	2 (3.17%)	5 (7.81%)	3 (16.67%)	4 (7.55%)	4 (20.00%)
8	7 (11.11%)	11 (17.19%)	2 (11.11%)	7 (13.21%)	2 (10.00%)
9	7 (11.11%)	5 (7.81%)	1 (5.56%)	6 (11.32%)	3 (15.00%)
10	4 (6.35%)	4 (6.25%)	2 (11.11%)	5 (9.43%)	2 (10.00%)
Total	63 (100%)	64 (100%)	18 (100%)	53 (100%)	20 (100%)

Of the 10 rules, Rule 1 was found to be most helpful in general as 10 of the 27 participants in the full group who returned the survey selected the rule on reducing the vowel to schwa on unstressed syllables to be most helpful in general. During the experiment, many of the participants said that they had never been taught this rule before and were surprised to learn that vowels are reduced in functions words such as *can*. In fact, many of the participants in Kim's (2021, p. 221) study stated in their journals that they found the same rule to be helpful. The rule that the least number of participants chose as helpful was Rule 7, which is actually a combination of two rules: /h/ disappearing at the beginning of a function word and /v/ disappearing at the end of a function word, accounting for the disappearance of the consonants in *have* in

sentences such as *I should have done that*. The fact that only two of the 30 participants chose this rule to be helpful was completely unexpected as this rule deals with one of the most common problems that Korean learners of English have in terms of both speaking and listening. Consistent with this finding is the fact that Rule 7 received the most votes for the rules unhelpful for both speaking and listening, three and four votes respectively.

We believed that the participants would find Rule 7 just as helpful as, if not more than, the first rule. However, the fact that the correct pronunciation of *should have* involves not only Rule 7 but also three other rules might have proven too complicated for the participants to appreciate the importance of this rule: in addition to the deletion of /h/ and /v/, the vowel in *have* is reduced to schwa (Rule 1); the last consonant in *should* is linked with this reduced vowel (Rule 3); and this linked consonant, which is /d/, becomes a flap as it occurs between two vowels in an unstressed syllable (Rule 6). Interestingly enough, this flap rule, which Jenkins (2002) does not recommend to be taught as part of a lingua franca core of features, received the second most votes as the most helpful rule of the 10 rules. The rule that received the second least votes was Rule 10, which addresses the common mispronunciation of words starting with the consonant cluster *qu* /kw/ as in *queen* and *quick*, as only four participants found this rule to be helpful. Also consistent with this finding is the fact that two participants found this to be unhelpful for both speaking and listening. It is unclear as to why this rule was construed as unhelpful. We suspect that some of the participants did not experience any communication breakdowns because of such mispronunciations and thus did not see any value in learning to pronounce words starting with *qu* correctly.

As for rules specifically helpful for speaking, Rules 6 and 8 received the most votes as the former received 12 votes and the latter 11. This was a surprising finding in that we expected Rules 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7 to be helpful for speaking as Rules 1, 5, and 7 deals with vowel reduction and consonant deletion, Rule 3 linking, and Rule 4 palatalization, all of which are general rules that can be used in many different environments. Many of the participants in Kim's (2021, p. 220) study also mentioned linking and palatalization as helpful for improving their pronunciation. Rules 6 and 8, on the other hand, deals specifically with environments concerning only /t/ and /d/. Also surprising is the fact that Rule 9, another rule addressing the different pronunciation of /t/, received only five votes for a rule helpful for speaking. The fact that Rules 6 and 8, but not Rule 9, deal with a liquid—a flap in Rule 6 and a retroflex in Rule 8—might have played a role as it is well known that Korean learners of English have a difficult time distinguishing the flap with the retroflex, only the former being a phoneme in the Korean language.

Interestingly, Rule 6 received only three votes as a rule helpful for listening, while Rule 8 received seven votes, second only to Rule 5, which received eight votes (Question 4). The fact that a pronunciation rule can be construed highly important for speaking but not as important for listening is noteworthy. This discrepancy observed in Rule 6 can be explained if we assume that the participants were already aware of the fact that native speakers pronounce /t/ and /d/ in certain words as a liquid but were unaware of the fact that the liquid produced by the native speakers in words such as *city* and *muddy* is a flap not a retroflex. In other words, some of the participants must have already been aware of the fact that the /t/ in *city* and the /d/ in *muddy* are neutralized to the same sound but were trying to produce [ɹ] instead of [ɾ] in those words. This in fact is a common mistake that many students make, regardless of the existence of a flap in their mother tongue: Although the flap exists in the Korean language, many Korean learners of English try to produce [ɹ] in words such as *city* when they are told to imitate an American native speaker. Also noteworthy is the fact that Rule 5, which addresses deletion of a consonant in consonant clusters such as *asked*, was considered more helpful for listening than for speaking. This certainly is a baffling finding as we cannot come up with a reason why any learner of English might consider consonant deletion more important for listening than for speaking.

