

【資料】

## Setting up a Pronunciation Clinic at a Japanese University

Jacob Andrew Lawrence

### 日本の大学での発音クリニックの設立

Jacob Andrew Lawrence

#### Introduction

During semester 1 of 2012, I developed a pronunciation clinic for students at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University to help improve their communication skills that I think are vital in the workplace after university where English may be the lingua franca. I felt that our curriculum was lacking this important component of language learning, and I used this as the impetus for its construction. I felt that a clinic of this type would offer students studying at the BECC (Bunkyo English Communication Center) a fun and engaging way to study pronunciation where they would ultimately be in control of their own learning using awareness-raising material that focuses on both segmental (isolated speech sounds) and suprasegmental (stress and intonation patterns) dimensions of pronunciation learning. This clinic is meant to be student-directed/teacher-supported by design, which supports our autonomous language learning philosophy here at the BECC. Learners were involved as much as possible during this initial phase of the clinic, as research shows that self-involvement is a primary characteristic of good language learners (Morely, 1991).

#### Background

Let us look briefly at the history of pronunciation teaching. Accurate pronunciation was the trademark characteristic of The Aural-Oral Approach of pronunciation learning and teaching in the 1940s and 1950s. Audiolingualism followed in the 1960s and 1970s and accurate pronunciation continued to be the focus, making use of language labs and using extensive drilling and repetition training (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Audiolingualism lost its popularity with the rise of Communicative Language Teaching in the 1980s where interaction in the target language was the primary focus and pronunciation was largely ignored (Isaacs, 2009).

Now, English language teaching has entered into what Richards and Rodgers (2001) call the post-methods era, and even now pronunciation has been identified as an often ignored component in English language classrooms (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin & Griner, 2010). Over the last 25 years, pronunciation teachers have emphasized suprasegmentals

rather than segmentals in promoting intelligibility (Avery & Ehrlich, 1992; Morley, 1991). It has been said that the overall goal of pronunciation teaching in the second language classroom should be achieving reasonable intelligibility, rather than native-like pronunciation (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 1996; Kenworthy, 1987; Morley, 1991; Pica, 1994, and others). As noted by Nakashima (2006), “For EFL situations in Japan, then, where the language is mostly taught by Japanese teachers of English, and where classroom interaction involves only Japanese speakers, evaluating intelligibility is difficult for both teachers and students.” I also support intelligibility as the ultimate goal of pronunciation teaching, and this supports my research for creating a pronunciation clinic where native English-speaking instructors with experience teaching pronunciation could be of great benefit to Japanese university students, giving them the support and feedback that they need to become successful communicators in English.

## Research Objectives

I was interested in finding out how Japanese students would use and benefit from a drop-in style pronunciation clinic where they would be responsible for their own learning with the guidance and support from teachers with experience teaching English pronunciation if the service were made available to students who had the time and the desire. I also wanted to investigate the necessary steps it takes to set up a clinic of this type and assess its overall success using feedback from participants, collected data, and assessment tools for gauging speech samples before and after the clinic. It is my belief that if a clinic of this kind were successful at the BECC, it could be of great benefit to our students who need to communicate clearly in English after university, especially students in the Global Communication Department (GCD).

## Clinic Preparation

### *Selecting Students*

For the one month trial phase of the clinic during semester 1 of 2012, I chose to focus primarily on first and second year students in the university's Global Communication Department, although the clinic was made available for all students interested in working on pronunciation.

### *Introductory Slide*

To begin with, I visited first and second year GCD classes with a PowerPoint slide translated into Japanese outlining the pronunciation clinic. The slide's purpose was to introduce the idea of the clinic to students and to outline its design. The following is an example of the information as it was presented to the students on the slide:

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<i>What the Pronunciation Clinic is...</i>	<i>What the Pronunciation Clinic isn't...</i>
1. An excellent opportunity to improve listening & speaking skills リスニングとスピーキングのスキルを伸ばす絶好の機会 2. Self-directed/teacher-supported learning 自律学習と教員支援による学習 3. Designed to meet the needs & goals of individual students 学生一人ひとりの目標やニーズに合わせてデザイン 4. Flexible & commitment-free 柔軟で誓約なし	1. A class that you have to attend regularly 規則通りに出席する学習 2. Teacher-centered 教員主導型の学習 3. Passive or controlled learning 受動的で規制された学習

While the slide was being projected, I answered students' questions as they arose and informed them that they would be doing an in-class survey on personal computers the following week. I strongly encouraged them to try the clinic as soon as times for sessions were chosen based on their feedback from the survey.

