

A REPORT ON THE PRONUNCIATION COURSE I IN ZENKI, 1978

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to report about what the students are doing in the pronunciation course. The course consists of one hour, i.e. fifty minutes, of instruction in class and one hour of practice in the Language Laboratory with a teaching assistant monitoring. Before the summer vacation, all the vowels, both the monophthongs and diphthongs, were presented and practiced. A test in which the students were required to transcribe words, phrases, and sentences and record them on the tapes was given.

In this paper, I want to write about (1) the goals of the course, (2) the inputs, i.e. the textbook, the type of phonetic symbols, and class procedures, and (3) the outputs, i. e. the students' performance on the test. Errors in the test are counted and analyzed in order to see what the students are doing in speaking English. Furthermore, some affective aspects of the students are discussed.

II. THE GOALS

The goals of the course in Zenki are (1) the understanding of the necessity why sounds must be distinguished phonemically, (2)

the recognition of the English vowel system which is different from the Japanese vowel system, and (3) the manipulation of English vowels. The ultimate goal is the manipulation of them which does not interfere with communication,¹⁾ either from the speaker's or the listener's point of view as Paulston (1976: 82) suggested.

III. THE INPUTS; THE TEXTBOOK, THE TYPE OF PHONETIC SYMBOLS AND THE VARIETY OF ENGLISH

The textbook in the course is American Pronunciation for the Japanese published by Nanundo. The set of phonetic symbols used in the textbook is a modified version of I.P.A. (International Phonetic Alphabet). The monophthongs and diphthongs are transcribed as follows:

A. The monophthongs

[i:]	<u>seat</u>	[u]	<u>pull</u>
[i]	<u>sit</u>	[u:]	<u>pool</u>
[e]	<u>set</u>	[ʌ]	<u>hut</u>
[ɛ(:)]	<u>very</u>	[ə]	<u>about</u>
[æ]	<u>sat</u>	[ə]	<u>doctor</u>
[ɑ]	<u>hot</u>	[ɜ:]	<u>hurt</u>
[ɑ:]	<u>father</u>		
[ɔ(:)]	<u>dog</u>		
[ɔ:]	<u>bought</u>		
[o:]	<u>story</u>		

1) It is said that after the age of puberty most learners cannot acquire a native pronunciation. Refer to Paulston (1976: 81) and Selinker (1974: 31-54).

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B. The diphthongs

[ei]	hate	[iə]	fear
[ai]	height	[ɛə]	fare
[au]	cow	[ɔə]	for
[ɔi]	boy	[oə]	four
[ou]	boat	[uə]	tour
		[ɑə]	heart

The symbols are used phonemically. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a language which carries distinctive meaning (Paulston, 1976: 83): The words "eat" [i:t] and "it" [it] have different meanings because [i:] and [i] are different phonemes. The type of English in the textbook is so called "General American." But in class, various kinds of pronunciation are accepted based on A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English and English-Japanese dictionaries where both American and British pronunciation are presented.

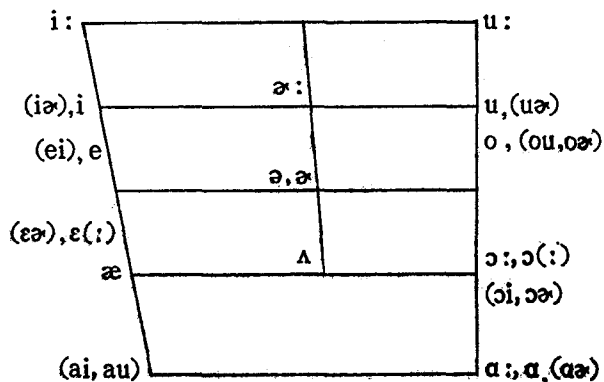
IV. THE INPUTS; THE CLASS PROCEDURES

A. A VOWEL CHART

The vowel chart¹⁾ is always presented at the beginning of a class. This chart helps the students to recognize the English vowel system and the relative tongue positions and lip shapes to produce the English vowels as a whole. According to the cognitive learning theory, the most important thing in learning a second language is

1) The vowel chart is taken from American Pronunciation for the Japanese. The diphthongs in the parentheses are added by the author to present all the English vowels.

to see the interrelationship within the language itself and to internalize it.