As for rules that are unhelpful for speaking or listening (Questions 3 and 5), none of the 10 rules received more than four votes as an unhelpful rule for either skill, a finding which suggests that the 30 participants in the full group indeed felt that the 10 core rules helped them (or will help them in the future) improve their speaking and listening skills. As stated earlier, Rule 7 received the most four votes as a rule unhelpful for listening as well as the most three votes for a rule unhelpful for speaking.

The remaining 15 questions on the survey were adapted from the survey questions conducted by Ko (2002, p. 137-139). The participants were asked to choose an answer to each question from the following Likert scale: (1) Strongly Agree (SA), (2) Agree (A); (3) Neutral (N); (4) Disagree, (D); and (5) Strongly Disagree (SD).

TABLE 7
Results of Survey Questions 6 to 10

Q	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
6	Before I participated in this study, I knew I had problems in my English pronunciation.	7 (25.93%)	14 (51.85%)	6 (22.22%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
7	Before I participated in this study, others could understand my pronunciation.	2 (7.41%)	5 (18.52%)	16 (59.26%)	1 (3.70%)	3 (11.11%)
8	Before I participated in this study, I have received pronunciation lessons before.	2 (7.41%)	7 (25.93%)	8 (29.63%)	7 (25.93%)	3 (11.11%)
9	After I participated in this study, people have said that my pronunciation improved.	2 (7.41%)	5 (18.52%)	20 (74.07%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)

Question 6 asked the participants whether they were aware of the problems with their English pronunciation, and most of them (21 of the 27 participants) indicated that they were in fact aware of their problems. Most of the participants, however, did not consider these pronunciation problems to affect their communication in English as only four participants answered that others could not understand their English pronunciation (Question 7). As was expected, only about a third of the participants have received pronunciation lessons before (Question 8). To our dismay, only seven participants reported that others have noticed improvement in their English pronunciation (Question 9). Table 8 below summarizes the results of the next five questions on the survey.

TABLE 8
Results of Survey Questions 10 to 15

Q	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
10	I am interested in improving my English pronunciation.	14 (51.85%)	11 (40.74%)	2 (7.41%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
11	I would like to speak like a native speaker of English.	18 (69.23%)	6 (23.08%)	2 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
12	I think I can improve my English pronunciation.	2 (7.41%)	16 (59.26%)	8 (29.63%)	1 (3.70%)	0 (0.00%)
13	My motivation is more important than my aptitude in improving pronunciation.	6 (22.22%)	17 (62.96%)	3 (11.11%)	1 (3.70%)	0 (0.00%)
14	Young learners can improve pronunciation faster than adult learners.	5 (18.52%)	15 (55.56%)	5 (18.52%)	2 (7.41%)	0 (0.00%)

Asked if they were interested in improving their pronunciation, the vast majority of them (25 of the 27 participants) answered that they still are interested (Question 10). This is an interesting finding in that despite the situation that their pronunciation might not have improved after taking lessons for a semester, many of them are still willing to work on their pronunciation. In fact, the number of participants who want to speak like a native speaker increased by four from those who strongly want to improve their pronunciation (Question 11). This finding is in line with Ko's (2007, p. 23) study, which found that most Korean learners of English hope to achieve native-like fluency even if this goal may not be attainable. Asked if they think they can improve their English pronunciation, however, only two answered that they strongly agreed with the statement (Question 12). As for the role that motivation, aptitude, and age play in improving one's pronunciation, most participants answered that motivation was more important than

aptitude (Question 13) and that age does play an important role (Question 14). All in all, the participants seem to possess a conflicting attitude for improving their pronunciation. On the one hand, they are eager to improve their pronunciation, even to the degree of native-like pronunciation. On the other hand, they seem to realize that their goal of improving pronunciation may not be an easy task because of their age. Table 9 below summarizes the results of the remaining questions on the survey.

