



Direct instruction of word stress in Russian language classes in South Korea*

Haksoo Yoo** · Andrea Rakushin Lee

(Sunmoon University · Austin Peay State University)

Yoo, Haksoo and Andrea Rakushin Lee. 2022. Direct instruction of word stress in Russian language classes in South Korea. *Linguistic Research* 39(Special Edition): 29-50. This study examined how direct instruction of word stress impacts Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL) students' accuracy of commonly mispronounced words in Russian. Furthermore, it aimed to provide recommendations for how instructors can improve word stress instruction for RFL students. Most native speakers of Korean underestimate the role of word stress in learning RFL and are not aware of its importance in the Russian phonetic system. The Korean language is classified as a non-stress language, which can be problematic for learners of languages with word stress, including Russian. This case study comprised 88 students studying in RFL courses at two universities in South Korea. Data included a compiled list of commonly mispronounced words in Russian, student observations, and linguistic interviewing. Results indicate that pedagogically similar word pairs demonstrate a critical function in differentiating stress in the Russian phonetic system. Word pairs have different meanings but are similar in terms of sound composition (e.g., *Бороди́н – Бородинó / Borodin (surname of a man) – Borodino (name of the village); временна́я форма – вре́менная форма / tense – temporary form; время летíт – время лéчит / time flies – time cures*). They include words with similar spellings but different accents (i.e. *[nófki] are understood as *но́жки(legs)*, and *[nafki] as *носкí(socks)*, because a good rhythm (the contrast of stressed and unstressed syllables) makes the words intelligible even to Korean RFL learners with pronunciation deficiencies. (Sunmoon University · Austin Peay State University)

Keywords Russian as a Foreign Language (RFL), Korean Language, Russian phonetic system, non-stress language, Russian language stress, pedagogically persuasive word examples, word recognition

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** First and corresponding author

1. Introduction

In South Korea, foreign language studies started becoming popular in the 1970s and 1980s (Lee 2015). Russian is taught as a foreign language (RFL) in some public schools and universities in South Korea. However, most textbooks designed for general international learners of RFL fail to address the unique attributes of Korean RFL learners (Popova 2019). One of those characteristics is the lack of word stress in the Korean language, which can make it difficult for Korean RFL learners to study the language. Korean is defined as a syllable-timed language since there is no word stress (Naumenko 2010). According to Fudge (1984: 1), stress means essentially that one phonological element is singled out within another, longer, phonological element. Sentence stress involves the picking out of one word or phrase in a sentence; this word or phrase is usually given the special emphasis of some kind in pronunciation.

Bryzgunova (1977), who developed a theory of Russian phonemics, stated that pronunciation is not limited to just sounds. It is a system consisting of word cohesion, sound accommodation, rhythm, intonation, and other components of speech.

Research has shown that stress patterns or the absence of stress in a native language can have a significant impact on non-native speakers' ability to learn stress patterns in another language (Archibald 1997). The lack of stress in the speaker's native language can result in pronunciation deficiencies in the target language or even incomprehensibility (Bian 2013). Consequently, native speakers of a non-stress language can have difficulties learning word stress in another language. The researchers found in previous observations that many RFL students in South Korea cannot pronounce Russian sounds and words clearly, and instructors may not always successfully correct these mistakes (Yoo et al. 2019). The reason for the speech incomprehensibility is rooted in a lack of pedagogically compelling materials, which could stimulate the students to focus more intently on not only the variety of sounds in the Russian language but also the word stress. This is especially critical for those who primarily learn the Russian language independently without the guidance of instructors (Naumenko 2020).

In this case study, the researchers concentrated their attention on the difficulties in teaching South Korean students word stress in the Russian language. The main aim of this study was to gain more insight into the process of word stress instruction in RFL courses in South Korea.

2. Literature review

When examining the role of word stress in language, it is first critical to define what spoken language consists of. According to Golub and Rosenthal (2018: 259), “Spoken language is the basic form of the language’s existence... We spend about 16% of the day on reading, 45% on comprehending speech, and 30% on speaking.” In addition, the spoken language includes more than just sounds. It is a system of tools including word cohesion, rhythm (which is made by the contrast of the syllables with and without stress), intonation (division into syntagmas and the types of intonation), and pauses. Word stress is one component of many facets of spoken language. Speaking requires creating and receiving information; additionally, it includes understanding the information being communicated (Brown 1994; Burns and Joyce 1997). In the Russian language, word stress is a component of speaking. Thus, when words are not stressed properly, this can cause miscommunication making it difficult for the native listener to understand what is being said.

