

What varieties of English pronunciation are Japanese learners learning?

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Japanese learners of English often say that they have learned American English, and high schools use American English textbooks and recordings. This study was carried out to find out which varieties of English influence Japanese learners' pronunciation. Five short news stories were recorded by 65 university students from the Kanto region. Seven features of pronunciation, which are characteristically different in British and American English, were examined for American, British, Australian and Japanese influence. The students answered a questionnaire about their exposure to varieties of English and which one they were aiming at. A majority of students wanted to learn American English pronunciation, but a large minority wanted to learn British English, and a smaller number said they just wanted to be easily understood. The pronunciation of most of the students was judged to be influenced by American English where it was not influenced by Japanese, and the pronunciation of a few students was judged as sounding predominantly British. A small amount of Australian influence was found in the recordings of some of the students.

Key words: vowels, post-vocalic **r**, loanwords, yod-dropping, voiced **t**

Introduction

Pronunciation teaching has been a neglected part of English language teaching since Communicative Methods were introduced in

the 1970s. Pronunciation teaching was central to the Audio-Lingual Method of the 1950s and 60s, but with the introduction of Communicative Teaching, classroom activities that did not simulate real communication, such as pronunciation drilling, were avoided (Morley, 1991). It has been claimed that pronunciation difficulties affect intelligibility more than lexical and grammatical difficulties (Jenkins, 2000). This suggests that pronunciation teaching is of central importance to the teaching of spoken English. Jenkins's publication of "The Phonology of English as an International Language" (2000) has been followed by renewed interest in the teaching of pronunciation (see the TESOL Quarterly, Special Issue, 2005).

Jenkins and other writers (Widdowson, 1994; Crystal, 1997; Honna and Takeshita 1998) argue that American and British English should no longer be used as the only models in the teaching of English as an International Language. They point out that English is now spoken by more second- than first-language speakers, and that it is spoken more between non-native speakers than between native and non-native speakers. This makes the use of British and American English as models irrelevant in many environments. They believe it is unnecessary, and even harmful, for teachers to expect learners to strive for near perfect General American or Received Pronunciation. Jenkins (2000) has drawn up a list of "core phonological features," based on her classroom research, which she claims need to be mastered in order for speakers of different Englishes to be intelligible to each other, and she lists features of English phonology which do not need to be mastered for intelligibility.

According to Widdowson (1994), "ownership" of English has passed out of the hands of North American, British, Australian, and other speakers who speak it as a first language (Kachru's Inner Circle of countries) to all proficient speakers who use it for international communication. Kachru (1985) argues that varieties of English which are spoken in countries such as Singapore, India and the

Philippines (his Outer Circle of countries) where English is one among other official languages, should be recognized as equal in status to varieties such as British and American English. Honna and Takeshita (1998) write that Japanese English should also be recognized as a variety of English. Japan is one of the countries in Kachru's Expanding Circle where English is not an official language, but where it is widely learned as a foreign language. Kachru himself does not advocate using Englishes from the Expanding Circle as models for learners. Honna and Takeshita (1998) argue for features of Japanese English to be respected rather than corrected.

This study was carried out to find out which varieties of English the subjects wanted to learn and which varieties actually influenced their pronunciation.

The following abbreviations will be used for American, British, Australian, and Japanese English: AmE, BrE, AusE and JE. The terms BrE and AmE are preferred over the terms Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American (GA) when referring to learners' pronunciation.

Method

Overview

The experiment consisted of two main parts:

1. Questionnaires and interviews about students' exposure and attitudes to varieties of English.
2. Recordings to study the influence of varieties of English on the students' pronunciation.

Sixty-five students from two universities in the Kanto area were recorded reading five short news stories (see Appendix I). Pronunciation of sounds that are characteristically different in BrE and AmE was examined by three judges trained in phonetics, including the author, to see whether they sounded American, British, Australian or Japanese. The judges also noted how each recording

sounded overall: predominantly Japanese, American, British, Australian, or a mixture.

The students were not told the exact purpose of the study before the recording. They were told only that their pronunciation was being studied. After the recording, they answered a questionnaire about their exposure to native-speaker English in high school, conversation schools, one-to-one interaction, and recorded materials (see Appendix II). They were interviewed about their answers to the questionnaire and about their knowledge of and attitudes to varieties of English. The interviews were recorded.