### *The Survey*

Roughly a week after the PowerPoint slide was shown to first and second year GCD students in their classes, I created a survey on [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com) in order to find out students' 1) pronunciation learning history, 2) interest, and 3) availability. I administered the survey in those GCD classes shortly thereafter. The survey consisted of questions where students could answer using a standard Likert scale. I have reproduced the questions from the survey in the following section below and summarized the students' responses to them. After the results were carefully analyzed, I selected times in the SALC (Self Access Learning Area) to slot the clinic and created a sign-up sheet for students to be made available at the front desk. I also made fliers and distributed them in the GCD classes to indicate the times of the clinic and to remind students. Posters were then made to advertise the clinic by SALC staff and put up around the BECC.

### *Survey Questions & Data*

*I have studied English pronunciation before (Yes/No). Where?*

The survey was completed by 52 students from the GCD. 37 of these students indicated that they had studied pronunciation in the past. The majority of these students reported that high school was where they had studied pronunciation (69.4%), followed by junior high school (38.9%), In cram school, or juku, (36.1%), Eikaiwa, or English conversation school, (11.1%), independently (16.7%), and some reported Other (5.6%). Interestingly, 16 out of the 52 students who took the survey skipped this question.

*How difficult is it to understand the pronunciation of native speakers of English (my teachers, on T.V, etc.)?*

Out of the 52 students who took the survey, 9 students answered that they found it *Very difficult* (18%), 27 found it *Difficult* (54%), 12 found it *Somewhat difficult* (24%), and 2 answered *Not very difficult* (4%). 2 students skipped this question.

*How difficult is it to understand your classmates' pronunciation when they use English?*

5 of the students answered that it was *Difficult* (10%), 7 answered *Somewhat difficult* (14%), 26 answered *Not very difficult* (52%), 12 answered *Not difficult* (24%), and 2 students skipped the question.

*My classmates have difficulty understanding my pronunciation when I use English.*

1 student *Strongly agreed* (2%), 13 students *Agreed* (26%), 21 students *Somewhat agreed* (42%), and 15 students *Disagreed* (30%). 2 students skipped this question.

*How important do you think studying pronunciation is?*

34 students answered *Very important* (68%), 10 students answered *Important* (20%), 5 students answered *Somewhat important* (10%). 2 students skipped this question.

*What areas of pronunciation do you think are most important? Please rate the following categories.*

	Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Not Very important	Not important	Don't Know
<b>L and R</b> sounds	62.7% (32)	33.3% (17)	3.9% (2)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
<b>V and B</b> sounds	49.0% (25)	43.1% (22)	7.8% (4)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
<b>TH</b> sounds	54.9% (28)	29.4% (15)	13.7% (7)	2.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Syllable Differentiation e.g. sutoroberi strawberry	43.1% (22)	39.2% (20)	13.7% (7)	2.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.0% (1)
Stress	51.0% (26)	43.1% (22)	3.9% (2)	2.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)
Intonation	70.6% (36)	29.4% (15)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)

Again, 1 student skipped this question, skewing the data somewhat. As expected, L and R, V and B, and TH sounds were all considered to be very important to study by students. Stress and intonation were also rated highly. This particular data was used in designing materials for the clinic for its one-month debut.

*I would be interested in participating in a drop-in pronunciation clinic in the SALC.*

17 students answered that they would be *Very interested* (37%). 19 students answered

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*Interested* (41.3%). 9 answered *Somewhat interested* (19.6%). 1 student answered *Not very interested* (2.2%). None of the students answered *Not interested*. A total of 6 students skipped this question.

*If shown what to do, I would be interested in studying on my own and reporting back to the clinic instructor periodically to give updates and get feedback.*

16 students answered *Very interested* (32%). 22 students answered *Interested* (44%). 8 students answered *Somewhat interested* (16%). 4 students answered *Not very interested* (8%). No one answered *Not interested*. 2 students skipped this question.

The final 2 questions of the survey gathered the students' availability using a chart of SALC times and an area where students could write suggestions and/or comments about the pronunciation clinic.

### Clinic Design

The clinic ran for roughly 1 month from June 26 until July 26 in its initial trial during semester 1 of 2012. The clinic ran in the BECC's Self Access Learning Area (SALC) twice a week. The clinic sessions took place during the 1 ½ hour teacher SALC times. There were three 25 minute clinic sessions slotted per 1 ½ hour SALC time with a maximum sign-up capacity of 6 students per 25 minute slot. This was to allot enough time to give instructions to students, or give feedback to students from a previous session with 5 minutes in between sessions for the clinic instructor to prepare as necessary. Students signed up on a sign-up sheet made available at the front counter in the SALC where students chose a time by writing their student identification number on the appropriate space. These sign-up sheets were collected at the end of every week to record attendance.

