Eigo Versus Eikaiwa : The Interference of Written English on the Pronunciation of EFL Learners in Japan

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Abstract

Many difficulties in acquiring English pronunciation by Japanese learners derive from the practice of teaching the written language before the spoken language. Differences between spoken and written form include those of function, context, grammar and vocabulary. One of the aspects of pronunciation which is not apparent in written English is the linking of word-final phonemes with the initial vowel in the following word. This study is an analysis of whether instruction can lead to an increase in the frequency of linking. A student in an Oral English class made six recordings of personal responses to specified topics at approximately weekly intervals. A further recording of her speech was made in a final examination. The student showed an initial improvement in the frequency of linking in the second recording, but a gradual progressive decrease in the frequency of linking over the course of the second to sixth recordings.

However the student demonstrated a clear increase in the frequency of linking in the examination. Hence her use of linking showed improvement in monitored speech, but not in unmonitored speech.

Introduction

We ... need to take into account the influence of the written word, overwhelming and all-pervasive for most literate people, and assuming in consequence a dominant position in most processes of teaching English, even those aimed primarily at establishing oral competence (Taylor, 1981, p. 240).

Writing is a special, careful, elaborated, shuffled, pruned and tidied form of language, very different from the everyday, spontaneous, precarious adventures of speech which make up, and have made up, most of the world's linguistic activity and are in that sense 'normal language' (Turner, 1973, p. 8).

In all literate societies, including Japan, the written form of the language is highly valued. Accordingly, in the scholarship of foreign languages the study of the written form has traditionally taken precedence over that of the spoken form. The major obstacles to an effective teaching of English pronunciation in Japan are the tradition of attaching greater importance to the written form than the spoken form, and the practice of making false generalizations about pronunciation based on the written form. The impact of perceptions about the written form on pronunciation constitutes a serious interference, and the failure to adequately address the problems caused by this interference is a major weakness in the teaching of English pronunciation in Japan.

According to Le Gros (1993) the neglect of the teaching of pronunciation in Japan exists for historical reasons. The first foreign language to be taught in Japan was Chinese, which was introduced solely for literary purposes. Although English

is used not only for literary purposes but also for scientific and communicative purposes, and as an instrument of popular culture, the teaching methodology of English has borne many similarities to the earlier study of Chinese. Hence spoken English, and thus pronunciation, have not been deemed to be of primary importance.

Furthermore students have transferred assumptions about the relationship between their written and spoken language to that of English, and this has created interference in the learning of English pronunciation. There is a regular relationship between spoken Japanese and the two phonemic syllabaries *hiragana* and *katakana*. In English the relationship between the written and spoken form is tenuous, and the spelling provides a somewhat inaccurate guide to the pronunciation (see Gimson and Cruttenden, 1994, p. 4). This difference is illustrated in the way pronunciation is indicated in the respective dictionaries; unlike English dictionaries, Japanese dictionaries have no requirement for phonetic transcriptions. This fundamental difference between English and Japanese is the source of many of the problems in pronunciation experienced by learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Japan.

The Influence of Exams

The importance attached to the written form in Japan probably explains why there are separate words for the study of English : *eigo*, and the study of English Conversation : *eikaiwa*. This form of classification is indicative of how speaking the language is regarded as being separate from the language itself. *Eikaiwa* is typically studied privately and is not on the national curriculum in secondary schools. Oral Communication has been offered in senior high schools since 1994. Furthermore junior high school students' English speaking proficiency is to be assessed from 2002 (Keogh, 2002, p. 26). However it is necessary to study *eigo*,

not Oral Communication, to gain university entrance. *Eikaiwa* and even Oral Communication are thus marginalized ; this constitutes a kind of institutionalized disincentive to learning to speak English, and thus to the study of pronunciation. White (1987) and Yoneyama (1999) alert us to the difference between exam subjects and their counterparts in the real world :

> The languages taught in Japanese schools, such as English and French, are taught as subjects for exam-taking, not as a way [to] communicate with others (White, 1987, p. 175).

> These students experience the reality that 'English for the entrance examination' and 'Mathematics for the entrance examination' exist as separate bodies of knowledge from 'English' and 'mathematics' (Yoneyama, 1999, p. 145).

Thus the importance accorded to written English is evident in the mode of testing. Proficiency in written English, not spoken English, is a prerequisite for university entrance. This is in contrast to countries such as Australia and the UK where officially accredited courses for foreign languages have long included spoken and interactive skills as part of the total assessment required for university entrance.

Comparisons with First Language Acquisition

In junior high school, where most Japanese students begin their study of English, the written form and the pronunciation are taught simultaneously. This contrasts with first language acquisition, in which children have usually been listening for at least four years (and speaking for a somewhat shorter time) before they learn the written form. Clearly the circumstances of first language acquisition

cannot be recreated for the foreign language learner. However, at least one aspect of first language acquisition should be preserved in the study of EFL. In a language such as English in which there is a great disparity between spelling and pronunciation, the spoken form should be introduced before the written form. The current situation is that the written form interferes with the spoken form ; students apply principles from their own language to English, and fail to grasp the features of English pronunciation that are not apparent in the written form.