The Russian language includes a system of word stress and sentence intonation (Svetozarova 1998). According to Svetozarova (1998: 276) “In principle, stress can fall on any syllable in the word and on any morpheme – root, prefix, suffix, or even desinence.” This can be problematic for non-native speakers who are trying to identify patterns in words with stress. In Russian, most words have only one stressed syllable, with secondary stressed words mostly found in some compound words. In addition, the word stress system in Russian can be confusing for students because it seems irregular; however, there are some commonalities based on word class (Fedjanina 1976). Svetozarova (1998: 266) also states that the primary reason for word stress in the Russian language is “constitutive and word-identifying: it determines the particular accentual rhythmic structure of a given word, and if that structure is deformed in any way, the word becomes more and more difficult, or even impossible, to recognize.” When studying word stress, students should also be aware of the purpose and functions of word stress in the Russian language. This may help them to become more cognizant of word stress when speaking the language.

Rosanova and Odintsova (1977) studied the accents of native speakers from Asian countries and stated that the Russian sounds for Korean students can be very clear and almost native-like if the instructor focuses on the word stress sounds during classroom instruction. However, Korean native speakers often struggle to hear word stress in the

Russian language because it does not exist in their native language. The insensibility of a human's ear to the pronunciation features of a foreign language becomes an obstacle. Trubetsky (1960: 59) states that a specific “phonological sieve” interferes. This statement can be supported based on similar-sounding word pairs in Russian, which are misunderstood by Korean RFL students. Some examples include *Ниско́лько* (*None*), which can be understood as *Нéсколько* (*a few*); *Это нéчто!* (*That is something great!*) – *Это ничто́!* (*That's nothing!*); *Ни за что́!* (*No way!*) – *Нé за что!* (*Not at all!*), etc. In addition, word stress problems in other foreign language learning contexts besides Russian can cause problems (e.g., Cohn 1989; Don et al. 2014; Ibrahim 2007). In a study on English language learners, Munro and Derwing (2009) found that word stress impacted the ability of native listeners to comprehend the meaning of what was being said by non-native speakers. Accuracy of lexical word stress placement can also result in a more favorable assessment of non-native speakers by native listeners (Hahn 2004) and can make the non-native speaker seem more fluent to native speakers (Derwing and Rossiter 2003). Examining the barriers to the effective pronunciation of these sounds and exploring strategies for successful instruction and learning is important. It is critical for instructors of RFL in the South Korean learning context and other languages that lack word stress to consider how to more effectively teach word stress to ensure that the words are correctly understood in authentic situations.

1) The first research question guiding this study is “How does direct word stress instruction impact South Korean RFL students’ accuracy of commonly mispronounced words in Russian?” 2) The second research question guiding this study is: “How can instructors improve word stress instruction for South Korean RFL students?” There is a dearth of research on word stress in RFL classes in South Korea. This study adds to the body of literature and provides much-needed theoretical and practical insight into the improvement of word stress instruction in RFL classes in South Korea.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants and setting

A case study was carried out to gain more insight into the experiences of South Korean RFL students who are learning word stress. Case studies employ various types

of data to attain a more holistic understanding of the case as a whole (Merriam 2009). Participants included students of RFL courses at two universities in South Korea. Participants were obtained through convenience and purposive sampling. Data was collected at “A University” in the first semester of 2019 with 25 participants and the second semester of 2019 with 22 participants. Data was collected at “B University” in the first semester of 2019 with 22 participants and in the second semester of 2019 with 19 participants. Both universities are located in Chungcheong Province, South Korea.

3.2 Materials

Many South Korean RFL students do not pronounce the difference between syllables with and without stress, and this sometimes makes it hard to understand which word they mean (e.g., *cmóum* (*it's worth*) or *cmoúm* (*he/she stands*)). As a result, the researchers created a file consisting of word pairs, which could be used as learning exercises for the pronunciation of word stress. The word pair file is largely rooted in the work of Sternin (2008) who developed a word stress classification system. Additionally, the researchers analyzed texts focusing on the frequency of the usage of the words, in which stress plays a significant role in terms of word meaning. Data were collected through the observation and analysis of word pair activities that centered on word stress errors of RFL learners in South Korea.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The researchers found that students often ask about how many signaling word pairs there are in the language and how frequently they are found in texts. To answer this question, the researchers conducted an experiment.

In the first stage of the study, the researchers gathered Russian word pairs to practice word stress with students. Secondly, student observations were conducted during linguistic interviewing activities. The researchers used a method of continuous sampling of incorrect language production among students enrolled in RFL courses, which led to inaccurate changes to the meaning of a word (for example, *Cóфа* (*a diminutive form of the female name Cóфья/Софúя*) instead of *coфá* (*sofa*)). These examples were compiled into a 185-page MS Word document. This material formed the basis of a system of

exercises developed by the researchers consisting of three stages: teaching pairs of words with different stress placement locations that change their meaning, repeating these pairs after the teacher, and self-checking pronunciation using the ‘speech to text’ function, which is a tool available in modern gadgets including smartphones, laptops, and tablets that are commonly used by students.

