

Phonological Systems among Second Language Learners: How SLA Research can Inform Phonological Research

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In this talk, I will relate a number of lessons I've learned from second language learners since we began SLA research in the late 1990's, lessons with broad application for anyone dealing with phonological systems, whether from a theoretical or a practical standpoint. 1) Any phonological element requires an array of skills from individuals using the language, and these skills include distinct production and perception skills. 2) Individuals vary idiosyncratically with their abilities in these skills in a way that exhibits phonological structure. 3) Phonological elements vary considerably in difficulty. And 4) the native language has an impact on the learner's abilities, though perhaps not what typical research models would lead us to expect. To illustrate the points, I will outline a variety of data from closely related experiments in phonologically-oriented performance by two groups of English learners, one composed of native speakers of Korean and one composed of native speakers of Mandarin.