The interference of written English on students of EFL is highlighted when contrasted to the English of native-speaking children who are pre-literate, or in the early stages of learning to read and write, and whose English is clearly free of any influence of the written form. They do not exhibit errors of linking in their speech ; that is, word-final phonemes are linked with initial vowels in the words which follow. Furthermore they are sometimes unaware of word boundaries. This is illustrated by a child observed by the author who sometimes pronounced *when* as *whend*. Because the word *when* is often followed by words beginning with the phoneme /d/, such as *do*, *does* and *did*, the child overgeneralised the word *when* as *whend*. Barton describes the decisions by children learning to write in English as a process of hypothesis-making. This highlights the extent to which the boundaries between words are obscured by the context in native English speech : "Children make hypotheses about word boundaries : for example, how and where to split up the flow of writing into words" (Barton, 1994, p. 155).

The process of learning to write in English as a first language seems to be in direct contrast to learning to write English as a second language in Japan. Children who learn English as a first language use invented spellings, which are a result of trying to map the letters of the alphabet on to the sounds of spoken English. Because of the irregular nature of correspondence between sound and letter in English young children use an abundance of non-standard forms when first learning

to write.　First language learners of English transfer their knowledge of the spoken mode to the written mode, whereas EFL learners in Japan transfer their knowledge of the written mode to the spoken mode.

Differences between Spoken and Written Discourse and the Implications for Teaching EFL

The differences between the spoken and the written modes include the functions, the context, the grammar, the vocabulary, whether the language is static or dynamic and the number of participants who typically construct the text. Furthermore, the fact that the schwa, the most commonly used English vowel, is not represented in English spelling, is a major source of difficulty for Japanese students because the Japanese language does not contain this vowel :

> [S]poken English, for example, has certain properties - such as the ubiquitous reduced vowels .... which the writing system has never adequately captured, and which make English a fairly messy language to write down (Barton, 1994, p. 99).

Functions and Context

Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish between the transactional and the interactional functions of language.　They assert that the characteristic of written language is its function as a means of transmitting information, and that the characteristic of spoken language is its function of maintaining social relationships. Closely related to the function of discourse is the context.　Spoken English requires a context of two or more people ; written English is usually distanced from this context (Garton and Pratt, 1989, p. 53).　Hammond highlights the context as being a major difference between the spoken and written modes :

Probably the most obvious difference between spoken and written texts is that the former are normally jointly constructed by two or more participants while the latter are essentially monologues (1990, p. 32).

Hammond outlines another important difference between speech and writing. Speech is dynamic and is influenced by contextual features such as physical location, gestures and intonation ; writing is static and is a fixed record. It has been planned, edited and drafted, and it may be reread at will (1990, p. 35). Hence even a dialogue in a textbook is not characteristic of spoken English. It is a record of a conversation that is distant from the reader in both time and space. It is in no sense dynamic because it is not constructed by the learners, but rather observed by them in a separate context from the original one.

Grammar and Vocabulary

Speech and writing also diverge in terms of grammar and vocabulary. Christie (1990, p. 84) notes that written language contains more nominalizations than spoken language, and is more densely worded. Guest (2002, p. 15) argues that the rules of grammar do not capture the complexities of the communicative context. Moustafa (1997, p. 75) identifies the use of complete sentences, particular kind of lexicon and the absence of contractions as defining characteristics of written language :

Written language usually consists of a series of complete sentences. Spoken language usually consists of turn taking, interruptions, and incomplete sentences in response to questions. Written language uses words like *difficult, repair* and *cruel.* Spoken language uses words like *hard, fix* and *mean.* Written language uses phrases like *It is big* and *It*

has gone.　Spoken language uses phrases like *It's big* and *It's gone*.

Advantages of Learning Spoken Discourse before Written Discourse

Given the multiple differences between written and spoken discourse the written mode constitutes an inadequate base for developing oral fluency and consequently an acceptable pronunciation.　In order for the influence of written English on the pronunciation of English to be minimized it would be advisable to delay the introduction of written English until a firm foundation of spoken English has been achieved.　Perhaps at least some of the principles of first language acquisition should be extended to cover second or foreign language acquisition.　Christie, describing first language acquisition, argues :

Children would be assisted to move more successfully from the oral to the written mode, and hence to learn to write, if teachers would design writing programs that enabled children to draw upon their oral language resources to construct written texts (1984 a, p. 40).

Oral language is of primary importance and (the point may seem obvious, but it cannot be overestimated) no child could learn to read or write without a very well-established oral language (1984 b, p. 65).