In the second stage of the study, the researchers conducted linguistic interviewing. These oral interviews were conducted during the midterm and final exams in each of the classes. Students were asked questions about word pairs with different placements of word stress. The goal of linguistic interviewing was to improve the Russian language awareness of native speakers of Korean, which is a non-stressed language. Therefore, students would become acquainted with each new word, thus, focusing more on the correct stress of each word. The researchers asked direct questions to students, which include, “Do you hear the difference in the sound of words with different accents? Do you understand that stress is the differential feature that distinguishes these units by value?”

In the third stage of the study, the researchers summarized the material obtained in the first and second stages and concluded that the success of working on stress with representatives of different languages does not depend on subjective factors. Such factors could be the inability to hear the place of stress and the inability to understand its role in speech recognition. However, the researchers did not find any subjective factors of this kind. The success of the accent work depends only on how convincing the examples used in the instruction process are and how systematic Russian accent training is in terms of word stress, which aligns with previous studies conducted by the researchers (Author et al. 2019).

In the last stage, the researchers verified the results of these linguistic training activities. This consisted of observing the classes to determine how much the skills of students developed in terms of correct word stress pronunciation. For example, when learning a new word, the student first pays attention to the place of stress, that is, to its rhythm (before the phonetic composition of the word).

4. Results

By summarizing the responses of students, the researchers concluded that in 99% of

the interviews, South Korean students could distinguish the difference in the place of stress and understand that the correct placement of stress in many cases depends on the ability to recognize a particular word to the listener.

The researchers found that South Korean students generally understand that it is essential to learn how to recognize the distinct sounds in a word, both vowels, and consonants, and then pronounce them correctly because there are a lot of words that are almost similar in their pronunciation, but different in their meanings: *расовый* (*racial*) – *разовый* (*one-time*), *надо* (*need*) – *Нато* (*NATO*), *тёмный* (*languid*) – *тёмный* (*dark*), *долго* (*for a long time*) – *только* (*just*), *частный* (*private*) – *частый* (*frequent*), *больше* (*more*) – *Польша* (*Poland*), *личный* (*personal*) – *лишний* (*extra*), etc. Students generally enjoyed doing phonetic exercises using these word pairs. They understood the purpose of these exercises. Through these activities, students tended to be more mindful of the word pairs, which can lead to misunderstanding if the words are not pronounced correctly. Examples include *беременная подруга* (*pregnant girlfriend*) – *временная подруга* (*temporary girlfriend*), *время летит* (*time flies*) – *время лечит* (*time cures*), etc. There are myriad examples that could be provided. For this reason, the researchers regularly gather examples of commonly mispronounced words to prevent students from facing misunderstandings in face-to-face conversations.

The researchers also noted that it is critical to focus on students' attitudes toward word stress at the beginning of RFL courses. According to Loginova (2017: 274), “The earlier one learns how to pronounce word stress, the less energy and time it requires, and it leads to better results than after the attempts of correcting the mistakes in the later steps of learning.” The importance of learning word stress, especially early in language studies, is emphasized by many researchers of Russian language education (e.g., Dobchinova 2008; Loginova 2017). Teaching word stress as early as possible requires less time and effort and will likely produce more significant results than trying to fix incorrect word stress placement at later stages of learning (Loginova 2017). Early exposure to correct word stress is critical for accuracy in the Russian language. Furthermore, when students do not learn correct word stress, they have to relearn pronunciation later in a course, which can make it difficult since they are already accustomed to incorrectly pronouncing words without proper stress.

The researchers found that the earlier students are exposed to word stress, the easier the signaling of word pairs should be. Table 1 provides specific examples of word pairs with English, Russian, and Korean translations of Russian words with similar sounds that

may not be stressed properly by Korean RFL learners. These were collected over time by the researchers through practical classroom activities and Russian linguistics' materials.