### Materials

All students participating in the clinic for the first time were given a diagnostic speaking test to complete taken from *Clear Speech* (Gilbert, 1996). All listening and speech recognition activities were recorded and made available in the pronunciation clinic folder available to all students on the user server at the BECC which was created by myself and learning advisor Mathew Porter. A short questionnaire was included with the speaking test asking students 1) noticeable differences between their speech and that in the model, 2) which sounds were most difficult to make, and 3) intonation differences between their speech and that in the model. This was to allow for student reflection on the tasks while they were still fresh in their memory.

Most of the other student materials used for the first 1 month trial session of the clinic were taken from the “English Pronunciation/Listening” ([international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation/](http://international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation/)) page from the Okanagan University College website. I have used this website extensively

in pronunciation teaching in the past with great results. These activities included minimal pair practice, repetition exercises, dialogue recordings, and intonation practice. The activities were then modified to better suit our students. My colleague Mathew Porter and I made audio files that were the same, more or less, to the activities in the online versions. The students listened to the recordings and marked their answers on printouts given to them that corresponded to the activities. These printouts were also made available in the pronunciation clinic user folder so that students could access them and print them out on their own as necessary and to further facilitate self-study. During semester 1, the sounds focused upon in the activities were voiced and voiceless /th/, /l/ and /r/, and long and short vowel sounds. Most sessions involved use of the voice recorders in the SALC where students recorded themselves (most times with a partner) reading unrehearsed dialogues and later comparing them to native speaker models on the user server pre-recorded by Mathew Porter and I. Minimal pair activities were also used quite often in the clinic activities, such as *breathe/breeze*, and *ship/sheep*, etc., depending upon the chosen phoneme that was being studied. These activities were also taken and adapted from the Okanagan University College pronunciation website mentioned before. Students were given basic, minimal instructions at the beginning of each session and were then set loose to work at their own pace with full access to the voice recorders, computers, and multiple purpose rooms and sound booths when available in the SALC. Minimal instruction was necessary to show students how to use the voice recorders and locate the pronunciation clinic user folder initially, but after that, very little set up was needed to get the students going.

#### *Pronunciation Journals*

Students were also asked to keep a pronunciation journal where they could note progress, areas of difficulty, write down questions and concerns about pronunciation issues to ask the clinic instructor later, and to keep a log of the strategies they employed to practice pronunciation on their own. A very small percentage of students did this fairly consistently, but making journal-keeping mandatory in the future should remedy this issue and make the pronunciation clinic more beneficial for students by helping them develop successful learning strategies.

#### *End Survey & Issues with the Pronunciation Clinic*

Although interest was initially high among the 52 students who took the survey, there were only 9 students who came regularly enough to the clinic who could justifiably take an end of semester survey based on the clinic and their participation in it. On the survey detailed above under *Clinic Preparation*, a total of 36 students said they were either *Very interested* or *Interested* in participating in a drop-in pronunciation clinic in the SALC. A total of 38 students surveyed said they were either *Very interested* or *Interested* in studying on their own and reporting back to the clinic instructor periodically to give updates and get feedback. Speculations as to reasons why clinic participation was so low and did not correspond to the initial survey results include time constraints of students, club obligations, test preparation, forgetfulness, and perhaps fickleness of many students

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given the survey.

The end survey was a written survey that I made and that was given to all students who participated in the trial pronunciation clinic more than one time. The end survey was given to participants during the last week of classes of semester 1, usually in their last clinic session. The survey consisted of 7 questions in a Likert scale format. The questions that appeared in the end survey were as follows:

*Do you think the Pronunciation Clinic has helped improve your pronunciation (listening and/or speaking skills?)*

Out of the 9 students who completed this survey, 2 strongly agreed and 7 agreed.

*If you answered “Agree” or Strongly agree,” what was the most helpful for you?*

	<i>Very helpful</i>	<i>Helpful</i>	<i>Somewhat helpful</i>	<i>Not helpful</i>
<i>Voice recordings</i>	5 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students	1 out of 9 students	
<i>Listening to native speakers voice</i>	8 out of 9 students	1 out of 9 students		
<i>Minimal pairs (bet/beat, ship/sheep, etc.)</i>	5 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students	1 out of 9 students	
<i>Talking to Pronunciation Clinic teacher</i>	4 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students	2 out of 9 students	

*If you answered “Disagree” or “Somewhat agree,” what would you like to do in the Pronunciation Clinic next semester? Ex. I would like to use the computer to study pronunciation, etc.*

The students who agreed somewhat indicated that they would like more explicit, teacher-centered pronunciation instruction like that found in a classroom.