In his discussion of the teaching of English as a second language in Australian schools, Wales argues that the principle of acquiring oral language first should also apply to second language learners.　He asserts that one of the crucial components for non-native learners of English in Australia is "setting up the necessary conditions for acquisition of fluent English, first spoken, and then written" (1989, p. 20).　Surely this principle should be extended to include learners of EFL.　If learners of

EFL could also follow this sequence, establishing a base of fluency in spoken English before writing is encountered, then the problems of pronunciation which have evolved from a dependence upon written English would be minimized.

The interference of the written form takes two forms ; firstly it may encourage spelling pronunciations, that is, pronunciations that derive from making generalizations based on irregular spellings. The other aspect of English pronunciation which is not apparent in the written form is prosody. An over-reliance on written forms may lead to the neglect of the primary defining characteristics of spoken English : linking, stress patterns and intonation. Nolan and Kerswill warn :

> In the reality the restructuring - and destructuring - of the phonetic properties of a lexical entry when it occurs in fluent speech may be so drastic that they bear little resemblance to those of a careful citation form (1990, p. 296).

If these characteristics of fluent speech are not addressed in the EFL classroom, difficulties in pronunciation can be anticipated.

Why focus on pronunciation ?

Clearly there is a need for a degree of correct pronunciation to be achieved in order to facilitate comprehensibility and thus communication. Furthermore, pronunciation cannot be isolated from its counterpart, listening comprehension. Gilbert (1987, p. 35) reminds us that pronunciation and listening skills are interrelated and thus should be taught simultaneously. However some consider that improving pronunciation is beyond the scope of the foreign language classroom. Nunan argues that pronunciation "cannot and should not be forced by instruction" (1991, p. 105) and that fossilization can occur after an intermediate level has been

achieved (1991, p. 107). Furthermore, Krashen and Terrell (1983) suggest that pronunciation exercises in the classroom are of limited effectiveness and thus do not include pronunciation tasks in their method. They warn that pronunciation skills learnt in the language laboratory may only be evident when the student is consciously applying them and may not be available otherwise (1983, p. 89, 90). Studies on the relationship between instruction and improvements in pronunciation have demonstrated various findings, due to the variation in the types of studies and the nature of the instruction (Pennington and Richards, 1986, p. 217). The present study seeks to ascertain whether one aspect of pronunciation, linking, can be improved by instruction and individual feedback.

The Significance of Linking

In the present study, linking refers to the practice of joining a word final phoneme with the first vowel in the following word. In written English each word can be perceived as a discrete unit, but in spoken English the divisions are blurred. However the way pronunciation changes when words are linked is only given cursory treatment in many EFL textbooks.

A special focus on linking was chosen because of the contribution linking makes to an impression of overall fluency. However the absence of linking does not necessarily lead to a communication breakdown. The degree of misunderstanding caused by an absence of linking depends on the nature of the omission. If the link is omitted in a position in which a pause would be acceptable, this does not lead to misunderstanding. However if the omission occurs in rapid speech in a position in which a pause is highly unlikely, such as between 'I' and 'am', or 'looked it up', there is an increased likelihood of misunderstanding. A focus on linking in the language classroom cannot be dismissed as mere pedantry. Linking facilitates comprehension of spoken English and thus contributes to smooth

communication :

Closer examination of linking shows its more profound effect on English pronunciation than is usually recognized, and that its neglect leads to misrepresentation and unnatural expectations (Temperley, 1987, p. 65).

Limitations on the use of linking in native speech

However there are occasions in which linking is not used by native speakers :

The amount of linking that occurs in native-speaker speech will depend on a number of factors, such as the informality of the situation, the rate of speaking and of course the individual speech profile (or idiolect) of the speaker (Celce-Murcia, Brinton and Goodwin, 1996, p. 158).

Linking in native-speaker speech may be omitted when pausing, or between certain words in news broadcasts in which pauses occur more frequently than in interactive discourse. However the latter kind of pauses are not necessarily desirable ; Turner derides these as "the special jerky speech adopted by some radio and television speakers who even pause after articles, as though searching for the - exact word" (1973, p. 35). In natural discourse, pauses are deliberately used for specific purposes such as clarity or emphasis. Accordingly the use of pauses and consequent absence of linking requires a degree of effort from the native English speaker. The use of linking is clearly the unmarked usage and thus warrants a focus in the EFL class.

Procedure

Students from an Oral Communication class were asked to record an oral

response to various questions in a tape journal. This idea was adopted from Kenworthy (1987, p. 119), who suggests that homework should include not only reading and writing but also oral work. A tape journal has many advantages ; it maximizes the speaking time of each student, and ensures that dominant students do not necessarily attract more teacher time than those who participate less actively. Tape recordings also facilitate a careful listening by the teacher with a minimum of distractions. The pronunciation can be studied in isolation because the recording is out of the communicative context. If necessary certain sections may be replayed in order to listen more carefully.