Table 1: Russian Words with Similar Sounds: Examples for Beginner Learners
(English-Translations)

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3
<i>Сóфа (Sofa: a diminutive form of the female name Сóфья/София)</i>	<i>софа́ (sofa)</i>	
<i>А́лла (Alla: female name)</i>	<i>Алло́ [алó/ал'ó] (hello)</i>	
<i>паго́да (pagoda)</i>	<i>пого́да (weather)</i>	
<i>Метропо́литен (Metropolitan)</i>	<i>метрополи́тен (metro)</i>	
<i>и́мя (name)</i>	<i>имéйл (email)</i>	<i>имéл (had)</i>
<i>бы́стро (quick)</i>	<i>бистро́ (bistro)</i>	
<i>ко́фе (coffee)</i>	<i>кафе́ (cafe)</i>	<i>ко́пия (copy)</i>
<i>рождéние (birth)</i>	<i>Рождество́ (Christmas)</i>	
<i>А́нна (Anna: female name)</i>	<i>она́ (she)</i>	
<i>водá (water)</i>	<i>фата́ (veil)</i>	<i>ва́та (cotton)</i>
<i>учéбник (textbook)</i>	<i>учени́к (student)</i>	<i>учёный (scientist/scholar)</i>
<i>женá (wife)</i>	<i>Жéня (Zhenya: a diminutive form of the male/female name Евгéний/Евгéния)</i>	
<i>брéмя (burden)</i>	<i>врéмя (time)</i>	<i>прéмия (prize)</i>
<i>па́ра (pair)</i>	<i>пора́ (period of time)</i>	<i>пóра (ко́жи) (pore (of skin))</i>
<i>сто́ит (it's worth)</i>	<i>сто́ит (he/she stands/ he/she is standing)</i>	
<i>плачу́ (I cry/I am crying)</i>	<i>плачу́ (I cry/I am crying)</i>	
<i>контро́лёр (в поезде)</i>	<i>контрóллер</i>	

<i>(inspector (on the train))</i>	<i>(в компьютерной технике) (computer controller)</i>	
<i>моѐ (my - with a singular masculine possessive determiner)</i>	<i>моѐ (my - with an in plural possessive determiner)</i>	
<i>квѣртал (fourth part of the year for the report)</i>	<i>квартѣл (quarter)</i>	
<i>пѳмѳцѳ (help)</i>	<i>пѳмѳщнѳк (assistant)</i>	<i>пѳмѳгѳть (to help)</i>

In beginner RFL classes, the signaling word pairs should be easier based on the methodological principle of ranging in order from simple to complex. These are some examples of Korean and English translations. *Сѳфа* (short form of the name *Sofia*) – *сѳфѳ* (a sofa); *Ѳлла* (female name) – *Ѳлло* [Ѳлѳ/Ѳл'ѳ] (*Hallo* - the word, usually said in the beginning of the phone call); *пѳгода* (pagoda) – *пѳгѳда* (weather); *метропѳлитен* (Metropolitan) – *метропѳлитѳн* (metro); *ѳмя* (name) – *ѳмѳѳл* (email) – *ѳмѳл* (had); *бѳстрѳ* (quick) – *бѳстрѳѳ* (bistro); *кѳфе* (coffee) – *кафѳ* (cafѳ) – *кѳпѳя* (copy); *рѳждѳнѳе* (birth) – *Рѳждѳствѳѳ* (Christmas). Hence, easier words should be covered earlier in a course and more difficult words as the course progresses.

While learning the word forms in different cases, the students find out about how the word stress can move in the different forms (e.g., *словѳрь* – *словѳрѳѳ*, *рукѳ* – *рѳкѳ*, *тѳло* – *тѳлѳ* – *тѳлѳѳ*, *дѳло* – *дѳлѳ* – *дѳлѳѳ*, *вѳчер* – *вѳчерѳѳ* – *вѳчерѳѳѳ*, *в дѳше* – *в дѳшѳѳ*, *дом* (*домѳѳ*) – *дѳма* – *дѳмѳѳ* (*дѳмѳѳѳ*), *водѳ* – *вѳды*, *землѳ* – *зѳмлѳѳ*, *стенѳ* – *стѳнѳѳ*, *дѳскѳѳ* – *дѳскѳѳѳ*, etc.). As the students expand their vocabulary, instructors can add more signaling pairs in the exercises. Examples of intermediate and advanced word pairs are provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Russian Words with Similar Sounds: Examples for Intermediate/Advanced Learners (English Translations)

Example 1	Example 2	Example 3	Example 4	Example 5
<i>Бѳродѳнѳѳ (Borodino: name of the village)</i>	<i>Бѳродѳѳн (Borodin: surname of a man)</i>			
<i>дѳнѳѳѳ (money)</i>	<i>дѳнѳѳѳѳ (days)</i>			

