報告

グローバル言語である英語を学習する日本人向け発音コースの報告と評価

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要約：本稿は、大学内での英語サポートルームで行った短期発音コースについての評価の状況を示すものである。このコースは、学生の理解力のレベル向上を目標とした。内容は、学生の英語の発音の問題点を分析し、グローバル言語である英語の概念に基づいて行った。特にこの報告は発音の要素である‘リングア　フランカ　コア’（以下、LFC）の応用に焦点を当てる。これらの発音の特徴表現は、国際的なコミュニケーションにおける理解力にとってこれらが最も中心的なものであることを立証した Professor Jennifer Jenkins (2002)によって提唱されている。本稿では、これらのアプローチの効果と欠点の両方から検討する。
（キーワード：英語の発音、グローバル言語、グローバルコミュニケーション）

Review of a Pronunciation course for English as an international language for Japanese learners.

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Abstract: The following article is a review of a short pronunciation course held in the English Support Room. The goal of the course was to improve the level of student's intelligibility. The content of the course was decided by both analysing the students language needs and drawing on the notion of English as an International Language (EIL). In particular this report focuses on the application of a ‘lingua franca core’ of pronunciation elements (LFC). This is a description of a number of pronunciation points put forward by Professor Jennifer Jenkins (2002) that she has identified as being most central to intelligibility in international communication. This report evaluates the teaching of these points in a classroom setting and outlines both advantages and possible drawbacks of taking such an orientation.
(Key words: English, lingua franca, pronunciation, Japanese students, English as an International Language)

1. Background and context

Intelligible pronunciation is an essential element in English communication. In her research Professor Jenkins found that pronunciation alone had a greater potential to compromise mutual intelligibility than other linguistic elements such as vocabulary and grammar (Jenkins, 2002, p86). In view of this a course specifically targeting pronunciation was considered desirable. A short course was held in the English Support Room over a period of 6 weeks from November 11th to December 16th 2011. This course consisting of 6 one hour periods was specifically aimed at Japanese students of English who wanted to use English for international communication.

Since this involved the application of language in a specific cultural context it was considered necessary to take into account certain contextual elements. Firstly there was the linguistic background of the students. In her study Jenkins found that all breakdowns in communication that could be attributed to pronunciation ‘were caused by the transfer of L1 sounds’ (Jenkins, 2002, p88). Therefore this course focuses on issues pertinent to Japanese learners; more specifically those characteristics shared by the participants on the course.

The second important contextual consideration was the context of use. Traditional pronunciation teaching is often associated with mimicking native speaker language; particularly Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) (Jenkins, 2002). However actual speakers of RP number fewer than 3 per cent of British Speakers alone (Crystal, 1995, cited in Jenkins 2002, p105). In fact according to Kachru’s three circles model of English, native speakers now make

up only one third of all English speakers worldwide (Crystal, 2003, p61). It is therefore more likely that English learners now will be speaking with other non-native speakers. For the Japanese there are other factors compounding this. Recent reports reveal that it is now China rather than America that is Japan's number one trading partner and tourist destination (Moore, 2008, JTM, 2011).

In view of this changing context of use Jenkins' (2002) model of a 'Lingua Franca Core'(LFC) was drawn upon to help prioritise elements for the course. This pronunciation syllabus for English as an International language (EIL) is based on her research on intelligibility and describes pronunciation features she observed as being essential to international intelligibility and a description of non-core elements considered either irrelevant to learners or unteachable. It can be summarised as follows:

Core elements:

1) Individual consonant sounds. According to Walker 'The LFC requires speakers to be competent both receptively and productively in all but two of the consonant phonemes' (2010, p29)
2) Groups of consonants (consonant clusters). No consonants should be deleted.
3) Vowels. Attention should be given to long, short differences rather than to exact quality.
4) Nuclear stress placement. Speech should be broken into manageable meaningful blocks of information

Non core elements:

1) /θ/ ,/ð/ and dark /l/. According to Walker these are 'absent from many of the worlds languages and native speaker varieties of English, inherently difficult to pronounce, notoriously resistant to classroom teaching, and unnecessary for ELF intelligibility' (2010, p30)
2) Exact vowel quality. Differences in vowel qualities among varieties of English are considered too great to be generalised.
3) Pitch movement (tone). This is described by Walker as being 'neurolinguistically inaccessible, pedagogically unteachable, possibly meaningless.' (2010, p39)
4) Word stress. Jenkins found it rarely causes intelligibility issues among non-native speakers.
5) Stress-timing. Considered not generalisable, also questions as to whether it actually exists (Marks, 1999)
6) Vowel reduction, schwa and weak forms. Not essential to intelligibility and difficult to teach.
7) Certain features of connected speech such as elision and assimilation. Although these are used in rapid colloquial speech they may actually decrease ELF intelligibility.

2. Evaluating student needs

The first step, which draws on contrastive analysis (CA), was to look closely at the language of the participants on the course to establish which elements of their pronunciation might have the potential to jeopardize intelligibility. This was done by recording the participants reading a specific text then undertaking an analysis of their language highlighting substitutions or other phonological characteristics that may hinder intelligibility.

In order to listen for these elements a text containing a broad range of relevant phonological characteristics was chosen. This text, the children's book 'Little Miss Birthday' by Roger Hargreaves (2006), contains a broad range of relevant consonants, vowels and consonant clusters. The choice was inspired by the British Library's 'Evolving English' project (British Library, 2010) which used a book from this series to document accents of English.

The recordings were analysed and pronunciation issues summarised for each student. Table 1(Appendix A) shows the analysis of segmentals with the spread of the potential issues shown across the five participants S1 through S5.

3. Course content

As can be seen at the segmental level alone there

was a broad range of issues with the potential to inhibit intelligibility. Course content was decided on those elements that were both shared by the majority of students and included in the LFC, is as follows:

Consonants

- Differentiation between /b/ and /v/. There was a tendency to substitute the labio dental fricative /v/ with a bilabial plosive, particularly in word initial position
- Differentiation between /l/ and /r/. There was a tendency to substitute the alveolar approximant /ɹ/ for both sounds
- Clear aspiration of /f/
- Full aspiration of /h/ before /u/ and /i/
- Clear pronunciation of /t/ before /i/. There was a tendency to palatise the sound similar to /tʃ/
- Correct aspiration of /s/ before /i/. There was a tendency to palatise /s/ before /i/ similar to /ʃ/
- Full pronunciation of /w/ before vowels other than /a/ for example ‘would’.

Vowels

The ability to recognise and produce differing vowel lengths was included in the course. Students undertook activities that contrasted short vowels with long vowels and diphthongs such as /e/, /iː/, /eɪ/ and /æ/, /ɑː/, /ɑɪ/. Attention was also given to the shortening of vowels before unvoiced consonants; for example mate->made.

Tonic stress

Jenkins states ‘the nuclear stress whether unmarked or contrasted is the most important key to the speaker’s intended meaning’ (Jenkins, 1997, quoted in Walker p37). Effective use of tonic stress requires being able to break utterances up into suitable tone groups. However, the students showed difficulty with word grouping and often included unnecessary pauses. Therefore it was considered important to include this component in the course.

4. Lesson Structure

For the teaching of vowels and consonants the following process was used:

1) The sound was modeled by the teacher
2) A diagram was used to show the mechanics of pronunciation. These diagrams were taken from Cambridge English pronunciation in use (Hancock, 2003)
3) The students practiced listening and repeating the target sounds in various words. For example: visa, vote, voice, river, of.
4) Comparisons were made with minimal pairs. Students practiced differentiating between the two sounds. For example: vote/boat, veer/beer, vest/best, curve/curb.
5) Tongue twisters were used for practice. For example ‘Vera drove to Venice in a van’
6) Listening activities: Various listening activities were employed; for example students were asked to listen to a sentence ‘We had a great flight/fright’ and circle the word they hear.
7) The lessons usually ended with a short dictation style game. For example the students stood in a line and tried to pass a short phrase down the line as accurately as possible. This helped to reinforce the speaking and listening skills.

