Effects of Instruction on the Development of Intelligible Pronunciation in Japanese EFL Classrooms: What and how to teach?

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Organization

(1) Background

(2) What to teach?
- Which pronunciation features are relatively important to attain L2 comprehensibility and intelligibility?

(3) How to teach?
- How should we help L2 students achieve such comprehensible pronunciation in the most effective/efficient manner?

Overview: How to conceptualize, define and measure L2 pronunciation (since 1990)?

Tracey Derwing   Murray Munro   Jennifer Jenkins   John Levis   James Flege

Adult L2 speech learning: Review

Many L2 learners perceive attaining "nativelike pronunciation" as an idealized goal (especially in EFL classrooms).

Many scholars have questioned whether "nativelikeness" actually matters in real-life situations…

(e.g., Derwing, 2003 for ESL; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011 for EFL)

Adult L2 speech learning: Review

English continues to serve as a *lingua franca* in many academic and business settings all over the world.

Most of the English users are actually <u>non-native</u> speakers.

(e.g., Jenkins, 2002; Levis, 2005)

Adult L2 speech learning: Review

Few non-native speakers demonstrate perfect proficiency in all aspects of L2 (like monolinguals do).

Many successful non-native speakers can be accented but highly comprehensible.

(e.g., Abrahamsson & Hyltenstam, 2009; Flege, Munro, & MacKay, 1995)

Adult L2 speech learning: Review

It is important to set a realistic goal for adult L2 speech learning.

~~Nativelikeness~~

vs.

Comprehensibility

(e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2009; Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012; Jenkins, 2002)

What kinds of methods do L2 speech researchers generally use?

1. Eliciting ESL students' extemporaneous speech

- Please explain an eight-frame cartoon below:

- Please explain each photo below:

(e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997)   (e.g., Saito, 2015)
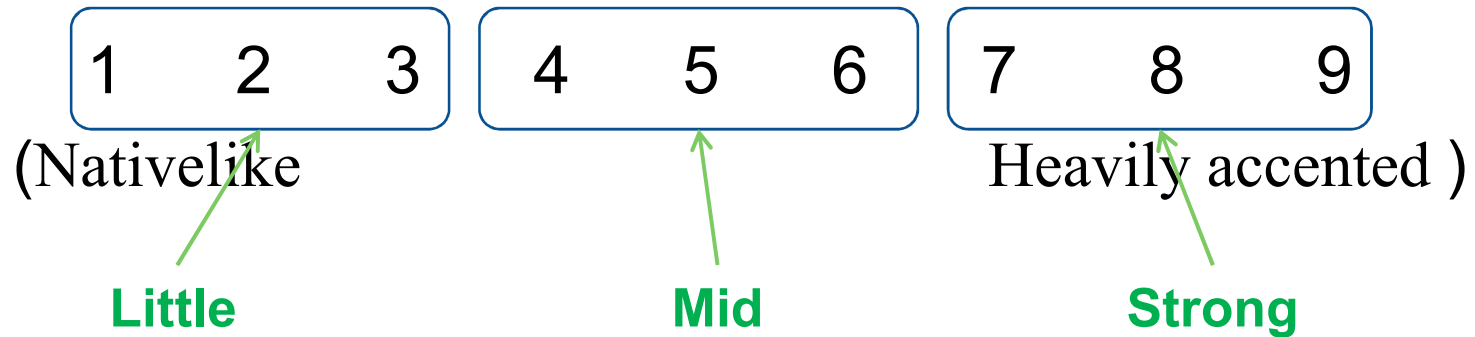
2. Native and non-native listeners rate accetedness and comprehensibility