<i>развитые</i> (developed)	<i>развѣтѣ</i> (development)		
<i>принято</i> (accepted)	<i>приятно</i> (pleasant)		
<i>ударили</i> (hit: past tense)	<i>удалили</i> (deleted)		
<i>посылки</i> (parcels)	<i>васильки</i> (cornflowers)		
<i>мало</i> (few/little)	<i>мало</i> (be small: a short form of the neuter singular of the adjective <i>малый</i>)		
<i>ѣдем</i> (we drive/we are driving)	<i>ѣдим</i> (we eat/we are eating)	<i>ѣду</i> (I drive/I am driving)	<i>ѣду</i> (food: accusative case)
<i>будущий</i> (future)	<i>ведущий</i> (host/moderator/leading)		
<i>бросил</i> (threw)	<i>просил</i> (asked)		
<i>стенá</i> (wall)	<i>сцѣна</i> (scene)	<i>цена</i> (price)	
<i>больше</i> (more)	<i>большой</i> (big)	<i>большинство</i> (the majority)	
<i>блюдо</i> (dish)	<i>блютуз</i> (Bluetooth)		
<i>берѣз</i> (kept safe)	<i>бѣрег</i> (shore)	<i>берегу</i> (I keep sth safe)	<i>к бѣрегу</i> (to the shore)
<i>соблазны</i> (temptations)	<i>соблазни</i> (tempt: imperative)		
<i>путы</i> (shackle)	<i>путѣ</i> (ways)		
<i>памяти</i> (memory: genitive case)	<i>помяты</i> (be crumpled: a short form of the plural of the participle <i>помятый</i>)		
<i>тамошний</i> (of that place)	<i>таможня</i> (customs)		
<i>виски</i> (whisky)	<i>виски</i> (temples)		

<i>ка́сса (cash machine)</i>	<i>коса́ (plait)</i>	<i>ко́со (slanting: a short form of the neuter singular of the adjective косо́й)</i>	<i>коза́ (she-goat)</i>	<i>Ко́за ностра (Cosa Nostra)</i>
<i>Калашу́ (автоматы Калашникова) (Kalashnikov: Russian rifles)</i>	<i>кало́ши (galoshes)</i>			
<i>авто́ (car)</i>	<i>а́втор (author)</i>			
<i>вино́ (wine)</i>	<i>ви́на (wines)</i>	<i>вина́ (fault/wine: genitive case)</i>		
<i>в дере́вне (in the village)</i>	<i>в дре́вности (in the ancient times)</i>			
<i>права́ (водительские) ((driving) license)</i>	<i>пра́во (юридическое) ((legal) right)</i>			
<i>про́шлое (past)</i>	<i>прошлó (passed: past tense of the neuter singular of the verb пройти́)</i>			
<i>ме́ртвые (the dead)</i>	<i>мертвѝ (be dead: a short form of the plural of the adjective ме́ртвый)</i>			
<i>живѝе (the living people)</i>	<i>живѝы (be alive: a short form of the plural of the adjective живо́й)</i>			
<i>о́соб (individuals)</i>	<i>осо́бы (personages)</i>			
<i>вре́менный (temporary)</i>	<i>совреме́нный (modern)</i>	<i>временно́й ((adj.) connected to time)</i>		
<i>подви́жный ребёнок (active child)</i>	<i>подви́жно́й соста́в (rolling stock)</i>			

A wide range of word pairs can be found on the internet (e.g., <https://accentonline.ru>), by searching for *homographs* – words that are written similarly but have different word stress. Some pairs of words (there are a little more than 20 of them) can be used in working with foreigners: *звонóк* (a bell) – *звóнок* (ringing), *хлоно́к* (cotton) – *хлопо́к* (clap), *хаóс* (chaos) – *хаóс* (*Chaos*), *бегóм* (*Run!/Hurry up!*) – *бéгом* (*running*), *языко во́й* ((*adj.*) connected to language) – *языко́вый* ((*adj.*) connected to tongue), *молоде́ц* (*Well done!*) – *молодец* (*young stalwart*), *пи́ли* (*drank*) – *пили́* (*Saw!*), *ношу́* (*I wear*) – *ношу* (*burden: accusative case*), *клубы́* (*clubs*) – *клубы́* (*masses*), *у́ху* (*ear: dative case*) – *уху́* (*Ukha: Russian fish soup: accusative case*), *пирогóи* (*pies*) – *пирогóи* (*pirogue*), *стрéлки* (*arrows/clock hands*) – *стрелкóи* (*shooters*), *пóлки* (*shelves*) – *полкóи* (*regiments*), *дом óвый* ((*adj.*) house's) – *домовóй* (*hobgoblin*), *бронировать* (*to reserve*) – *бронировáть* (*to armour*), *запах* (*bodice width/smelled: past tense of the masculine singular of the verb запахнуть*) – *запах звозди́ки* (*smell of carnation*) – *звóздики* (*small nails: a diminutive form of the noun звоздь*)), etc.