Subjects

The subjects were students at two universities. Seventeen were studying at Kanagawa University and 48 at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS). Sixty of the 65 students were majoring in English, two in Spanish, one in German, and two in Law. They were recruited using handouts. In return for their participation, they were offered a small payment, an audiotape of their recording, and written feedback on their pronunciation.

They were divided into five groups, one consisting of the students from Kanagawa University, and the other four, of the students from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (see Table 1).

Table 1 Groups of Subjects and Stays in English-Speaking Countries

Group	n	Length of stay	Age during stay
Kanagawa U.	17	≥ 2 months	
Non-returnees	21	≥ 1 month	
Exchange	5	1 year	15-18
M. A.	9	0-5.5 years	18+
Returnees	13	1-6 years	3-13

Thirteen of the students from Kanagawa University were majoring

in English, two in Spanish, and two in Law.

The first TUFs group shown in Table 1 were 13 first-year and 8 third-year English majors who had spent little or no time abroad. They are called “non-returnees” in this study.

Five TUFs students had spent a year as exchange students, four in the US and one in Australia, staying with local families and going to local high schools. Four had stayed in the US and one in Australia. Four were first-year English majors, and one was an M.A. student in Interpreting aged 23. He was grouped with the exchange students because none of the other M.A. students had spent time in an English-speaking country before the end of high school. The average age of the exchange students at midpoint of stay was 17 years 4 months.

There were nine students in the M.A. group, eight studying Interpreting and one studying Phonetics. Two were in their mid 20s, three in their late 20s, and four in their late 40s and early 50s. Two had not stayed in English-speaking countries. The other seven had had a variety of short and long stays in the US, Canada, Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The average total length of stay in English-speaking countries was 2.5 years.

Thirteen TUFs students had lived with their families in English-speaking countries between the ages of 3 and 13, and had gone to local schools. They are called *kikokushijo* in Japanese, or “returnees” in English. The average length of stay was 3 years. The average age at midpoint of stay was 7 years and 10 months. Twelve students had lived in the United States and one in Britain. Twelve of the 13 returnees were majoring in English and one in German.

Native-speaker controls

Three speakers from the US, one from New Zealand, and one from Britain were recorded reading the five news stories.

Judges

Individual sounds and overall impression were judged by three

judges trained in phonetics: the author, a speaker of RP, a speaker of GA, and a Japanese national who is bilingual in Japanese and English and who lived in the US and Australia as a child and in Britain as a graduate student.

Questionnaires

There were two questionnaires:

1. A one-page questionnaire about stays abroad and languages learned.
2. A two-page questionnaire about types and amount of exposure to English during junior high and high school, which varieties of English they were exposed to, and which variety of English they wanted to learn (see Appendix II).

They were given the second questionnaire after the recording in order not to alert them to the exact purpose of the experiment.

Interviews

The students were asked general conversation questions aimed to illicit some of the sounds in the readings, they were asked to expand on their answers to the questionnaires, and they were asked why they had chosen a particular variety as a target. Some of the students were asked to give examples of different pronunciations in AmE, BrE and AusE to find out how much they knew about pronunciation differences. The question about pronunciation differences was introduced after the start of the experiment, so not all the students were asked.

Materials recorded

The materials consisted of five news stories from newspapers and the Internet (see Appendix I). They were chosen and edited to include sounds which are different in BrE and AmE. The stories totaled 312 words and took a total of about 2.5 minutes to read. The students were given the stories a week or two before the recording

and were asked to prepare the reading. They were recorded in a soundproof studio.

Sounds examined

J. C. Wells (1982) has developed a set of key words to represent vowel phonemes across varieties of English. Following his practice, the words are capitalized here. The following features in the recordings were examined for possible AmE, BrE, AusE and Japanese influence:

1. Post-vocalic **r** (pvr).
2. Voiced **t**. This includes tapped **t** within words and across word boundaries (for example in “better” and “got a”), and voiced **t** after /n/ in words such as “twenty.” In RP, **t** is voiceless in these environments.
3. Yod-dropping, which is the dropping of [j] between alveolar consonants and /u:/. The words in the news stories were, “tune,” “introduce,” “student,” and “new.” In RP, [j] is not dropped in these environments.
4. The LOT, THOUGHT, and BATH vowels.
5. AusE influence was looked for in the NURSE, NEAR and PRICE vowels.