However it is important to note the limitations of the use of a tape journal. A tape recording is not representative of natural discourse because, as Allan points out, "it lacks the interaction and spontaneity of a conversation" (1991, p. 65). The interlocutor's response is more distant in both time and space than in conversation. As Allan cautions, the tape journal should serve as a supplement rather than an alternative to more interactive kinds of practice. However, given the limitations of the EFL classroom, in which classes are limited to twice weekly and the ratio of one native-speaking teacher to twenty students, it seemed a relatively effective way of maximizing the time devoted to listening to individual students' pronunciation.

The task set was a short response to one of the various topics raised during the class. Students were asked to submit the tape recording and comments on their pronunciation were recorded by the instructor on the tape that they had submitted, and also in note form for the instructor's records. Students were instructed not to read a prepared speech but rather to respond to the questions spontaneously. However speaking from notes was considered acceptable. Students were made aware that the recordings other than the final one of the oral exam would not be used as a basis of assessment, but were rather a chance for them to refine their pronunciation skills in a non-threatening context. Students submitted their tapes six

times, and a final recording of their English was made during a final oral examination. Comments were recorded in two sections: pronunciation and grammar. Errors were corrected selectively; only those judged to impede communication were corrected. The final recording was of the oral exam, and consisted of an interview that was conducted individually with each student. Students were required to recite a prepared speech for five minutes and then to respond to questions on the topic. The objective was that the combination of individual feedback on the tape and classroom instruction on particular aspects of pronunciation would result in improvements in pronunciation.

Instruction

Students were instructed on areas of pronunciation that the instructor considered that they had probably lacked in the high school curriculum. This consisted of various aspects of stress, including contrastive stress used to highlight a particular piece of information from a wider context, stressed and unstressed syllables in sentences, the pronunciation of the schwa and intonation patterns used to distinguish new and shared information. They were not instructed on areas that the instructor assumed they had already had ample instruction in junior and senior high school, such as the pronunciation of individual words. However errors of this kind were corrected as they were observed in the tape journals. In particular there was an emphasis on the processes involved in linking words. Firstly, students were alerted to the need to connect the final consonant of a word with an initial vowel in a following word. Secondly, students practised linking the final vowel of a word with an initial vowel in a following word. A special focus was made of the /y/ link between a word ending in /iy/, /ey/, /ay/ or /ɔy/ and another word beginning with a vowel, the /w/ between a word ending in /uw/, /ow/ and /aw/ and another word beginning with a vowel (see Celce-Murcia et al. 1996, p. 167, Gilbert, 1984, p. 65-

66, Hancock, 1995, p. 76.) 'Intrusive' /r/ was also included in instruction ; this is the /r/ which is sometimes used to link a final vowel with an initial vowel even when this is not justified by the spelling, such as after 'law' in 'law and order' (Yallop, 1995, p. 56 ; Gimson, 1989, p. 303).

Subject

A single subject was chosen for a detailed analysis in the present study. This student was chosen because of her consistent attendance, her keen attitude towards her study of English and her responsiveness to comments made by the instructor. It was assumed that a particularly highly motivated student would be suitable candidate for this study because this would automatically exclude lack of motivation as a factor for a failure to respond to suggestions made by the instructor.

Results and Discussion

The tapes were transcribed and classified by the instructor, a native English speaker. Three broad categories formed the basis of classification : appropriate linking, failure to use linking, and pauses. Appropriate linking was considered to be the linking of a word-final phoneme with the initial vowel in the following word ; failure to link was the absence of this link. Because native English speakers do not use linking after a pause, pauses were classified separately ; the absence of a link after a pause was not considered failure to link, regardless of whether the pause was considered to be appropriate or not. A pause was indicated if it were sufficiently long to render linking unnecessary. The total sample size for each recording consisted of all possible linkings which appeared in the transcriptions of the recordings.

The results are shown as percentages of appropriate linking, failure to use linking, and pauses (see Table 1 and figures following). Although the second