During class, students can use short poems that the researchers created for better memorization of the signaling word pairs such as «Читал *учёбник* *ученик*, писал *учёбники* *учёный*»; «Беспóмощным *пóмощь* нужна, *пóмощники* им *помогáют*»; «Фреск у «Тáйная *вечéра*» *вéчером* *вчeрá* купил»; «Вот прекрасная картина: на картине – *дáма* *дóма*, вдалеке от её *дóма* – *дáмы*, *чайки* и *домá*»; «Кури́ть он быстро *брóсил*: так врач его *прóсил*»; «Прáво есть купить машину, водить машину есть *правá*»; «Пáгода прекрасна в любую *погóду*»; «Купила *еду* и *еду* домой». These activities can be beneficial to students because rhyming words used in a poem format can lead to better memorization of the frequency of words in speech and improved understanding of the importance of stress for distinguishing words of similar phonetic composition (Saveliev 2018).

They analyzed a large text trying to find the words that could be in those pairs where the only difference between words is the word's stress (two different words or word forms); however, on 250 pages of text, there were only a couple dozen words.¹

¹ The researchers analyzed Saveliev's (2018) book, Церебральный сорти́нг (Cerebral sorting). It turned out that there were not so many words, where the meaning could change due to the word stress: *деле́* – *дела́*, *сторонóи* – *сторóны*, *бeрeгá* – *берегá*, *мeстá* – *местá*, *средá обитания* – *сре́ды обитания*, *по́ля* – *поля́*, *го́рода* – *городá*, *воло́кна* – *волокна́*, *странóи* – *стра́ны*, *лeсá* – *лесá*, *семóи* – *сeмьи*, *торьмóи* – *торьмы́*, *козлóи* – *кóзлы*, *чeрeпá* – *чeрeпá*, *цeлeй* – *цeлeй*, *на гóре* – *на горé*, *богóв* – *Бóгов*, *глазкóи* – *глазкóи*, *побeгóи* – *побeгóи*, *тoрмoзá* – *тoрмoзá*, *су́шу* – *сушóи*, *цвeтá* – *цвeтá*, *вeстóи* – *вeстóи*, *войнóи* – *во́ины*, etc. In the text, the word stress was not marked since Russian native speaker can understand the

Therefore, some students came to the conclusion that word stress, despite being significant in some cases, is not as important as the pronunciation of the sounds. Fortunately, in the majority of Russian words (96%), the stressed vowel stays the same in different word forms (Pyo and Muran 2008). It is important to emphasize that instructors should show the students exact examples, on the basis of which they would be able to realize that good rhythm hides the flaws of the pronunciation (Bryzgunova 1977). This is because the students who are learning a foreign language cannot be indifferent to how their speech will be comprehended. Miscommunication can result in communication barriers with native Russian speakers who may not fully comprehend the message that the non-native speaker is trying to convey due to word stress errors.

The experiment of analyzing different words with a focus on word stress revealed the following consistent pattern. In long words, the mistakes in word stress and insignificant mistakes in pronunciation of sounds do not play a huge role in recognizing the word. For example, ²*Новелевская премия will be understood as *Нобелевская премия* (*Nobel Prize*) anyway, and ^{*}*достопримецательности as *достопримечательности* (*sights*) as well. The reason for that could be found when the distance is long. Based on the results of the study, the researchers also found that students could recognize the right image of the word even in a slightly changed variant. However, if the distance consists of two-three syllables in the word and the pronunciation is not clear enough, the word stress helps the listener to understand the meaning of the word. For example, if the speaker says sound [c] ([s]) as [ф] ([f]), we can see if the word stress can hide this flaw. Indeed, if the speaker with a speech impediment makes the word stress in the right place, their speech will be understandable to the listener: ^{*}[нефкьл'кь] ([néfkalka]) – will be decoded as *несколько* (*a few*), while ^{*}[нифкол'кь] ([nífkól'ka]) as *нисколько* (*none*). When the speaker produces the word stress correctly and that is why the listener understands what they are saying. 1) Instead of [ш] ([sh]) and [c] ([s]) they say [ф]([f]), but the word ^{*}[нофки] ([nófki]) will be understood as *ножки* (*legs*), and ^{*}[нафки] ([nafkí]) – *носки* (*socks*). 2) The speaker has difficulties with [б] ([b]) and [п] ([p]) sounds, but the word ^{*}[пусина] ([púsina]) will be understood as *бусина* (*bead*), and ^{*}[пусина] ([pusína]) as *пучина* (*abyss*). 3) Non-native speakers may have difficulties saying soft [д] ([d]) and [б] ([b]) and the combination of sounds [дж] ([dʒ]). However, ^{*}[бужет]**

meaning of the word based on the context (*многие страны (many countries) – нет такой страны (there is no such country)*).