The author marked the features listed in 1. to 4. as sounding mainly American, British, or Japanese on scripts of each student’s recording. There was a total of 102 possible instances of the features in each recording. Australian-sounding vowels were marked, and the judges were asked to listen for any other Australian influence. The judgments were checked by the two other judges and revised. The number of sounds, 102 x 65 subjects, made it impractical to have all three judges make the judgments from scratch.

The impressions of the judges as to whether the recordings sounded predominantly American, British, Australian or Japanese were compared with the students’ choices of target.

Results

Questionnaires and Interviews

Exposure to native-speaker English

The questionnaire (see Appendix II) had questions about exposure to ALTs, teachers in conversation schools, one-to-one interaction with English native speakers, and exposure to recorded teaching materials.

Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in high schools.

The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme has placed young graduates from outside Japan as Assistant Language Teachers in high schools since 1987. Their numbers peaked at over 6,000 in the year 2000. Most have been from the US and Canada, followed by the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). In 1989, a course called Oral Communication was introduced into the English curriculum in senior high schools. These are taught by Japanese English teachers and ALTs.

The students' answers to the questionnaire showed that in junior high school they were taught mostly by ALTs from North America, but they also reported being taught by a large minority of ALTs from the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Their answers for junior high school (64% North American) were close to the actual proportion of North American ALTs in Japan around the time they were in junior high school (62% in 2001). Their answers for senior high school show a smaller proportion of North American ALTs (49%) than the actual proportion in Japan at that time (67% in 2004). The first-year students in this study graduated from high school in 2006.

Five of the M.A. students, aged 29 to 51, had never been taught by ALTs. Six students were not taught by ALTs in junior high school, including the five M.A. students, and 16, including the five M.A. students, were not taught by ALTs in senior high school. On average the students were taught by ALTs less than once a week.

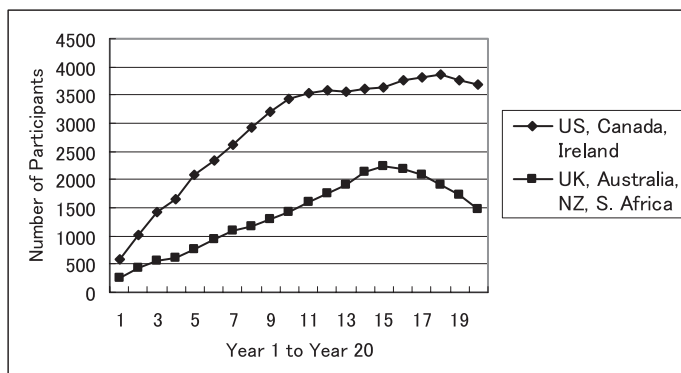


Figure 1 JET Programme participants from rhotic and non-rhotic English-speaking countries, 1987–2006.

Actual numbers of JET Programme participants from the US, Canada, Britain, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006), are shown in Figure 1, divided into two groups according to whether the English spoken in the countries is mainly rhotic (with pvr) or non-rhotic (without pvr). Post-vocalic r is considered to be the most important distinguishing feature of North American English (Wells, 1982; Ladefoged, 2001). Although a majority of participants were from North America, a large minority were from countries where non-rhotic English is spoken. In 2001, there were 3,629 ALTs from countries where rhotic English is spoken, and 2,226 from the countries where non-rhotic English is spoken.

Figure 2 shows JET participants from non-rhotic English-speaking countries divided between the UK and Southern Hemisphere countries. Wells describes the Southern Hemisphere Englishes as being similar to each other (1982, p. 592). The majority of the non-rhotic English-speaking participants were from the UK, but a large minority were from the Southern Hemisphere.

