

音変化の口頭練習が日本人中学生の聴解力に及ぼす影響

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A Study on the Effect of Instruction
of Aural-Oral Practice for Sound Changes
on Japanese Junior High School Students' Listening Abilities.

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Summary The purpose of this study is to clarify the effect of aural-oral practice of sound changes on Japanese junior high school students' listening abilities. The subjects were 72 junior high school students in the Joetsu district in Niigata prefecture. They were in the ninth grade. They were divided into two groups and were given instructions focusing on sound changes of expressions in video segments in the first semester of 1996. These instructions were repeated 5 times. In the experimental group, the subjects studied how to listen to and speak expressions occurring in video segments which contain sound changes in a "rapid colloquial style" (Gimson 1989). They then role-played a scene as aural-oral practice. In the control group, on the other hand, the subjects studied only how to listen to the sound changes of expressions in the same video segments. The listening abilities of the subjects were measured by the standardized listening test and analyzed by ANOVA. The results of this study indicated that though the subjects in both groups improved significantly in understanding English sound changes from the pretest to the posttest, there was no significant difference in understanding English sound changes between the experimental group and the control group.

要 約 本研究の目的は、音変化を伴う発話の口頭練習を行なうことが、日本人中学生の聴解力向上に、有効であるかどうかを明らかにすることである。被験者は上越地区の中学校3年生 72名である。実験は、1996年の7月に実施された。被験者は実験群と統制群の2つのグループに分けられ、それぞれ5回にわたり学習を行なった。実験群では、ビデオ教材にある音変化を含む速い口語体の表現について、その聞き方と発音の仕方を学習し、さらに口頭練習としてロールプレイを行なった。統制群では、口頭練習以外は、実験群と同様の学習を行なった。被験者の聴解力は標準化されたリスニングテストによって測定され、分散分析によって分析された。両群ともプリテストよりもポストテストの得点の方が有意に高く、聴解力は改善されたといえるが、実験群と統制群の聴解力の差は有意ではなく、処遇による効果は見られなかった。

Key words 聴解力 (listening ability) 口頭練習 (aural-oral practice)
音変化 (sound change) 速い口語体 (rapid colloquial style)
ビデオ教材 (video material)

1. Review

1.1. Japanese EFL(English as a Foreign Language) learners and sound change instruction

Rost (1991:4) points out that successful listening involves an integration of the following three component skills: perception skills, analysis skills, and synthesis skills. Above all, perception skills seem to be the most basic and important skills for Japanese EFL learners in the early stage. In Japanese EFL classrooms they practice in listening and speaking the sounds of isolated words that are ideally pronounced by their teacher or a model recorded by a native speaker.

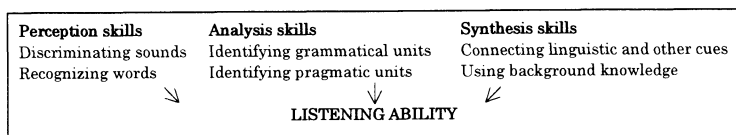


Fig.1 Component Skills of Listening Ability

Even if they thoroughly learn isolated words, however, they experience difficulties in listening to English spoken by native speakers because they are not familiar with a rapid colloquial style. In a rapid colloquial style, English vowels and consonants in words are often pronounced differently from the sounds enunciated individually. Once words are integrated into sentences within colloquial, spontaneous speech, recognizing them becomes far more difficult (Ur 1984:41). One of the reasons these kinds of difficulties occur is that there are sound changes produced by native speakers. Such sound changes make it difficult for Japanese EFL learners to identify English sounds and recognize English words.

Ono (1996:2), referring to Gimson (1989), illustrates this point with the next sentence.

What do you think we should do this evening?
 He says that in a careful colloquial style, this sentence is pronounced as follows:

[wət du ju θiŋk wi(:)ʃəd du: ðis i:vniŋ ?].