TABLE 9
Results of Survey Questions 15 to 20

Q	Questions	SA	A	N	D	SD
15	My Korean pronunciation affects my English pronunciation.	1 (3.70%)	16 (59.26%)	5 (18.52%)	3 (11.11%)	2 (7.41%)
16	I can produce English phonemes similar to Korean phonemes.	2 (7.41%)	6 (22.22%)	12 (44.44%)	6 (22.22%)	1 (3.70%)
17	Learning the English sound system is important for improving one's pronunciation.	3 (11.11%)	12 (44.44%)	9 (33.33%)	3 (11.11%)	0 (0.00%)
18	If I talk to a native speaker more often, my pronunciation will improve.	9 (33.33%)	14 (51.85%)	2 (7.41%)	1 (3.70%)	1 (3.70%)
19	Repeating after a native speaker can help improve my pronunciation.	8 (29.63%)	15 (55.56%)	4 (14.81%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
20	Having interest in American and British culture is helpful for improving pronunciation.	9 (33.33%)	15 (55.56%)	2 (7.41%)	1 (3.70%)	0 (0.00%)

Questions 15 and 16 asked the participants about the possible negative transfer of Korean on their English pronunciation. More than half of them answered that their English pronunciation is affected by their mother tongue (Question 15), a finding which supports Kim and Lee's (2003, p. 91) argument that pronunciation errors made by Korean learners derive from "phonetic and phonological difference between Korean and English." Question 16 intended to ask the participants whether they were able to use the phonemes in Korean to acquire certain allophones in English. More specifically, Rule 6 teaches the participants to use the Korean phoneme /ㄹ/ to produce the flap allophone of /t/ and /d/ in English because the two sounds are in fact the same (Lee, 2011, p. 53). We now realize that the wording of the question is unclear, and this unfortunate mistake on our part might have contributed to the fact that Question 16 did not produce any meaningful answers.

Asked if learning the English sound system is important for improving one's pronunciation, a little over half (15 of the 27 participants) agreed with the statement, while only three disagreed with the statement (Question 17). Although the participants were not taught the whole consonant and vowel system of English, they were exposed to the importance of paying attention to the phonetic symbols in the dictionary, and this might have attributed to many of the students' recognizing the importance of learning the English sound system. As for other strategies for improving one's pronunciation, the vast majority of them felt that talking to a native speaker of English would help improve their pronunciation (Question 18) and that repeating after a native speaker would also help improve their pronunciation (Question 19). In fact, shadowing has become a popular technique for improving one's pronunciation and speaking skill. We do believe shadowing will be an effective technique for those who received pronunciation instruction. For those who have not received any pronunciation instruction, however, shadowing will not be effective as it will only help to fossilize the mistakes that the learners were making. The survey ends with a question on the importance of having interest in American or British culture, and most participants agreed that having interest in the target culture would lead to improvement on their pronunciation (Question 20). This is particularly relevant for the participants in this study as they used scripts from American movies to practice the core pronunciation rules that they learned.

Conclusion

In order to ascertain whether learning the 10 core pronunciation rules by Yoo (2011) can help adult Korean learners of English improve their intelligibility, this study conducted a quasi-experimental study by teaching these rules to two groups of students who were taking a conversation class in a two-year college in Seoul, Korea. Consisting of 30 participants, the first group received pronunciation instruction on all 10 rules, hence the name full group; consisting of 21 participants, the second group received pronunciation instruction on only the first four rules, hence the name partial group. The full group was found to have made progress as the mean of the posttest increased by 0.2666 from that of the pretest, and this difference was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The partial group, however, showed regression as the mean of the posttest decreased by 0.2619 from that of the pretest, although this difference was found not to be statistically significant. The results of a one-way ANOVA test also showed that the mean difference observed in the posttest between the full group and the partial group was found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Given the fact that the progress made by the full group is relatively small, it is difficult to conclude whether the 10 core pronunciation rules did indeed help the learners improve their intelligibility: the small increase in the posttest might have stemmed from other variables not controlled in this experiment.

In order to ascertain the perceived usefulness of the 10 rules and of pronunciation instruction in general, 30 participants in the full group were asked to fill out a survey. Of the 10 rules, Rule 1 on the reduction of unstressed vowels was perceived to be most helpful for both speaking and listening, while the least helpful was Rule 7, which accounts for the disappearance of the consonants [h] and [v] in *have* in sentences such as *I should have done that*. This was a surprising finding in that Rule 7 was thought to be one of the most helpful rules. The fact that the correct pronunciation of *should have* involves not only Rule 7 but also three other rules—the vowel in *have* is reduced to schwa (Rule 1), the last consonant in *should* is linked with this reduced vowel (Rule 3), and this linked consonant becomes a flap (Rule 6)—might have been the reason why this important rule was perceived as not useful. As for rules specifically helpful for speaking, Rule 6 was perceived to be most helpful, followed by Rule 8 on the pronunciation of /tr/ and /dr/ in words such as *truck* and *dry*, as well as on the deletion of /n/ after /t/ in words such as *international*.