The students' responses to the questionnaire about origin of ALTs were approximately consistent with Ministry of Foreign Affairs data for country of origin of ALTs (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). The

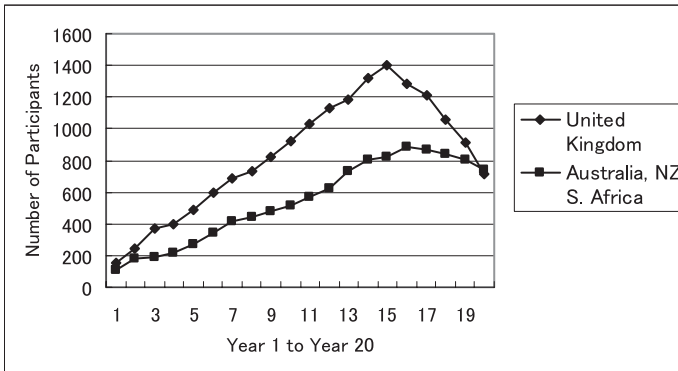


Figure 2 JET Programme participants from the UK and Southern Hemisphere countries, 1987–2006

data show that most high school students' exposure to ALTs until 2006 was to speakers of AmE, but that a large minority of ALTs were not North Americans. Of the non-Americans, the majority were from the UK, but a large minority were from Southern Hemisphere English-speaking countries.

Conversation schools.

Nearly half the students (29) reported learning English at conversation schools. There were slightly more reports of being taught by British and Australian teachers, when counted together, than by North Americans. It is possible that the proportion of Australian and British teachers is higher in conversation schools than on the JET Programme. Japan has working holiday programs with Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, but not with the US (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2007). The programs make it easier for nationals from these countries to work in conversation schools in Japan. At the time that the Nova conversation schools went bankrupt, a newspaper reported that 900 British nationals, “a similar number from Australia and about 1,300 from the US” had lost their jobs with Nova (Lewis, 2007).

One-to-one interaction with native speakers

The answers showed that the students had spoken more with North Americans than with other native speakers (55%). However, when answers for interaction with Britons and Australians are counted together (45%), they were not much lower than for interaction with Americans.

Use of recorded materials.

Seventy-four percent of the students reported that recorded materials were used “sometimes” or “a lot” in their high schools and that the materials were American. Nineteen percent, answered “don’t know,” and 7% answered that the recordings were Japanese or British. Listening tests have been used in entrance examinations for some private high schools and universities since the 1990s. A listening test was introduced as part of the National Center Test for University Admissions in 2006. High schools used mostly recorded AmE materials to prepare students for listening tests at least until 2006.

Nearly all the students (50) used recorded materials for self-study. Five reported using BrE materials; the others reported using AmE materials.

Variety most listened to.

The students were asked to consider which variety of English they had been most exposed to, whether recorded or in person. Overwhelmingly they answered AmE. Some students answered with two varieties. These were counted as 0.5 each. The results were 85% for AmE, 13% for BrE, and 2% for AusE. The three students who answered AusE also answered AmE.

Exposure to native-speaker English: a summary.

The students reported that exposure to native speakers was highest for North Americans but that a large minority were British and a