9-point Scale

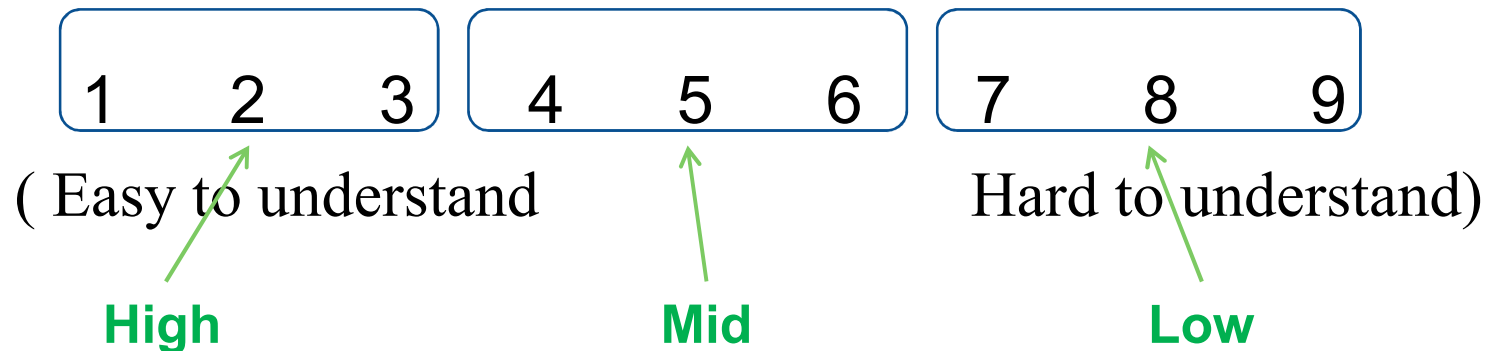- **Accentedness (nativelikeness)**

| 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 7 8 9 |

(Nativelike   Heavily accented)

Little   **Mid**   **Strong**

- **Comprehensibility**

| 1 2 3 | 4 5 6 | 7 8 9 |

(Easy to understand   Hard to understand)

High   **Mid**   **Low**

Derwing & Munro (2009) in *Language Teaching*

Accentendess and comprehensibility are "partially independent constructs" (p. 488)

Pedagogical implications for pronunciation teaching (Levis, 2005)

Nativeness Principle (traditional approach)

- Focusing <u>equally</u> on all pronunciation features in a L2
- To become "nativelike"

**Intelligibility Principle (new approach)**

- Focusing <u>selectively</u> on certain features affecting comprehensibility/intelligibility
- To become "comprehensible"/"intelligible"

Key references

- Derwing, T., Munro, M., & Wiebe, G. (1997). Pronunciation instruction for "fossilized" learners: Can it help? *Applied Language Learning, 8*, 217–235.

- Flege, J., Munro, M, & MacKay, I. R. A. (1995). Factors affecting degree of perceived foreign accent in a second language. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 97*, 3125–3134.

- Jenkins, J. (2002). A sociolinguistically based, empirically researched pronunciation syllabus for English as an international language. *Applied Linguistics*, *23*, 83–103.

- Levis, J. (2005). Changing contexts and shifting paradigms in pronunciation teaching. *TESOL Quarterly*, *39*, 367–377.

Question

- Which pronunciation problems are relatively affecting successful comprehensibility? Which pronunciation features should be taught as a priority in **Japanese EFL** classrooms?
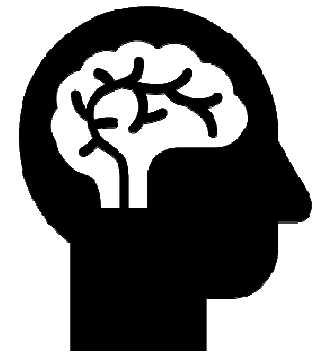
Specific pronunciation problems

- Segmental errors
  - ❖ "road" mispronounced as "load"

- Syllable errors
  - ❖ Play "pleɪ" mispronounced as "pəleɪ"

- Word stress errors
  - ❖ "guiTAR" mispronounced as "GUItar"

- Intonation errors
  - ❖ "Can you see it? There are three guys on the stage."

Teachers' opinions

Saito, K., & van Poeteren, K. (2012). Pronunciation-specific adjustment strategies for intelligibility in L2 teacher talk: Results and implications of a questionnaire study. *Language Awareness, 21*, 369-385.

Saito, K. (2014). Experienced teachers' perspectives on priorities for improved intelligible pronunciation: The case of Japanese learners of English. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 24*, 250-277.

Saito & van Poeteren (2012), Saito (2014)

Participants?

- 120 experienced teachers (> 10 yrs of teaching)

Method?

- Questionnaire/interview

Findings?