recording demonstrates a higher frequency of linking than the first, the subsequent recordings 3 to 6 indicate a decrease in the frequency of linking and an increase in the frequency of pauses. This may have been because the student had been taught to use English fillers (such as *um* and *er*) rather than inadvertently using Japanese ones during pauses in conversation, and was consciously using pauses in her speech.
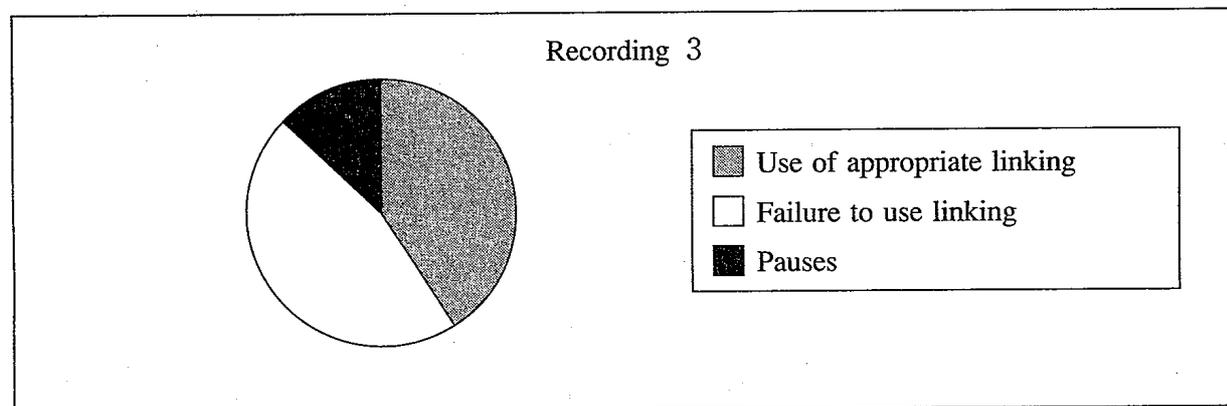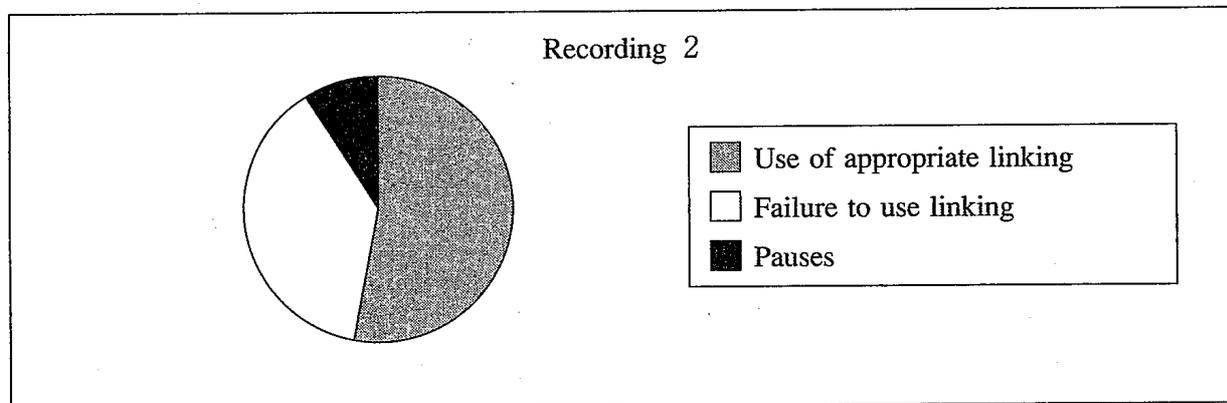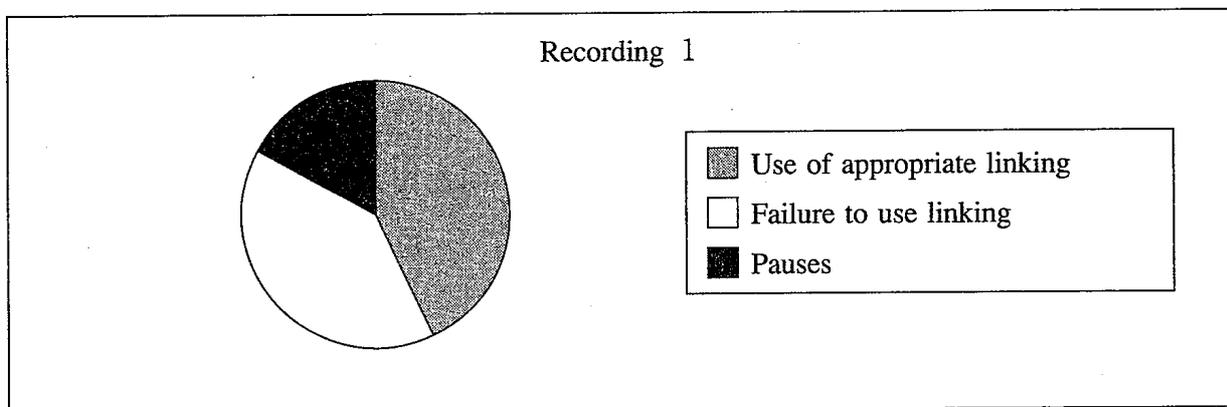
Despite the initial decrease in the frequency of the failure to use linking in the second recording, this was not sustained and remained consistently high throughout recordings 3 to 6. This is probably due to the changing focus of the student's attention over the span of the recordings. After an initial focus on pronunciation in the second recording, she may have moved her focus to the content of her speeches. The student was spontaneously and enthusiastically engaged in relating personal anecdotes in the recordings, and was arguably absorbed in the content of these anecdotes rather than the