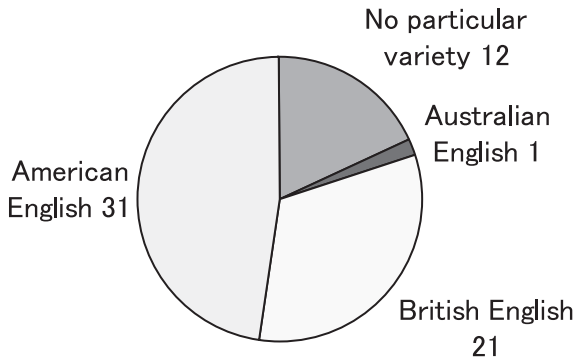


Figure 3 Varieties chosen as targets

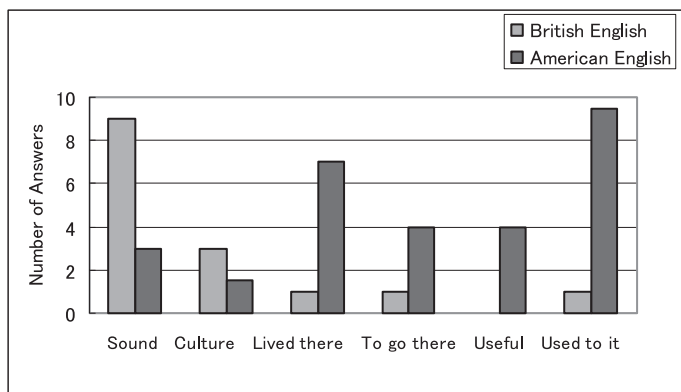
slightly smaller number were Australians or New Zealanders. They reported that the recorded materials they heard in class and used for self-study were overwhelmingly North American. They considered that their total exposure to native-speaker English, both in person and recorded, was overwhelmingly North American. Listening skill is tested in entrance examinations but speaking skill is not. It seems from the students' answers that time spent with recorded materials was longer and probably more important to them than the time spent interacting with native speakers.

Pronunciation teaching in high schools

Seven students (11%) reported "a lot" of pronunciation teaching in junior high school and seven in senior high school. Scores for the other three answers were similar, but with more answering "a little" (36%) than "never" (25%) and "sometimes" (28%).

Varieties chosen as targets

AmE was chosen by more students than the other varieties, but a large minority said that they wanted to speak BrE (see Figure 3). These results were similar to those obtained by Humpries (1995). Twelve of the students answered that they did not mind which variety of English they spoke, as long as their English was understandable.



Only one student had AusE as her target. She chose it for cultural reasons. She was not one of the students who had Australian influence in their speech and she had not stayed in Australia. Where students chose two targets, each target was counted as 0.5.

Reasons for choosing target varieties

The students were asked to elaborate on their choice of varieties in the interviews. Where they gave two reasons, each reason was counted as 0.5. Three gave no reason, and the answers of two of the students were unclear. Twelve chose “Not any particular” variety or two or more varieties, and one chose AusE. Four students who considered themselves to be mainly speakers of AmE were interested in learning BrE only in order to learn the differences between AmE and BrE. They were not thinking of changing their own speech. The answers for the remaining 44 students are shown in Figure 4.

More students were attracted to the sound of BrE than were attracted to the sound of AmE. Words used to describe BrE were, “beautiful,” “clear,” “prestigious,” “sophisticated,” and “easier to understand.” AmE was described as “beautiful” and “easy to understand.” Another reason for choosing AmE was that it was “more useful” or “more widely used” for international communication. None

of the students described BrE as “useful.”

Some students who chose “Not any particular” variety believed that accents were not important if their speech was clear. Two students seemed to be familiar with ideas about English as an International Language as developed by writers such as Jennifer Jenkins. One described English as a “lingua franca,” and one pointed out that even though his accent was mixed - he had Japanese, American, and traces of Australian pronunciation - he had never been misunderstood.

Consciousness of differences between AmE, BrE and AusE

Thirty-one students were asked what they knew about differences in pronunciation between AmE and BrE, and some were asked about AusE. Twenty-three reported differences (see Table 2). The others said they did not know any differences. The largest number of students reported pvr as a feature of GA. The “can’t” difference is shown separately from the BATH vowel because a number of students only gave the pronunciation of “can’t” as a difference but did not know what the difference was. This seems to be a stereotyped answer to the question about differences between British and American pronunciation.

Table 2 Differences between RP and GA Reported by the Students

Features	Number of students
pvr	12
BATH vowel	5
“can’t”	7
LOT vowel	5
Tapped t	3
Yod-dropping	1

Several students were asked what features of AusE pronunciation they knew about. Some who had been to Australia mentioned the

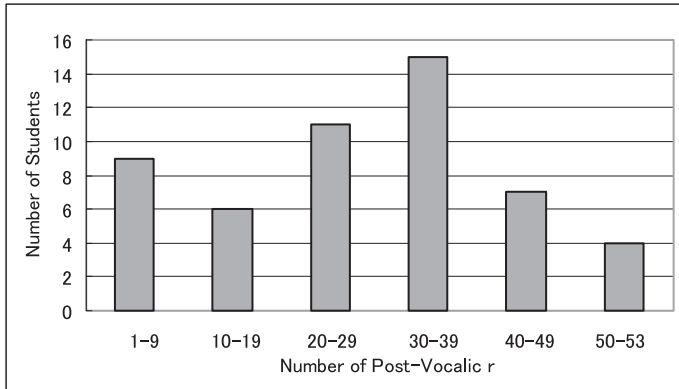


Figure 5 Pronunciation of post-vocalic r by students who were not returnees

General Australian [ʌ] pronunciation of the PRICE vowel in “G’day mate.” The student who had the most AusE/NZ influence in her speech, but who was aiming at BrE, mentioned the Australian FLEECE vowel [i:].