1. Major segmentals /l, ɹ, ð, θ, v/
2. Syllable-related problems [schwa vowel insertion]
3. Assimilation /si, ʃi, ti/
4. Stress/Intonation [sentence/lexical stress, intonation]
5. Secondary segmentals /æ, ʌ, f/

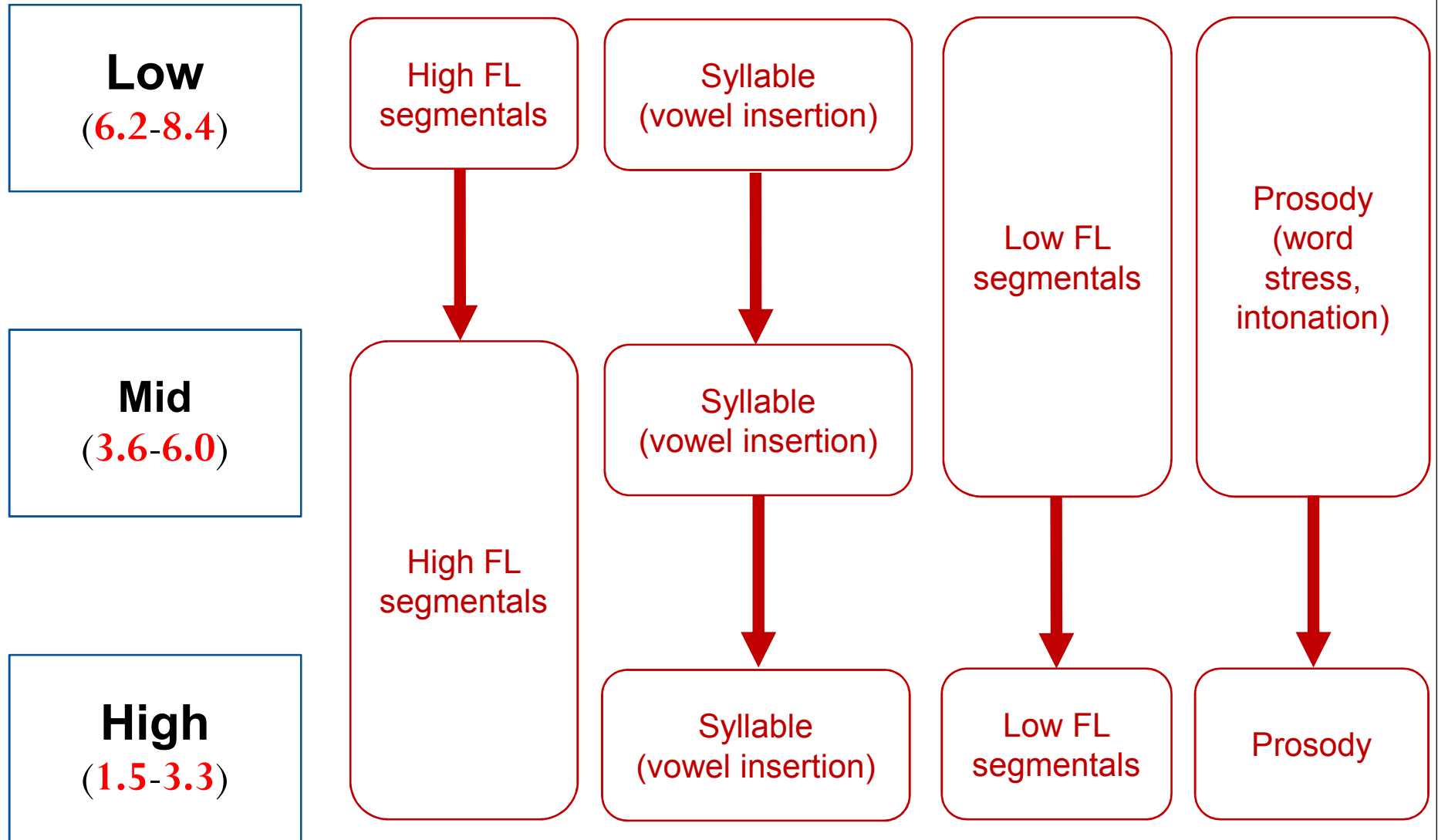# Listeners' judgements

Suzukida & Saito (under review)

Participants?

- 40 Japanese learners with varied L2 English proficiency (LOR = 0-40 years in Canada)

Method?