B. GENERAL STEPS IN CLASS

The general steps in class are (1) presentation of sound features to be taught, (2) choral repetition of sounds in words, phrases, and sentences, (3) individual response, (4) presentation of a new sound in comparison with previously learned sounds, and (5) choral repetition followed by individual response. The following details of each step are taken from the second class of the course where [i:] and [i] are practiced.

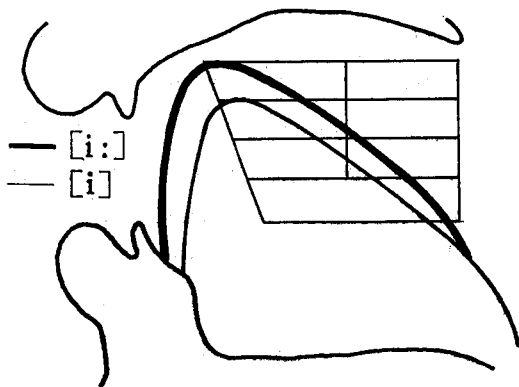
1. The presentation of sound features to be taught.

The sound features of [i:] are presented with the aid of a diagram²⁾ in the book: The tongue position is front high and the lips are unrounded. Ikeura (1978: 15) suggests explaining the movements and shapes of the organs to pronounce the English sounds to the students since the organs are used differently in

2) The diagram is also taken from American Pronunciation for the Japanese.

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pronouncing the Japanese sounds.



2. Choral repetition of the sounds in words, phrases, and sentences. The words, phrases, and sentences are repeated chorally after the instructor.

Example: eat, sea, see, deal, feel

keen heat, free seat

One evening the teacher was reading under a green tree.

3. Individual response.

Several students are asked to pronounce the above sounds. When they mispronounce them, the instructor corrects their pronunciation. The methods of correction will be discussed later.

4. Presentation of a new sound in comparison with previously learned sounds: The recognition of the new sounds and the discrimination between the new sound and the learned sounds.

[i] differs from [i:] in quality not in quantity. The tongue position is front high-mid and the lips are unrounded. [i:t] mea-

ns taberu while [it] means sore. These semantic differences must be emphasized because both [i:] and [i] belong to the Japanese [ɪ] phoneme. These semantic differences help the students to understand why sounds must be distinguished phonemically. Then the discrimination test of [i:] and [i] is given.

Example: Hold up one finger for [i:] and two fingers for [i].¹⁾

The instructor pronounces both sounds several times and then pronounces the following words only once.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. it (2) | 6. seat (1) |
| 2. feel (1) | 7. ship (2) |
| 3. fill (2) | 8. sheep (1) |
| 4. eat (1) | 9. read (1) |
| 5. sit (2) | 10. pick (2) |

5. Choral repetition of (a) the new sound in words, phrases, and sentences and (b) minimal pairs of the two sounds, phrases, and sentences which involve these two sounds.

Example: (a) it, pick, will, isn't

big ship, sit still

It is impossible for him to fill it with ink so quickly.

(b) eat-it, feel-fill, peak-pick, seat-sit

steel mill, rich meal

Will you please read it aloud?

She's still feeling weak.

6. Individual response as in the step 3.

1) This method is adapted from Pronunciation Manual for Japanese Speakers published by Seido Language Institute.

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C. LANGUAGE LABORATORY

After each class, under the instruction of a teaching assistant the students practice previously learned sounds using a tape recorded by a native speaker of English. In addition to the pronunciation practice, listening comprehension and dictation drills are given.