form. Macdonald, Yule and Powers (1994, p. 76) remind us of the tendency for an aspect of pronunciation to improve during the time of focused instruction but then regress when attention is no longer being directed to that area. Although linking received a regular focus in the course, the student probably had a keener awareness of it when first introduced to the concept. This is suggested by the decrease in linking in recordings 2 to 6, which indicate a gradual decline in focus after an initial heightened awareness.
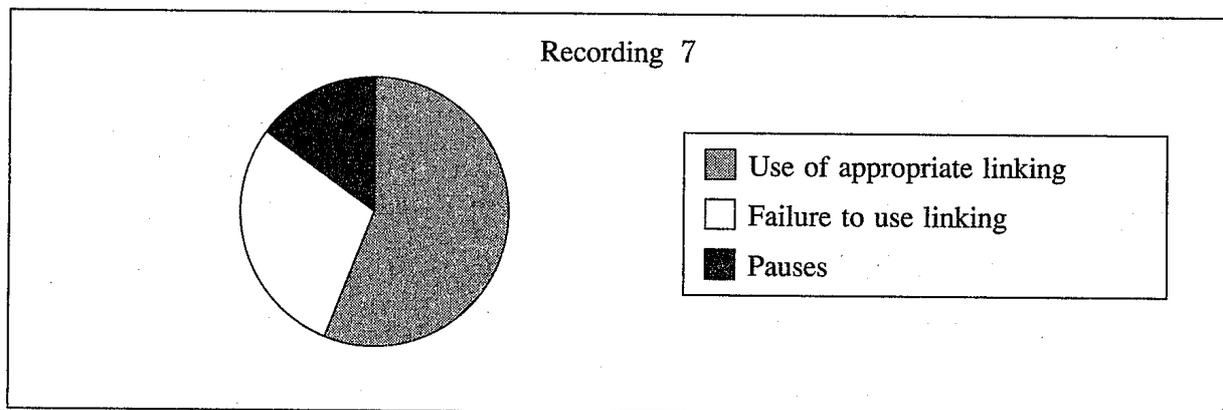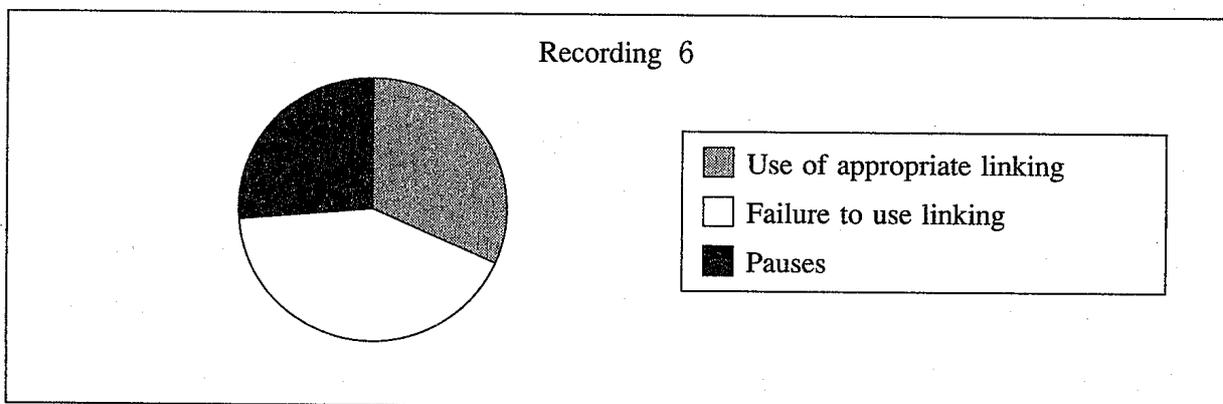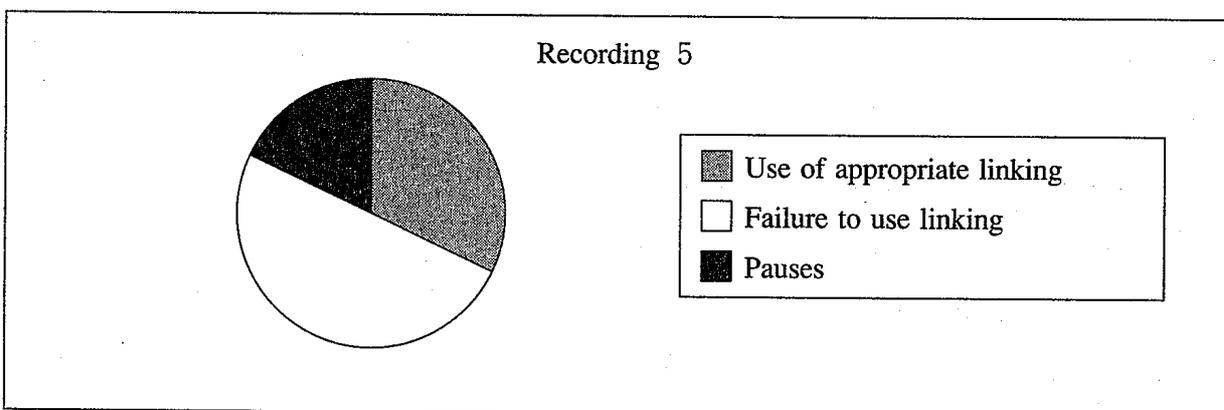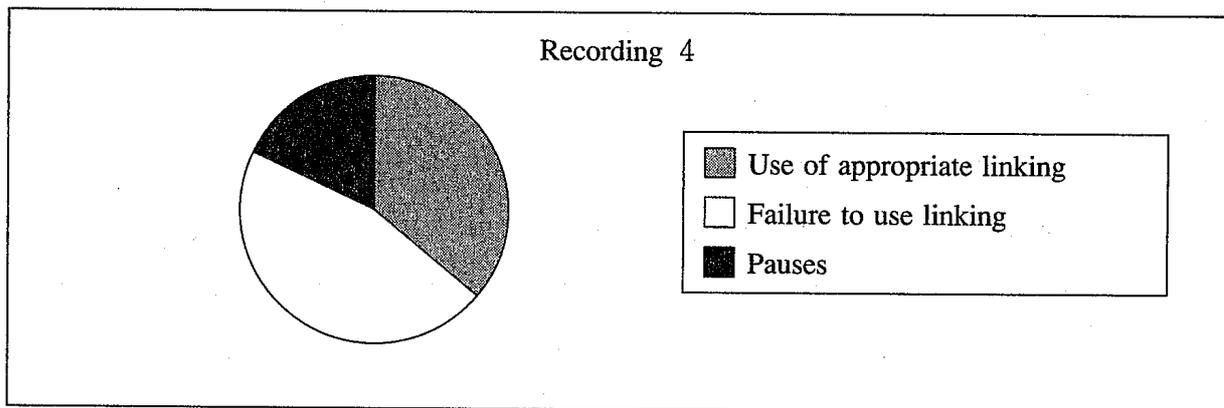
Significantly, the final recording demonstrates the highest frequency of linking. This is probably attributable to the fact that the speech had been drafted, redrafted and memorised, indicating a high level of planning and rehearsal. Hence the student was not purely focusing on content during the delivery of this speech. When the student was free to focus on form after having composed and memorized the speech, there was a clear improvement in the frequency of linking.