- Their extemporaneous speech (30sec per token) first judged for "perceived comprehensibility" and then acoustically analyzed for "segmental, syllabic and prosodic accuracy"

ANOVAs (*1 = good, 9 = poor*)

Low (**6.2-8.4**)	Mid (**3.6-6.0**)	High (**1.5-3.3**)

Low (**6.2**-**8.4**)

Mid (**3.6**-**6.0**)

High (**1.5**-**3.3**)

High FL segmentals → High FL segmentals

Syllable (vowel insertion) → Syllable (vowel insertion) → Syllable (vowel insertion)

Low FL segmentals → Low FL segmentals

Prosody (word stress, intonation) → Prosody

Question

- How should we teach L2 pronunciation? Any thoughts for an optimal method (based on research/anecdotal stories)?

✓ Explicit phonetic instruction?
✓ Contextualized usage of language?
✓ Fun and meaningful activities?
✓ Useful online tools?

Explicit phonetic instruction

Option 1. Perception training

- Let students hear the acoustic features of target sounds via minimal pair activities!

"Rock" vs. "Lock"?

"Read" vs. "Lead"?

Web Materials: English Accent Coach

http://www.englishaccentcoach.com/play.aspx

Explicit phonetic instruction

Option 2. Articulation training

- Let students understand the articulatory features of target sounds!
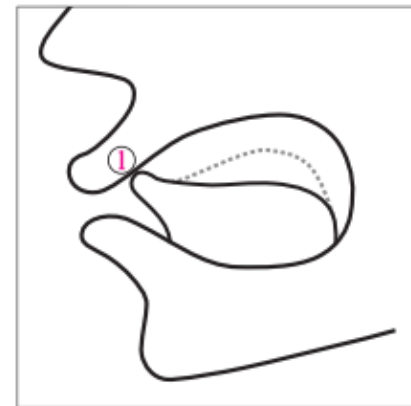
Web Materials: Iowa Uni Phonetic Lab

http://soundsofspeech.uiowa.edu/english/english.html

fənɛtɪks

the sounds of spoken language

choose a language

american english   german   spanish   ? help

This site contains animated libraries of the phonetic sounds of English, German, and Spanish. Available for each consonant and vowel is an animated articulatory diagram, a step-by-step description, and video-audio of the sound spoken in context. It is intended for student of phonetics, linguistics, and foreign language. There is also an interactive diagram of the articulatory anatomy.

Now Available!!!

English Sounds of Speech Mobile App

| **Android** | Revenue from purchases are used to support further develop of this application. | **iOS** |
| Google Play Store | | Apple iTunes Store |

(If you bought the Android version prior to Jan 2nd 2014 and would like an update to the newest version please contact us at uirf@uiowa.edu)

Audiolingual teaching methods vs. L2 pronunciation development
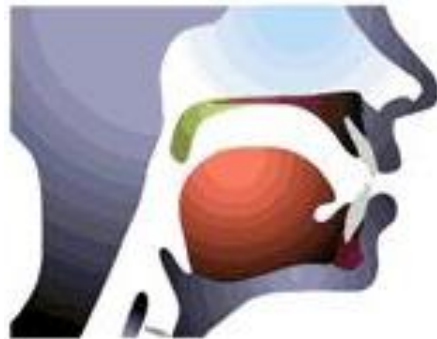
Research Evidence

Mcdonald, Power, & Yule (1994)

- ➢ 23 ESL learners
- ➢ 10 key lexical items

Elliott (1997)

- ➢ 66 English learners of Spanish
- ➢ 19 Spanish allophones

Saito (2011)

- ➢ 20 Japanese learners of English
- ➢ 5 English-specific segmentals (including English /r/ and /l/)

➡ Improvement was clear at a *controlled-speech* level but not at a *spontaneous-speech* level

(See also Saito, 2012 for research synthesis)

Key references

- Lee, J., Jang, J., & Plonsky, L. (2015). The effectiveness of second language pronunciation instruction: A meta-analysis. *Applied Linguistics*, *36*, 345–366.

- Thomson, R. I., & Derwing, T. M. (2015). The effectiveness of L2 pronunciation instruction: A narrative review. *Applied Linguistics*, *36*, 326–344.

- Saito, K. (2012). Effects of instruction on L2 pronunciation development: A synthesis of 15 quasi-experimental intervention studies. *TESOL Quarterly*, 842–854.