For the teaching of tonic stress the lesson primarily focused on breaking sentences up into word groups.

1) Using a CD from the Cambridge English Pronunciation in Use series, students listened to examples of speakers breaking up sentences.
2) Good and bad examples were contrasted
3) A longer example was given with a written transcript showing the tone groups.
4) Students undertook reading and listening activities breaking up sentences into tone groups. Finally a paragraph was attempted.
5) A dictation game was played where students competed in two teams to dictate s paragraph to each other using tone groups with the stress in the neutral (final) position.

5. Course outcomes

Table 2 (Appendix B) gives a summary of observations of student performance made during the course. The students showed the quickest progress with differentiating between vowel lengths. They appeared to have a good ear for the subtle differences in length and were successful with the activities in the class. However, the consonants were more resistant with differentiation between /r/ and /l/ being particularly problematic. Even with careful coaching the majority of the students remained unable to either recognise or produce the different sounds. This was similar with /w/ before /u/ and pronunciation of the phoneme /s/ before /i/ that remained illusive for the students.

Although similar problems existed with /b/ and /v/ some students were able to mimic the fricative nature of the /v/ perhaps due to the fact that it was easier to physically demonstrate. Students showed a moderate increase in the ability to recognise differences. However, when speaking students soon resorted to substitution with a plosive /b/ outside of restricted activities. This was similar with /f/ where students were able to demonstrate some modification under coaching they soon reverted back to substituting the Japanese voiceless bilabial fricative /ɸ/ before certain phonemes such as /u/. With /t/ and /tʃ/ students were able to demonstrate the ability to differentiate when listening but issues still remain with production before /i/.

At the supra-segmental level the breaking up of sentences into sensible tone groups proved more difficult and time consuming for some students than expected. In particular success at this activity appeared to be dependent on English ability with students of a more advanced level of English performing better. Demonstrating the unmarked stress revealed another potential issue; that the way students indicated the stress, with a slight change in pitch and volume, was not explicit enough. The tonic stress was often difficult to distinguish. Overall this section required more time and attention to be useful.

6. Course Evaluation

Using the LFC was a useful way to prioritise pronunciation elements. However, some observations were made during this practical application.

The greatest proportion of time was spent on consonants yet this yielded the least noticeable results. As stated sounds were resistant to change and students quickly reverted back to substitution. It may be that this time could have been better spent elsewhere. In fact what was noticeable for the majority of students was that the quality of individual segmental production had very little impact on the overall intelligibility of communication between the group. What appeared to have more benefit to clear communication was the natural tendency to employ accommodation strategies during activities. These ranged from just speaking more loudly to more complex strategies such checking understanding and negotiating meaning. In some cases simply repeating the utterance with varying pronunciation seemed to be more beneficial to intelligibility than the exact articulation of phonemes. Interestingly Porter states ‘there does not appear to be any direct relationship between a learner’s competence in the pronunciation of individual items and his or her overall intelligibility (Porter, 1989, cited in Walker 2010, p156).

This does not necessarily mean that segmentals be avoided. Jenkins notes that lower level students are more dependent on the actual sounds that they hear than they are on broader contextual elements for decoding. It may be that the students in this intermediate and above group just benefited more from contextual signs. Alternatively, it may mean that their pronunciation characteristics are more ingrained and need more rather than less work. Whatever the reason it makes sense when designing a future pronunciation course that more consideration should be given to the levels of the students. Since this group of students were generally of intermediate level and above more attention should perhaps have been given to accommodation skills and supra-segmental elements than to the individual phonemes.