2) The superscript asterisks used throughout the paper denote examples of phonetic (or word stress) irregularity.

([búdzet]) will be understood by listeners as *бyдeт* (*will be*), and **[бyжéт]* ([budzét]) as *бюджéт* (*budget*). It is critical to be aware of the decisive role in understanding the word's meaning despite inaccurate pronunciation of some sounds. Word stress helps to recognize the words and give meaning and understanding to the words.

5. Discussion

The research results lead to important conclusions that should be considered by RFL instructors in South Korea and by students who are independently studying RFL. When instructors begin to teach RFL to native Korean speakers, they should help them to realize the importance of word stress from the very beginning of class by showing clear examples of how important it is to master the word stress as a phonetic part of the language. This has also been noted by other researchers (e.g., Loginova 2017) who emphasize the need to learn proper word stress pronunciation early in a learning program. It should be of even greater importance than the pronunciation of the distinct sounds, especially when it comes to words with two to three syllables. It is connected to the fact that word stress has more functions than the system of sounds. For example, the contrast between voiced and voiceless and soft and hard consonants can play a distinguishing role (*ноpoзу* (*sills*) – *ноpoку* (*sins*), *днa* (*bottom: genitive case*) – *днa* (*day: genitive case*)); meanwhile, the word stress, being on a different level in a phonetic system, has three functions – it helps to distinguish different words (*глáзкu* (*eyes*) – *глaзкú* (*peepholes*)), word forms (*зúмы* (*winters*) – *зuмú* (*winter's/of winter: genitive case*)) and to recognize the words.

Based on the findings of this study, instructors of RFL in South Korea should aim to create a curriculum, which centers on the memorization of Russian words with their established rhythmic pattern (Chistovich et al. 1976: 52; Zhang and Lee 2019: 72). There are three things needed to be done to achieve that. First, all of the word pairs should be collected with similar sounding compositions, especially the ones in which the students most frequently do not stress properly, leading to the change of the lexical meaning (e.g., *кpасивые глáзкu ребёнка* (*beautiful baby eyes*) – *дверные глaзкú* (*door peepholes*), *po коváя жéницинa* (*femme fatale*) – *рáковая больная = жeницинa, больная раком* (*a woman, suffering from cancer*)). Second, instructors should demonstrate with convincing examples that in many cases, word stress is more important than the clear pronunciation

of the sounds. Third, instructors should analyze whether the students' attitude toward word stress changes based on whether they were introduced to this concept early on or relatively later in a course.

The results of this study also indicate the necessity of having direct and deliberate word stress instruction, which aligns with other germane studies (e.g., Jung et al. 2017; Ghorbani 2019). Task-based instruction rooted in memorization and drill activities can help RFL learners to better master word stress in the Russian language. Pronunciation mistakes can lead to miscommunication during conversations (Brown 2007), so it is critical that more attention be placed on accuracy since semantic changes in words can occur. Although the results of this study are mainly geared toward instructors of RFL, curriculum developers could also consider how to improve word stress materials and activities.

Specific task repetition-based instruction can be beneficial for students learning word stress in foreign languages (Jung et al. 2017). Word stress plays a critical role in understanding words and determining their meaning (Field 2005). A major inhibiting factor for students learning word stress in a foreign language is the impact of the transfer of word stress in the native language (Lord 2001). Word stress is absent in the Korean language, which poses challenges for Korean learners who are not accustomed to word stress. A study by Altmann (2006) found that students whose native languages lack a word stress system, including Korean, had less accuracy in word stress production in the English language in comparison to Spanish, Turkish, and Arabic speakers who are accustomed to word stress in their native language. Developing specific task-based repetitive word stress activities benefitted Korean learners in English as a foreign language course (Jung et al. 2017). Through repetitive tasks, foreign language students can improve fluency and accuracy (Ahmadian and Tavakoli 2011). Through task repetition of word stress activities in RFL courses, Korean learners will likely improve accuracy and will also be perceived as more fluent than native Russian speakers.

Instructors of RFL could also consider giving pre and post-tests to students to measure how their speaking has changed through word pair and word stress instruction. The results provide myriad practical and theoretical considerations for instructors to consider when developing and modifying RFL courses in South Korea. Although this study focuses on the South Korean learning context, many of the principles and lessons can be applied to other countries, especially in places where word stress is not a part of the dominant language. Moreover, instructors should consider getting input from

students about their learning experiences with word pairs and word stress and determine if there are any other useful activities or methods that they can use to improve future classes. Through this research, it is evident that word stress teaching is critical in RFL courses, and students need to be aware of the importance of word stress to prevent miscommunication.