The Recordings

Judgment of sounds

Post-vocalic r (pvr) in the recordings

According to Ladefoged (2001) and other writers, “The most noticeable difference among accents of English is in whether they have r-colored vowels or not” (p.78). Transcription into *katakana* of English words is based mostly on RP. Post-vocalic r is not transcribed into *katakana*, although it is transcribed into *katakana* in loanwords from other languages.

The three American speakers who recorded the news stories pronounced 52, 52 and 53 pvr. Ten of the 12 returnees from the US pronounced between 51 and 53 pvr. The other two pronounced 44 and 48. The returnee from Britain did not pronounce pvr. The average number of pvr pronounced by returnees from the US was 51.

The average number in the recordings of all the other students was 27.6. Nine students had under 10 pvr (see Figure 5). Four of them were aiming at BrE and sounded mainly British. The other five were not aiming at BrE and sounded Japanese. Six students pronounced between 10 and 19 pvr. Five sounded Japanese and one exchange student who had only 12 pvr, sounded partly Japanese and partly American.

The five exchange students pronounced an average of 33.4 pvr. Four had spent a school year in the US and one in Australia. She pronounced 45 pvr and was judged to sound American by two of the judges and Australian by the third. The M.A. students pronounced an average of 22.5 pvr, the fewest of any group. They had more of a mix of AmE, BrE, AusE and JE influence than the other groups. The average age of the M.A. students was 36 years 3 month while the average age of the other students was 20. The TUFs non-returnee group pronounced 29.5 pvr, and the Kanagawa University group pronounced 26.5.

In GA, r-coloring starts during the vowel preceding the /r/, except for /ə/ and /ɜ:/, where it is present throughout the nucleus of the syllable (Ladefoged, 2001:78). However, many students pronounced the vowel before the pvr with no r-coloring, and then had a quick transition to a short /r/. This pronunciation may be spelling influenced (personal communication, H. Saito). The students' pronunciation of /ɜ:/ sometimes sounded like British /ɜ:/ followed by /r/ or like Japanese [a] followed by /r/.

There was some "hyper-rhoticism" (Wells, 1982), which is pronunciation of pvr in words such as "was" [wəz] and "China" [ʃamə] where there is no **r** in the spelling. There was an average of 1.45 hyper-rhoticisms per student, excluding the returnees, with a range of 0 to 7.

Voiced t

Wells uses the term “voiced **t**” (1982) to cover both “tapped **t**” and voicing of /t/ after /n/. The three American native speaker controls had 12, 12 and 14 voiced **t**. Students with high rates of pvr had high rates of voiced **t**, and those with low rates of pvr had low rates of voiced **t**. Students with under 10 pvr out of 52 averaged just over one voiced **t** while those with more than 40 pvr averaged just under nine voiced **t**.

Frequent words such as “twenty” and “winter” were more frequently pronounced with voiced **t** than less frequent words such as “mentally” and “prevented.” This is also true for native speakers of AmE who tend to pronounce a voiceless /t/ after /n/ in less frequent words, particularly in formal or slow speech.

Yod-dropping

Yod-dropping is the absence of the “y” sound [j] before /u:/, mainly after alveolar consonants including /t/, /d/ and /n/. It is a feature of the speech of most speakers of GA (Wells, 1982), but not of RP. The words in the recordings generally pronounced with yod-dropping in GA were: “tune” 4, “introduce” 1, “student” 1 and “new” 2.