Another issue that arose was the inclusion of consonant clusters in the LFC where deletion of consonants is considered an issue. These Japanese students exhibited the opposite trait where vowels were often added to consonant groups. In the LFC adding phonemes is not considered detrimental to intelligibility yet to a native speaker ear they did make understanding more difficult. It would be interesting to look more closely at consonant clusters and their impact on intelligibility with Japanese learners.

The exclusion of vowel quality was another apparent issue. There were instances during the course where a lack of differentiation between /æ/ /ʌ/ and the pronunciation of /ɜː/ caused miscommunication. There may be reason to include vowel quality in some instances.

7. Summary

Using the Lingua Franca Core was a useful way to prioritise pronunciation elements for a short course. However, informal observations from the course give the impression that the usefulness of the contents may be level dependent. Whereas lower levels may benefit more from practice with segmental phonemes, the students in this intermediate and above group would have benefited from more from developing overall accommodation strategies. Additionally more time should have been allotted to working on tonic stress placement and word grouping which would have likely had a more positive impact on overall intelligibility.

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Appendix A

Table 1　Segmental pronunciation characteristics of 5 Japanese students

sound	Problem	examples	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
CONSONANTS							
/p/	light aspiration	bump, easy peasy, promptly	X		X		
/b/	fricative between vowels	cupboard					X
/t/	dental, weak aspiration before /e/, /a/, /o/	told, ten	X				
/t/	realised as /tʃ/ before /i/ [ts] before /u/	tip, tease, tour, tool				X	X
/d/	dental before /a/, /e/, /o/	desk, dorm			X		X
/k/	weak aspiration	cool, cake				X	X
/g/	fricative between vowels like /ŋ/	Organize		X		X	X
/ŋ/	pronounced with /g/ in singer	Singer			X		
/f/	not a phoneme. sounds like /ɸ/	photo, fuji	X	X		X	
/v/	not a phoneme, substituted with /b/	solving, very, berry	X	X		X	X
/ʒ/	not a phoneme, substituted with /dʒ/	Vision				X	X
/z/	pronounced as /ʒ/ before /i/	New Zealand, lazy, zip		X			
/h/	pronounced as /ɸ/ before /u/ and voiced velar fricative 'ich' before /i/	hoop, heat.	X	X			X
/n/	Substituted with /ɴ/ in final position - unclear	in an hour					
/r/, /l/	no differentiation	right, light	X	X		X	X
/j/	ok before /o/ but not before /i/, /e/	yeast, year		X			
/w/	unclear before vowels other than /a/	wool, woman	X	X		X	X
/l/	dark /l/	little, I'll,			X		
/θ/, /ð/	replaced with /ʃ/ and /z/	this, then	X	X			X
/s/, /ʃ/	differentiation before /i/	seat, sheet	X				X
CLUSTERS							
	adding vowel between consonants	expression, drawing, star					X
VOWELS							
/ɜː/	Quality	turn, birthday, her	X	X		X	X
/eɪ/	Length	day, mate/made	X	X		X	X
/aɪ/	Length	five, ice/eyes	X	X		X	X
/æ/	length and quality	hat, back/bag	X	X		X	X
/ɪː/	Length	see, leaf/leave, peace/peas	X	X		X	X
/e/		ten, ferry					
/ɑː/	length and quality	arm, fast		X		X	
/ʌ/	Quality	cup, butter	X	X	X	X	X

Appendix B

Table 2　Summary of general observations of student performance at segmental level.

Segmental pronunciation issue	General observations of student performance on the course
CONSONANTS	
Differentiation between /b/ and /v/	Temporary improvement
Clear pronunciation of /t/ before /i/	No improvement
Clear aspiration of /f/	Temporary improvement
Full aspiration of /h/ before /u/ and /i/	Improvement before /i/ but not before /u/
Differentiation between /l/ and /r/.	No improvement
Full pronunciation of /w/ before vowels other than /a/	Some temporary modification before /i/, /e/ and /o/ but not before /u/
Correct aspiration of /s/ before /i/	No improvement
VOWELS	
Differentiation between long and short vowels	Achieved a reasonable level of differentiation