But in a rapid colloquial style, this sentence is pronounced as follows:

[wədʒu θiŋk wi ʃəd du: ðəs i:vniŋ ?]. He then points out that as various sound changes do occur

in a rapid colloquial style compared with a careful colloquial style, the sound change is important for us to comprehend English spoken by native speakers. Brown (1990:2) compares a foreign language spoken by the teacher in a classroom with the language spoken in real life by native speakers. Brown states:

When the teacher pronounces these words he or she will tend to pronounce them fairly slowly and clearly, giving us[i.e.learners] plenty of opportunity to recognize them. Indeed many teachers of foreign languages develop particularly slow, clear styles of speech when speaking the foreign language to learners. In real life, however, ordinary speakers of the foreign language are simply using it to get on with living.

Brown continues that many speakers quite quickly adopt a more normal, more rapid style of speech if the other person does not need to be treated with consideration.

In teaching a foreign language, since teachers' main interest is in teaching their students correct pronunciation, they naturally want to find a slow, clear model for the students to imitate (Brown 1990:3). In the EFL classroom in Japan, teachers also have a tendency to teach students English in the same way. They teach it using a slow, clear model even if the students are at an elementary, intermediate or advanced level. But Takefuta (1989:22-23) states, "it is most important for learners and teachers who are engaged in listening skills of English that they should recognize correctly that the spoken English has the distortions or blurs which occur within the context of natural speech." Moreover Takefuta (1989:34) suggests that if teachers have the listening materials containing informal speech by native speakers, they should use it without fear, and let learners get used to such English.

Since various sound changes do occur in a rapid colloquial style spoken by native speakers, it

is inevitable that Japanese EFL learners have to learn them in order to listen to natural English. In the EFL classroom in Japan, there are several studies in which the researchers teach students how to listen to or how to comprehend what native speakers say in a rapid colloquial style with sound changes.

Sakamoto (1992:175-180) instructed senior high school students in implosion (e.g. asked), nasal plosion (e.g. written), voicing (e.g. better), and linking (far away) in order to foster their listening ability. Kashiba (1992:181-186) taught junior high school students sound changes as the rules of pronunciation that occur in natural English : weakening (e.g. at her), elision (e.g. moved to), assimilation (e.g. want you), and linking (e.g. for eight years). Kashiba reported that they got used to such natural changes and improved their listening ability. Fukuda (1992:187-192) instructed reduction (e.g. should have done [ʃədəvdʌn]) to senior high school students and found that they got used to the sound change. Hirose (1994:107-121), experimenting on junior high school students, reported that instruction on weak forms had an effect on improving their listening ability. Shizuka (1995:95-112), experimenting on first-year college students, reported that the instruction of sound changes using the “*katakana* decoding practice” brought about significant gains in the subjects’ ability to decode rapid casual speech. Nakamura (1996:33-37), instructing first-year junior college students typical English sounds and sound changes, had an effect on their listening ability. These researches show that it is effective for Japanese EFL students to learn sound changes in rapid colloquial speech of English.

1.2. Relationship between Aural-Oral Practice and Listening Ability

It is necessary for students to concentrate on aural-oral practice in order to learn a foreign language (Fries 1945). Repetition drill, for example, is often used for students to learn sounds or

sentence patterns, imitating the model in the classroom. In this activity, they listen to the model and repeat just what they hear. It is easy for Japanese EFL students to imitate the sounds of words or sentences when the model is spoken slowly and clearly, even if they don’t understand the meaning of it. If, however, the model is spoken in a rapid colloquial style and contains sound changes, the process of this drill done by students is more complex than when the model is spoken slowly and clearly. For example, when they first listen to the sound “d’no” (I don’t know), they try to discriminate the sound and recognize the words. If they fail to perceive the sound because of the sound change, they do not repeat it but keep quiet, or repeat it indefinitely. If, on the other hand, they succeed to perceive the sound completely, they will probably be able to identify it as “I don’t know” (Ur 1984:42). That is, while they are listening to the model of rapid colloquial English and repeating it, it seems that students use not only perception skills but also analysis skills and synthesis skills. As the result of this process, they say, “I don’t know” rather than “d’no”, because they can easily confirm the meaning of the model when they say it as “I don’t know” rather than “d’no”. Therefore this kind of aural-oral practice, in which students use perception skills, analysis skills and synthesis skills, seems to be effective in fostering listening ability in Japanese EFL students. In this aspect, it is important to prove the effect of aural-oral practice for sound changes on listening ability.

2. Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to clarify the effect of instruction of aural-oral practice for sound changes on Japanese junior high school students’ listening abilities.

3. Experimental Method

3.1. Subjects

The subjects were 72 students at a junior high school in the Joetsu district in Niigata prefecture. They were in the ninth grade. They were divided

into two groups: experimental and control groups. There were 36 students in both the experimental group and the control group.

3.2. Materials

The video material used in this class was segments from *Sesame Street at the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Shirakawa 1989). The two standardized listening tests (STEP 4th Grade (Akao 1996)) were assigned to the subjects in order to measure their listening abilities. One of the tests was used as the pretest and the other as the posttest. Before the experiment, the first term test prepared by the teacher at the junior high school was analyzed in order to show that there was no significant difference among the groups in their English proficiency: reading and writing ability.

3.3. Instruction

The experiment was performed in the classroom at the end of the first term in 1996. The subjects had taken the pretest one week before they took part in the experiment and they took the posttest one week after the experiment. The subjects in both groups were given instructions five times focusing on expressions with sound changes in video segments. In one lesson, the experimental group, while watching a segment with reference to Japanese and English scripts, were asked to grasp the plot. After they understand the story, they watched the segment three times in order to listen to the sounds of the utterances and recognize the words. Then they studied how to listen to and repeat expressions which contained sound changes in a rapid colloquial style in the video segment. After they learned how to listen to the expressions that contained sound changes, they watched the segment and tried to comprehend the expressions. Then they role-played a scene as aural-oral practice while watching the segment. Finally the subjects role-played out loud without watching it. The control group, on the other hand, studied the same things in the same way as the experimental group except doing aural-oral practice. Some of the

examples of the sound changes given to the two groups were:

- Wait a minute, your mother and father are stars in the sky? (weak form)
- I want to be a star in the sky! (elision)
- I have to stay in it. (linking)
- You're only a little kid! (voicing)
- What's your spell? (assimilation)

3.4. Method of Analysis

The listening abilities of the subjects were measured by the standardized listening test and analyzed by analysis of variance.

4. Results

The result of the first term test showed that there was no significant difference in English proficiency between the experimental group and control group ($F(1,70)=0.09$).

Table 1 shows the results of the mean and deviation of the pretest and posttest in listening comprehension.

Table 1 Mean and Standard Deviation of the Pretest and Posttest

Class	Test	Number of Subjects	Mean	S.D.
Experimental group	Pretest	36	11.17	3.61
	Posttest	36	12.83	3.77
Control group	Pretest	36	10.78	3.79
	Posttest	36	12.72	3.19

Table 2 lists the factors, sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares and F-ratios for ANOVA on listening ability measured by the listening comprehension test. In table 2, the F-ratios of A (0.10) and an interaction effect (0.14) showed no significant contrast. But the main effect of the tests indicates that there is a significant difference between the pretest and the posttest ($F(1,70)=23.15$, 1% level).

Table 2 ANOVA on Treatment and Test

Source	SS	df	MS	F
Treatment(A)	2.25	1	2.25	0.10
Subj.w.group(S)	1512.50	70	21.61	
Test(B)	117.36	1	117.36	23.15**
A × B	0.69	1	0.69	
S × B	354.94	70	5.07	0.14
Total	1987.75	143		

**p<.01

5. Discussion

Some researchers point out that there is a close relationship between a learner's pronunciation and his listening ability. Ur (1984:12) states, "it is certainly true that if he learns to pronounce the sounds accurately himself, it will be much easier for him to hear them correctly when said by someone else." Kuniyoshi (1993: 314) also indicates that there is a close relationship between the instruction on listening and aural-oral practice for speaking ability. Shimaoka (1996) points out that we find it difficult to perceive the sounds which we can not pronounce. Despite these affirmative assertions for the effect of aural-oral practice on listening ability, the result of this study showed no significant effect of aural-oral practice on learners' listening ability.