*How many times did you come to the Pronunciation Clinic this semester?*

Out of the 9 students who took the end survey, 1 student came a total of 4 times, 4 came a total of 3 times, and an additional 4 came a total of 2 times.

*Do you practice pronunciation outside of class? Please circle your choice (Yes/No)*

6 out of the 9 students answered Yes. 2 answered No.

If you answered “Yes,” how often do you study outside of class and what do you do? Ex. I study pronunciation 3 days a week outside of class. I usually watch English movies and listen to English music, etc.

-Please complete this chart about your pronunciation study:

	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
<i>At home</i>	4 out of 9 students	2 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students	
<i>In the library</i>			2 out of 9 students	7 out of 9 students
<i>In the BECC</i>	3 out of 9 students	5 out of 9 students	1 out of 9 students	
<i>On the train</i>	2 out of 9 students	2 out of 9 students	2 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students
<i>In a cafe</i>		1 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students	5 out of 9 students
<i>Listen to English music</i>	7 out of 9 students	1 out of 9 students	1 out of 9 students	
<i>Watch English movies</i>	4 out of 9 students	3 out of 9 students	2 out of 9 students	

*Other (please write):* 1 student answered that they listen to English radio, and another answered that they read English pronunciation books. 3 students gave information regarding how often they studied pronunciation outside of class; 1 student answered that they study 4 days a week outside of class and 2 students answered 2 days a week.

*Would you be interested in continuing the Pronunciation Clinic next semester?*

Out of the 9 students who took the end survey, 5 said they would be *Very interested*, 3 answered *Interested*, and 1 answered *Somewhat interested* in continuing.

## Conclusion

The clinic is still in its infancy, and it is currently being developed and fine-tuned for a second trial in light of the data from semester 1, 2012. During semester 2 of 2012-2013, I hope to run it longer and involve more students, compiling more varied activities for students in order to suit their various learning styles. Some long term goals I have for the pronunciation clinic are generating SALC activities connected to it for students at the BECC. I am also interested in incorporating select pronunciation activities into the GCD and General English (GE) curriculum where and if appropriate and aligning pronunciation learning in the clinic with the CEFR-J.



Better diagnostic and assessment tools to evaluate students' progress also need to be incorporated in future clinic trials. This may be done by getting a group of BECC teachers to serve as members of a panel to listen to and make assessments on students' speech samples taken from both the beginning and end of the clinic during semester 2. Progress has already been made developing these diagnostics for the 2<sup>nd</sup> trial of the pronunciation clinic during semester 2, 2012-2013.

As mentioned earlier in this paper, I also wish to make journal-keeping more of a prominent feature in future pronunciation clinic campaigns in hopes of making the clinic more beneficial for students. Journal-keeping should encourage students to become more involved in the learning process and allow them to reflect on that process as they proceed. Pronunciation/speech study is most profitable (and most pleasant) when students are actively involved in their own learning, not passively detached repeaters of drills. Research has shown that self-involvement is a primary characteristic of good language learners (Morely, 1991). I feel that more knowledge is needed regarding the connection between learning strategies and pronunciation and will focus on this aspect more extensively during the 2<sup>nd</sup> trial of the pronunciation clinic next semester.

Regarding the low participation in the clinic during semester 1, 2012, having more sessions available would make the clinic more flexible so more students could participate. This may require having additional BECC teachers brought on board who are willing to help out in the clinic during their free-time. The clinic could also be promoted more strongly towards students studying to take the TOEIC test who wish to improve their scores. Efforts will be made in the future to include more students from various departments in the university when promoting the pronunciation clinic as well.

Ultimately, I would like to enable our students to study pronunciation more effectively by helping them develop good learner strategies in which to do so, thus preparing them to become successful communicators in English. This would be invaluable for those students who wish to enter the global workplace where English may be the lingua franca. Intelligible communication should be the goal of EFL pronunciation teaching, not native speaker-like pronunciation, and pronunciation should be considered an essential component of communicative competence (Morely, 1991). I look forward to developing the pronunciation clinic in the future and discovering its full capabilities here at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University.

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