In modern textbooks and other studying materials, students generally learn to pronounce word stress with the demonstration of the rhythmical models of Russian words (e.g., *táma* – *máma*, *tamá* – *странá*, *tátama* – *кóмната*, *tatáma* – *красíвый*, *tamatá* – *кабинéт*, etc.) and various exercises focusing on the contrast between stressed and unstressed vowels. However, students usually do not fully understand and accept this system. Many textbooks that have a section on stress in Russian contain examples of pairs in which stress does not change the meaning. The students generally know that there are cases in the language when semantic changes do not occur because of the change of word stress (e.g., *рэфе́ри* – *рефе́ри*, *однове́менный* – *однове́мный*, *тво́рог* – *творо́г*, *кулина́рия* – *кулина́рия*, etc.). That is many students tend to not be significantly worried about word stress. If they make a word stress mistake (e.g., **красивы́й*), the native Russian listener will still understand this word, especially in context.

The attitude toward word stress can be changed if instructors change the students' perception of it. According to Dobchinova (2008: 191), “the sensitivity to the sound stimulus rises significantly if the sound plays a *signaling* role, which means it distinguishes one word from another.” Instructors should present as many pedagogically persuasive signaling examples as possible, with which the students would be able to make a conclusion about the importance of word stress due to its connection to the meaning of the word. Results from a previous study (Author et al. 2019) indicate that this should be done with two approaches. The first approach is that instructors should regularly practice word pairs with different meanings, in which the only difference phonetically is word stress (or a word stress and 2-3 sounds). A mistake that is frequently made by students is *ужина́ла* (*had dinner*) – *узна́ла* (*found out*). The second approach centers on demonstrating examples that show that adequate rhythms would make a foreigner's speaking more intelligible even if there are some flaws in the pronunciation of a few sounds. Examples can be found below. Both approaches illustrate the leading role of word stress, a tool of a higher phonetic level, compared to the role of the sound composition in the word.

Based on the results, the researchers determined that if work in this direction is carried out systematically throughout the instructional year, then 92% of students acquire this skill. Carrying out word stress instruction from the beginning of the course is critical for successfully developing correct word stress pronunciation. Furthermore, when students learn correct word stress initially, instructors do not have to spend a significant amount of time correcting errors later in a course.

6. Conclusion

The compilation of students' most frequent mistakes in word stress, which could be significant (which means it could lead to misunderstanding), turned out to be rather useful for research. The researchers created a list of word pairs to practice word stress (examples are provided in Tables 1 and 2). Practicing word stress through the examples provided in this research and pedagogically relevant material helps the native speakers of the languages that have no stress to fully understand the idea of the importance of the complex system of phonological tools in communication. This individual method showed that the students who were provided with the word pairs where the word stress played a significant role from the first lesson were more attentive to the word stress in a new word. It is noticeable because when the students read unfamiliar words, they tried to pronounce the right rhythmic patterns initially, which means they tried to contrast stressed and unstressed vowels, understanding that the semantics of the word and listeners' understanding is connected to it.

Additionally, it would be valuable to include word pairs in textbooks and other teaching materials. The curriculum for teaching RFL in the South Korean learning context seems to focus more on all learners rather than just Korean learners. Although these materials are beneficial, there are also distinct differences among language learners. The Korean language does not have word stress, which can be problematic for Korean RFL learners. Including more word pair activities that focus on word stress distinction is critical for learners and should be done early on in courses to prevent confusion and misunderstanding in the future. Creating a database of these word pairs to share with other instructors and students would also be beneficial to help integrate them into the curriculum or independent study activities.

Although the study provides new insight into the teaching of Russian as a foreign

language in South Korea, there are some limitations. This research was only conducted at two universities and with a limited number of students. In the future, it would be beneficial to gather data from other universities that have Russian language programs. Furthermore, although the data was carried out over a several-year period, it would have been beneficial to have a more systematic method of data collection and to perhaps examine differences in students who had been exposed to word pairs early on as opposed to those who learned later in courses. Future research could expand to RFL programs in other countries where the dominant language does not have word stress. Additionally, even if other languages have word stress, students may still struggle with Russian word stress since it may be different from their native language. It may also be beneficial to reach out to other RFL instructors in South Korea to obtain data on their experiences teaching word stress to Korean RFL learners.

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Haksoo Yoo

Professor
Department of Russian Language and Russian Studies
Sunmoon University
70 Sunmoon-ro 221-gil, Tangjeong-myeon,
Asan, 31460 Korea
E-mail: hsyoo@sunmoon.ac.kr

Andrea Rakushin Lee

Assistant Professor
Department of Educational Specialties
Austin Peay State University
601 College Street,
Clarksville, TN 37044 USA
E-mail: leea@apsu.edu

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