The implications from these recordings are no sustained improvement in linking in spontaneous speech, but a distinct improvement in monitored speech. The

Table 1

Recording	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Use of appropriate linking	43%	53%	41%	36%	32%	30%	56%
Failure to use linking	40%	38%	46%	46%	50%	45%	29%
Pauses	17%	9%	13%	18%	18%	25%	15%

Recording 1

Use of appropriate linking
Failure to use linking
Pauses

Recording 2

Use of appropriate linking
Failure to use linking
Pauses

Recording 3

Use of appropriate linking
Failure to use linking
Pauses

Recording 4

Use of appropriate linking

Failure to use linking

Pauses

Recording 5

Use of appropriate linking

Failure to use linking

Pauses

Recording 6

Use of appropriate linking

Failure to use linking

Pauses

Recording 7

Use of appropriate linking

Failure to use linking

Pauses

higher frequency of the appropriate use of linking and lower frequency of a failure to use linking in recording 7 are thus significantly different from those of the recordings of spontaneous speech. This supports Krashen and Terrell's (1983) argument that one can only improve pronunciation in monitored speech.

It could be expected that linking would be more successfully employed with words which commonly occur together, such as "when I" and "and I", because word combinations which appear with a high frequency may be more easily stored in the memory as sets. However this assumption was not borne out by the data. Words which are linked in native-speaker conversation were frequently unlinked in the recordings. They included the following examples: "and I", "like a", "wish I" (Recording 1),"since I", "and I" (Recording 2), "is increasing", "but I", "do if", "that I" (Recording 3), "for our", "puts us", "use of" (Recording 4), "ever eaten", "like it", "and I", "that's all" (Recording 5), "I often", "years old", "that's all" (Recording 6), "was able", "here in", "I am" (Recording 7). Some sets were linked in some cases but not others ; "that's all" was linked in the third recording but not in the fifth or sixth recordings, indicating support for linking slipping when it is not being monitored (see Appendix).

The expectation that words which commonly appeared together would be linked was based on the assumption that extensive aural exposure to these sets would result in them being stored in the memory as sets. The fact that these commonly used sets were frequently not linked suggests that they were not being retrieved from auditory memory but rather from visual memory, or that they had been memorized as discrete units. This suggests that habits acquired from written English formed the basis of the student's spoken English rather than extensive listening.

The most likely explanation for the high frequency of failures to link is that the student had not had enough exposure to spoken English and was simply not ready to focus on extensive output. The student had previously had adequate exposure to

written English but insufficient exposure to spoken English. In order to master linking the student should have been exposed to spoken English much more extensively. A technical explanation of linking was inadequate. The student should have been provided with more modeling of linking in the course of classroom listening, and ideally this should have started many years earlier in her study of English.