D. SPIRAL METHOD

Each class begins with the review of the practiced sounds with the aid of the vowel chart. The vowel chart helps the students to see what they have learned already and what they will learn next. To relate new items with the old ones is very important in learning activity. Riggs (1976: 446) summarizes Comprehension and Learning; a Conceptual Framework for Teachers by F. Smith as follows:

xxx The way we comprehend is by relating new information to what we already know, by fitting it in to what Smith calls our cognitive structure. Learning, like comprehension, requires fitting new information into old, but learning also involves a reorganization of the cognitive structure to accomodate the new information. "Noise" is whatever we cannot make sense of, either through immediately relating it to what we already know or through reorganizing what we know so that the new information fits. It is unfortunately very easy for us teachers to present information that is meaningful to us, in such a way that is noise to our students.

V. THE OUTPUTS; THE STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE AT THE TEST

A. THE TEST FORM

The students were required to transcribe the vowels of forty words in phonetic symbols and to record them on the tapes. Eighty percent of the tested words had been practiced in class or in the L.L. Ten points were allotted to the transcription and twenty points to the recording. One of the test forms is as follows.

Test

First transcribe the following vowels in phonetic signs, then record the words, the phrases, and the sentences.

1. luck-lock
2. fan letter
3. dirty part
4. The fair lady was asked to dance by a cow boy.
5. Would you please tell me where the nearest bus stop is?
6. Who could read the new booklet?
7. I want to see your form.

B. THE TEST RESULT

The average test grade taken by 175 student was 26.52 out of 30 points. The correlation between the transcription test and the pronunciation test was also computed in order to see what the students were doing with the phonetic symbols in pronouncing the tested items. It was .50. This means "neutral" statistically. This neutral correlation can be interpreted in three ways; (1) They did not make use of the phonetic symbols. (2) They could not articulate

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properly even if they know the symbols. This can be exemplified in [æ], [wu], [æ:] and [ou] sounds. And (3) They could not transcribe the symbols properly. For instance, some wrote [c] instead of [ɔ]. The second interpretation will be discussed later in this chapter.

The number of the errors in pronouncing the tested vowels was also counted to search for the students' weak points.

Vowels	Number of errors	Vowels	Number of errors
i:	10	iə	16
i	20	ɛə	3
æ	122	uə	2
ʌ	16	oə	2
ə	57	ɔə	16
ə	17	ɑə	32
ə:	127	ei	15
u:	17	aɪ	1
u	8	aʊ	7
ɔ:	26	ou	55
ɑ:	5		
ɑ/ɔ	17		

In addition to these vowels, fifty-five errors were counted in pronouncing [wu]. Thirty-three students mispronounced "work." Some students transcribe its vowel [ɔə] instead of [æ:]. Twenty-five students mispronounced "university." Some students pronounced [ə] of purchase [ei] or [e].

C. ERROR ANALYSIS

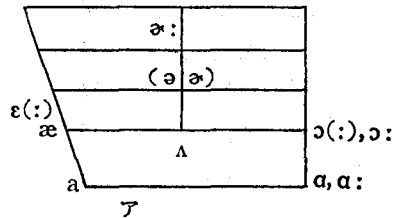
The students errors were analyzed to find the sources of errors. At this step, the Japanese vowel system has to be compared with

the English vowel system. There are five vowels [ア, イ, ウ, エ, オ] in Japanese. The following frameworks are taken from American Pronunciation for the Japanese (the vowels in the parentheses are added by the author).

1. THE COMPARISON BETWEEN THE JAPANESE VOWELS AND THE ENGLISH VOWELS

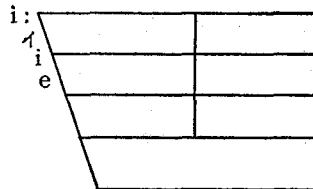
a. The English vowels similar to the Japanese [ア] and their tongue positions.

	Front	Center	Back
ア	ε(:)	ə: (ə)	
	æ	(ə)	ɔ(:)
	a	Λ	ɔ:
			ɑ
			ɑ:



b. The English vowels similar to the Japanese [イ] and their tongue positions.

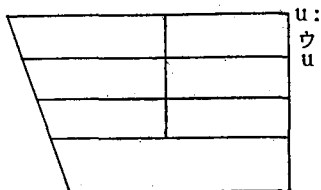
	Front
イ	i:
	i
	e



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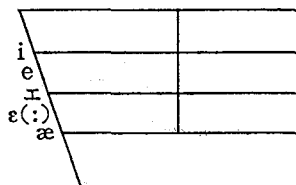
c. The English vowels similar to the Japanese [ウ] and their tongue positions.