One of the reasons that this aural-oral practice resulted in no effect on learners' listening ability is probably due to the same phenomenon which the students face when they begin to learn English for the first time. Ono (1986:15) states,

Japanese EFL students may be able to make themselves understood in English if they use /p/ only for [p^h](pin), [p](spin), [p^ɹ](top), but they will have difficulty in comprehending authentic English spoken by native speakers if they don't know such phonetic and phonemic distinctions. [Translation mine]

The same thing seems to have happened in listening and speaking English sentences which involve sound changes. As far as Japanese EFL

learners are concerned, they are usually taught to produce and listen to a careful colloquial style like "I don't know" instead of "d'no", which is used in rapid colloquial speech. Therefore, they are troubled by a sound change like "d'no" for "I don't know". In other words, the students need to have the phonetic knowledge of such sound changes in order to comprehend the rapid colloquial style. If that is true, it would benefit the students more to let them have the phonetic knowledge of sound changes and practice listening to and understand sentences with such sound changes rather than let them have aural-oral practice without such knowledge.

It is generally thought that intensive oral-aural practice should be done in the early stage of instruction in foreign language. But children demonstrate comprehension of many utterances before they develop the ability to produce any intelligible speech. Priority of aural comprehension in the first language acquisition process is clearly evident (Postovsky 1974:230). Moreover, Krashen & Terrell (1988:20) maintain that comprehension precedes production and that the students should not be forced to speak before they are ready. In this study, there was no difference between the experimental group and the control one. One of the reason is that there were some subjects who were repeating the model spoken in a rapid colloquial style without decoding the meaning of it in the experimental group. It means that they were just repeating the sound of the model. For example, they said "wachua spel?" after the model reading, but they did not notice that this sentence means "What is your spell?". Such subjects probably could not make progress in their listening ability, because they did not use the three components of listening ability: perception skills, analysis skills and synthesis skills (Rost 1991:4). On the other hand, those subjects who repeated "wachua spel?" recognizing it as "What is your spell?" used the three components of listening ability. Furthermore, there were some subjects who said "What is your spell?" instead of "wachua spel?"

Though they did not repeat it as "wachua spel?," they could understand the meaning of the model. In other words, they used their listening ability quite well, and consequently they properly repeated the model uttered in a careful colloquial style. Therefore, in this sense, in order to foster a learner's listening ability by using aural-oral practice, it seems to be very effective that learners repeat the model uttered in a careful colloquial style.

6. Conclusion

In order to make the aural-oral practice a more effective activity for developing learners' listening ability, it will be necessary to consider the following conditions in the lesson.

- 1) The aural-oral practice should be a repetition practice which activates the three component skills of listening abilities indicated by Rost(1991:4).
- 2) In order to activate these three skills, the repetition practice should follow the process: perception of a model, analysis of the model, and reproduction of the model with synthesizing.
- 3) The model should be uttered in a rapid colloquial style with sound changes.
- 4) The model should be uttered in a careful colloquial style, being translated from a rapid colloquial style into a careful colloquial style in learners' mind at the end of the process.

By doing aural-oral practice considering the four conditions above, the three component skills of listening seem to be activated naturally. The following is the diagram of the process of aural-oral practice for developing learners' listening abilities.

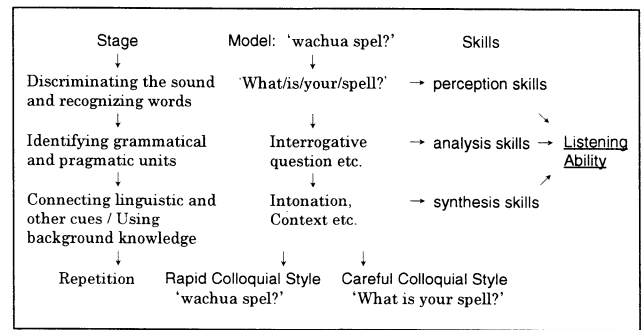


Fig.2 Two Types of Aural-Oral Practice Focusing on Listening Ability

The reproduction at the stage of perception may not be effective in activating the three skills because the learner does not use the other two component skills yet. On the other hand, after the stage of synthesis skills, the repetition of the model uttered in a rapid colloquial style or in a careful colloquial style is the aural-oral practice in which an integration of these component skills is involved. The aural-oral practice done by learners in these conditions, therefore, would be the effective aural-oral practice for Japanese EFL learners in improving their listening ability.

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