Limitations to the study

These results concern only one student, and different students may respond differently to instruction. Furthermore students in the class were focusing on a number of areas of pronunciation other than linking. The results may have been different if linking had been the sole focus of pronunciation instruction.

Implications for the EFL Classroom

The objective of establishing oral competence before written competence in the foreign language classroom, although ideal, is not necessarily feasible. If practical limitations, such as the availability of resources, do not permit the establishment of oral skills before written ones, there are steps that could facilitate the avoidance of errors resulting from a dependence on the written form. English vocabulary should be taught in the context of 'chunks' of words that typically occur together rather than words in isolation, because linking is naturally incorporated into chunks of language. This approach would have the additional advantage of teaching students about collocation rather than relying on them to create their own phrases possibly using transfer from their L 1. The traditional vocabulary list of single words to be memorized out of context should be abandoned.

The use of katakana in the learning of English should be discouraged from the earliest stages, and students should be encouraged to dissociate katakana from the

English forms from which they have been derived. The conventions of katakana inhibit the acquisition of linking because words are conceptualized as individual lexical units. Even though linking could sometimes be represented in katakana this is not the standard practice. Many young students of EFL say,

My name is.......

マイ・ネイム・イズ

mai neimu izu

whereas if linking were taken into consideration, it could be represented as :

マイ・ネイミズ

mai nei mizu

This tendency for katakana representations of English to represent words as discrete units with no reference to modifications which are made to phonemes in the stream of speech is an important argument against its use in the teaching of EFL.

Ideally, rather than trying to address linking once speech habits have been ingrained and students are focusing on an advanced level of communication, linking and collocation should be introduced at the elementary level. Communicative English should be taught from the earliest stages ; linking should be presented via modeling as in the case of first language acquisition. Finally, written skills should be introduced after a foundation of oral and aural proficiency has been established. Rather than having students "unlearn" errors derived from learning written English before spoken English, students should acquire spoken English before written English in the same sequence as native English speakers. This would reduce the wasted effort of acquiring an erroneous pronunciation and then having to replace it

with another form.

Concluding Remarks

This study has confirmed that an increase in the frequency of linking between words can be achieved in monitored speech, but indicates no increase in the frequency of linking in unmonitored speech. Hence this merely confirms Krashen and Terrell's (1983) observation that pronunciation of monitored speech can demonstrate improvements in pronunciation. However, because this study is limited to a single subject, the issue of whether the kind of improvement demonstrated in monitored speech can be sustained in unmonitored speech deserves further investigation.

In order to circumvent the issue of how to improve the pronunciation of unmonitored speech, the teaching of spoken English and thus pronunciation should commence much earlier in the teaching of EFL in Japan. This study suggests that it may be too late to introduce the concept of linking at the stage at which language is being used as a communicative tool. At this stage students are rightly focusing on the most important function of English, which is its function as a means of communication. To introduce linking at this late stage interferes with the communicative process and leads to a loss of confidence by the student. The sequencing of learning spoken language before written language needs to be observed in EFL classrooms in Japan.

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Appendix

The following is the total list of words in which a failure to link was apparent.

Recording One

cheerful and, my answer, topic is, holiday is, and I, like a, wish I, Year's Eve, eaten on, time on, by ourselves, shrine on, I eat

Recording Two

and I, my answer, today is, topic is, since I, I always, feel uneasy, whenever is, thunders and, what animals, colour and, and I, head on, which insects, since I, flying over, cockroaches are, it either, be able, you afraid, that's all

Recording Three

festival in, although I, starting it, I enjoyed, my answer, topic is, crimes are, delinquency is, is increasing, change at, house ever, do if, molested on, if I, but I, that I,

Recording Four

today is, topic is, is opinions, think of, smell of, in addition, for our, puts us, us off, restaurant or, or anywhere, campaign against, smoking in, be allowed, train or, no I, things I, like about, send email, to each, use of, cellphones in, annoys other, wave of, bad influence, think is, most important (× 2), thing in (× 2), family is (× 2), they always, if I

Recording Five

and I, really excited, my answer, today is, topic is, is opinions, my opinion,

opinion of, school life, be honest, like it, and I, people in, and of, light and, school and, students around, goal and, dream in, where I, from elementary, ever eaten, she always, cooked it, but it, whenever I, I ate, parents in, that's all

Recording Six

because I, new album, and I, be able, my answer, today is, topic is, will introduce, father is, years old (× 3), gentle and, get along, I often, him on, mother is, character is, see us, but I, I always, brother is, that's all

Recording Seven

ambassador of, an Australian, proficiency in, with Australian, them in, traditions and, but at, time I, whom I, poor English, were all, get along, poor English, looked it, it up, up in, meaning and, they always, always asked, power of, the English, teachers and, sumo and, physical education, it all, idea of, also able, was able, but after, to improve, with others, can easily, and I, for everyone, international exchange, with other, here in, I am