ウ	Back
	u: u



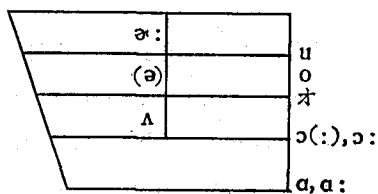
d. The English vowels similar to the Japanese [エ] and their tongue positions.

エ	Front
	i
	ei
	e
	e(:) æ



e. The English vowels similar to the Japanese [オ] and their tongue positions.

オ	Center	Back
	ɔ:	u o, ou
	(ə)	ɔ(:) ɔ:
	ʌ	ɑ ɑ:



2. THE STUDENTS' ERRORS

The following students' errors were taken from thirty-five samples. They were transcribed correctly but pronounced erroneously. Each English vowel was substituted with another Eng-

lish vowel or a Japanese vowel. An arrow→ indicates the substitution.

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. [æ]→[jΛ] | 5. [aə]→[ə:] |
| [ɑ] | 6. [au]→[ɑ:] |
| [ɑ:] | 7. [i:]→[i] |
| [a] | 8. [i]→[ɛ] |
| [ア] | 9. [iə]→[ə:] |
| [ɛ] | 10. [ɔ:]→[aə] |
| 2. [Λ] and [ə]→[æ] | [o:] |
| [ɑ] | 11. [ɔi]→[oi] |
| [aə] | [オイ] |
| [ア] | 12. [ɔə]→[ɑ:] |
| 3. [ə:]→[aə] | [ou] |
| [ア+ə] | 13. [ɑ/ɔ]→[オ] |
| [ア] | [ou] |
| 4. [ə]→[aə] | 14. [ou]→[ɔ:] |
| [ア+ə] | [ɑ] |
| [ɑ:] | [o:] |

3. THE SOURCES OF THE ERRORS

Some of the students substituted [ア], [ɛ], or one of the English vowels within the framework of [ア] and [ɛ] for [æ] which sounds similar to [ア] and [ɛ]. Some substituted [jΛ] ([j] of yesterday) for it. Some substituted [ア] or one of the English vowels within the framework of [ア] and [オ] for [Λ] and [ə] which are similar to [ア] and [オ]. Some pronounced [aə] instead of [Λ] or [ə] since both [ɑ] and [ə] sound like [ア] to the Japanese speakers. [ə:, ə, aə, ɑ:, ɔə, ɔ:,] could not

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sometimes be distinguished since all of them belong to both [ア] and [オ] frameworks or one of them and sound similar to the Japanese speakers. That is the reason why [ə:] of "work" and "university" was transcribed as [aə, a:, əə, əə, ə,]. [ɔ:] was replaced with [aə] because [ɔ:] and [a] belong to the same framework and the long feature of [ɔ:] sounds like a diphthong. [a/ɔ] was replaced with [ou] because [a/ɔ] and [ou] belong to the same framework.

The diphthongs were replaced with the monophthongs: [aə] and [iə] were replaced with [ə:], [ɔə] with [ɑ:], [au] with [ɑ:], [ou] with [ɔ:], [o:] or [ɑ]. This tendency might be due to the Japanese syllabic structure. Each Japanese vowel is syllabic and has the same length. For example, English [au] consists of one syllable while Japanese [au] consists of two syllables. Thus the students often substituted a monophthong which consists of one syllable for a diphthong. Because of this syllabic structural difference between English and Japanese, one student pronounced [ɛə] in two syllables.

The sequence of [wu] is very difficult since this sequence does not exist in Japanese. So the students often pronounced [uwɪ] instead of [wul], [uwmən] instead of [wumən].