As for pronunciation instruction in general, the vast majority of the participants were still interested in improving their pronunciation despite the fact that their pronunciation might not have improved after a semester of instruction. In fact, most of them want to speak like a native speaker of English despite their premonition that they may not be able to improve their pronunciation because of their age. They, however, felt that motivation was more important than aptitude in improving one's pronunciation. Taken together, the results of the survey present the participants' conflicting attitude towards pronunciation instruction. They are anxious to improve their intelligibility, even to the degree of native-like pronunciation, believing that motivation plays a more important role than aptitude. However, they also recognize the fact that improving pronunciation requires hard work because their age may be an inhibiting factor.

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Appendix A

Diagnostic Passage

(from Celce-Murcia et al., 2010, p. 481)

Is English your native language? If not, your foreign accent may show people that you come from another country. Why is it difficult to speak a foreign language without an accent? There are a couple of answers to this question. First, age is an important factor in learning to pronounce. We know that young children can learn a second language with perfect pronunciation. We also know that older learners usually have an accent, though some older individuals also have learned to speak without an accent.

Another factor that influences your pronunciation is your first language. English speakers can, for example, recognize people from France by their French accents. They can also identify Spanish or Arabic speakers over the telephone, just by listening carefully to them. Does this mean that accents can't be changed? Not at all! But you can't change your pronunciation without a lot of hard work. In the end, improving appears to be a combination of three things: concentrated hard work, a good ear, and a strong ambition to sound like a native speaker.

You also need accurate information about English sounds, effective strategies for practice, lots of exposure to spoken English, and patience. Will you make progress, or will you give up? Only time will tell, I'm afraid. But it's your decision. You can improve! Good luck, and don't forget to work hard.

Appendix B

IELTS Rubric

Grade	Description
9	- uses a full range of pronunciation features with precision and subtlety - sustains flexible use of features throughout - is effortless to understand
8	- uses a wide range of pronunciation features - sustains flexible use of features, with only occasional lapses - is easy to understand throughout; L1 accent has minimal effect on intelligibility
7	- shows all the positive features of Band 6 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 8
6	- uses a range of pronunciation features with mixed partial - shows some effective use of features but this is not sustained - can generally be understood throughout, though mispronunciation of individual words or sounds reduces clarity at times
5	- shows all the positive features of Band 4 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 6
4	- uses a limited range of pronunciation features - attempts to partial features but lapses are frequent - mispronunciations are frequent and cause some difficulty for the listener
3	- shows some of the features of Band 2 and some, but not all, of the positive features of Band 4
2	- speech is often unintelligible

Appendix C

Scores of the Pretest and Posttest of the Full Group

Subject	Pretest	Posttest
1	4.5	4.5
2	4.5	5
3	3	3.5
4	4	4
5	5.5	4.5
6	4.5	5
7	4.5	4
8	3.5	4
9	4.5	5.5
10	3	3
11	2.5	3
12	4.5	4.5
13	4.5	4.5
14	2.5	2.5
15	5	5
16	5.5	6.5
17	4.5	4
18	6	7.5
19	5	5
20	3	3.5
21	6	5.5
22	3	3
23	4	5.5
24	3.5	2.5
25	5	5
26	8	9
27	4	5.5
28	4	4
29	5.5	6
30	3.5	4
Mean	4.3667	4.6333
SD	1.18855	1.41989

Appendix D

Scores of the Pretest and Posttest of the Partial Group

Subject	Pretest	Posttest
1	5.5	4
2	3.5	2
3	2	2.5
4	3.5	3
5	5	5
6	4.5	4
7	3.5	4
8	5	5.5
9	3.5	3
10	4.5	3
11	7	6
12	4.5	3
13	4.5	6
14	3	3
15	2.5	3
16	4	3.5
17	4.5	4
18	2.5	3
19	4	3.5
20	4	4.5
21	3	3
Mean	4.0000	3.7381
SD	1.14018	1.11377