Contextualized Instruction to teach L2 pronunciation!

Saito, K. (2015). Communicative focus on L2 phonetic form: Teaching Japanese learners to perceive and produce English /r/ without explicit instruction. *Applied Psycholinguistics, 36*, 377-409.

Saito, K. (2013a). The acquisitional value of recasts in instructed second language speech learning: Teaching the perception and production of English /r/ to adult Japanese learners . Language Learning, 63, 499-529..

Saito, K. (2013b). Re-examining effects of form-focused instruction on L2 pronunciation development: The role of explicit phonetic information. Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 35, 1-29.

Design (*N* = 100+)

Pre-tests

⬇

Four 1-hour meaning oriented sessions with ***communicative*** focus on English /r/ form

⬇

Post-tests

Communicative Tasks & Recasts

Main Activities

Theme: "Developing a convincing argument"
  Activity 1. How to critique?
  Activity 2. English Debating
  Activity 3. Argument-creation and Public Speech

Warm-up Games

Activity 4. English Karuta (noticing activities)
Activity 5. Guessing Game (awareness activities)
Activity 6. English Card Game (awareness activities)

English Debating

"*Run*ning inside is better than *run*ning outside"

S: In spite of winter weather, I can see run[lan]*ners in Montreal.

T: Runners.

S: Runners. So, we can get on coat, sweater, more clothes. If you run [lan]*..

T: Run

S: If you run, you get warm so you will take care of weather.

Topics for debate activities

- Which would you prefer, eating *rice* vs. *bread* for breakfast?

- Listening to *rock* music is not good for children

- Is it good to have a *rain*y day?"

- Is a sense of "*rat race*" among students good (e.g., tests, entrance examinations)?
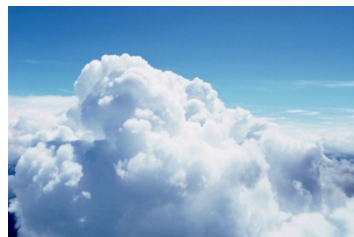
English Karuta

English KARUTA

Please pick up the card I am reading!

L

R

CL

CR

Excerpt 3

T: "Race"

S1: Yes.

T: No…

S1: Ohh

S2: This one!

T: Yes! What is this?

S2: Race [lace]*

T: Race

S2: Race

Results

Trained items

M = 62.4 → 68.9% (6.5% gain)

Untrained items

M = 57.7 → 67.7% (10% gain)

- The amount of improvement resulting from 4 hr of FFI (6-10% gain) could be comparable to other intensive lab training studies (e.g., Logan et al., 1992, for 8% gain after 10 hr of training). (p. 25)

Results

Production

Neither /r/ nor /l/ → Good/probably /r/ at controlled and spontaneous speech tests

- A communitive focus on form could be an optimal method to allow students to automatize their new phonetic knowledge.

Key references (FonF in L2 grammar)

FonF

- Ellis, R. (2016). Focus on form: A critical review. *Language Teaching Research*, *20*(3), 405-428.

- Spada, N., & Tomita, Y. (2010). Interactions between type of instruction and type of language feature: A meta-analysis. *Language Learning, 60,* 263–308.

Corrective feedback (reactive FonF)

- Lyster, R., Saito, K., & Sato, M. (2013). Oral corrective feedback in second language classrooms. *Language Teaching, 46*, 1-40.

Conclusion

Teaching *adult* Japanese learners to improve *comprehensibility* in English

Set a realistic goal!

- It is important to set a realistic goal:
  - ✓ "*comprehensibility*" (using L2 as a non-native speaker) rather than "*nativelikeness*" (mastering L2 like a native speaker)

- Make sure (a) where students currently are; and (b) what they ultimately aim at:

Beginner-level Comp   Intermediate-level Comp   Advanced-level Comp

What to teach?

Beginner-level Comp

Intermediate-level Comp

Advanced-level Comp

Initial Stage of L2 Speech Learning
- High FL segmentals
- Syllables (schwa vowel insertion)

Later Stage of L2 Speech Learning
- Low FL segmentals
- Syllables
- Prosody (word stress, intonation)

How to teach?

Explicit instruction
- Articulatory explanation
- Perceptual training

Communicative activities
- Focused tasks
- Input enhancement
- Recasts

THANK YOU!!