There was another type of errors. They were the errors interfered with spellings:

luck [u]	earring [ɛə]
stop [o]	pearl [ɛə]
done [ɔ(:)]	

In short, most errors seem to be caused by the Japanese lang-

uage. However, this error analysis was conducted only linguistically. Observing the students' performance, I can tell that many of these errors were also caused by the affective factors of the students such as their motivation and inhibition. In the following section, these affective factors will be discussed.

D. THE AFFECTIVE FACTORS AND THE CORRECTION

Stevick (1978: 145) states that the teaching of pronunciation generally consists of selecting, presenting, drilling, and correcting the sounds of the target language; the learning of pronunciation involves neuromuscular and some cognitive activity, but it also has affective and social components, which carry important implications for the role of the teacher. Two apparent affective components in the pronunciation class are "motivation" and "inhibition." Canales (1978: 28-33) says that without motivation the student will never learn a second language no matter how easy that language might be or how excellent a teacher he might have. I can see many students have high motivation in learning English. On the other hand, some students do not have enough motivation to learn a foreign language. The other factor which relates with motivation is inhibition (Canales calls it shyness). Guiora et al (1970) suggests that there exists direct relationship between inhibition (a component of language ego) and pronunciation in a second language. The neutral correlation between the symbols and the pronunciation and the substitution of one phoneme for another phoneme might indicate that the inhibition is a strong regressive factor in the course. This phenomenon is apparent in pronouncing [æ], [æ:], and [wu]. Many students hesitate to open their mouths widely enough to pronounce

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[æ]. Instead, they sometimes shake their heads or raise their voice. Some words of foreign origin might contribute to their inhibition. For example, [æ] of man is pronounced [ア], [ɜ:] of nurse and bird [アー], [wu] of wool [ウー] in Japanese. Consequently, they are afraid of producing these unfamiliar sounds.

Though Paulston insists on immediate correction of faulty pronunciation at the early stage, immediate correction in the course in this situation decreases the students' motivation and increases their inhibition. Stevick cautions that immediate correction is evaluative and harmful:

Yet a person who is trying to perform in the presence of someone who is taking this stance (evaluative stance)¹⁾ typically becomes self-conscious and anxious, and tends to "choke," or "freeze". xxx All too often, self-consciousness leads to tension, tension leads to poor performance, poor performance leads to frustration, frustration leads to added tension, and so on toward a downward spiral.

Therefore, I do not correct more than four times when the students do not show any eagerness to correct their errors by themselves. Sometimes I ask the teaching assistant to correct their faulty pronunciation individually in the L.L. On the other hand, when the students show some or strong eagerness to improve their pronunciation, I use the vowel chart effectively in the following way. I always point at the vowel chart and ask them to pronounce from [i:] to a mispronounced vowel. When they pronounce [ɑæ] instead of [ɜ:],

1) The phrase in the parentheses is added by the author.

for instance, I point at [ɑə] on the chart and ask them to pronounce from [i:] to [ɑə]. Then I make them pronounce the central vowels from [ʌ] to [ə:]. This method works very effectively. What I am trying to do with this method is to give the students an inner criteria (Stevick, 1978: 148) for the sounds of the English language.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have written about the pronunciation course and reported the test result considering the linguistic and affective aspects. The ultimate goal of the course in Zenki is the manipulation of the vowels which does not interfere with communication. The type of phonetic symbols used in the text, American pronunciation for the Japanese is a modification of I.P.A. Some variants of English are accepted based on dictionaries where both American and British pronunciation are presented. The class procedures were described including the method of correction with the aid of the vowel chart. The test procedures were also described and the errors in the test were analyzed; most of their errors were caused by the interference of the Japanese language and many of them were also caused by the affective factors such as the students' motivation¹⁾ and inhibition.

At the end of this paper, I want to ask your opinion. Stevick says that the teacher may bring about some temporary change but

1) To raise their motivation, it is a good way to give them a standardized test such as TOEFL the main purpose of which is to determine the English proficiency of individuals whose native language is not English.

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the student will show deep and often unconscious resistance toward making these changes permanent in his speech outside of the pronunciation class. What are the students doing in your classes? To provide an effective learning course of pronunciation, your opinion will be most welcomed.

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