In BrE and AusE “tune,” “introduce,” and “student,” the “tu” and “du” are pronounced /tju:/ and /dju:/, or /ʃu:/and/ɕu:/. Japanese phonology does not allow a [j] between [t] or [d] and [u], and there is no [tju] or [dju] in loanwords. In Japanese, [u] can be preceded by [ʃ] or [ɕ] and [ɸ] or [ɕ], so the initial consonants [ʃ] and [ɕ] in the loanwords “tune-up,” “tuning,” and “deuce” sound similar to the initial consonants in RP and AusE. The Japanese [u] is more central (Vance, 1987) than the GA GOOSE vowel, but similar to the General Australian or younger Southern BrE GOOSE vowel, so the Japanese vowel can pass as BrE or AusE. Pronunciations

of “tune” which passed as AmE, BrE and AusE were /tu:n/ for GA, and /tju:n/ or /ʃu:n/ for BrE and AusE. Some of the pronunciations which sounded wrong were /tsu:n/, and vowels which sounded fully front and round: [y]. No reason could be deduced for this pronunciation. A number of students confused “tune” with “turn.”

The results for “tune” are reported separately from “introduce” and “student” because the students had a large number of errors with “tune” but no apparent errors with “introduce” and “student” which sounded either like AmE or BrE/AusE.

Table 3 Pronunciation of Four Instances of “Tune”

	AmE	BrE	Errors
Kanagawa U.	12 (18%)	42 (62%)	14 (21%)
Non-returnees	30 (36%)	31 (37%)	23 (27%)
M.A.	3 (8%)	25 (69%)	8 (22%)
Exchange	3 (15%)	15 (75%)	2 (10%)
Returnees	21 (40%)	28 (54%)	3 (6%)
Total	69 (27%)	141 (54%)	50 (19%)

Table 3 shows that there were twice as many BrE/AusE-sounding pronunciations as AmE, probably because of the influence of

Table 4 Yod-Dropping in “introduce” and “student”

	Yod-dropping		No yod-dropping
	“introduce”	“student”	
Kanagawa U.	4	2	28
Non-returnees	6	7	29
M.A.	1	0	17
Exchange	1	0	9
Returnees	6	8	12
Total	18 (14%)	12 (12%)	96 (74%)

Japanese phonology, and probably also because of a lack of awareness of the GA feature of yod-dropping. Even the returnees had more BrE-sounding pronunciations than AmE-sounding pronunciations.

The proportion of yod-dropping in “introduce” and “student” was about the same as for “tune” at 26% (see Table 3). There were only BrE-sounding and AmE-sounding pronunciations and no wrong-sounding pronunciations.

The word “new” appeared twice in the recordings. It was pronounced in the BrE/AusE way /nju:/ 125 out of 130 times, and with the AmE pronunciation /nu:/ only 5 times (4%). Wells (2000) found an 86% preference in the US for yod-dropping in “new.” The pronunciation of “new” as a loanword is /nju:/. However, Japanese phonology also permits [nu:], for example in the Japanese word [nu:] “sew,” and the loanword “nude” is pronounced [nu:d]. “New” is a frequently used loanword. Among the 26 pronunciations by the 13 returnees, there were only four /nu:/ pronunciations by three of them. It is likely that most of the returnees pronounced “new” as /nu:/ when they lived in the US, and that the influence of the JE version, high school teachers or peers caused them to change their pronunciation by the time they reached university.

Overall, there was little consistency in the use of yod-dropping. Only six of the 65 students used it at least four out of eight times. Use or non-use of yod-dropping seems to have been unrelated to the students’ target variety or the overall impression of their speech: some aiming at or sounding British used yod-dropping, but most aiming at AmE did not.

The THOUGHT and LOT vowels

These vowels are transcribed into *katakana* using the Japanese long [o] for the THOUGHT vowel and short [o] for the LOT vowel. The quality of the Japanese vowel is very close to the British THOUGHT vowel /ɔ:/ - mid back rounded. In GA, the THOUGHT and LOT vowels are both pronounced /ɑ/ - open back unrounded. In

North America, however, there is considerable regional and allophonic variation in the pronunciation of the two vowels (Wells, 1982), with some variants being close to the British vowels.

The British THOUGHT vowel /ɔ:/ is easy for Japanese learners to pronounce because of the close equivalent in Japanese. Some English-Japanese dictionaries only give the RP transcription, /ɔ:/ (Kenkyusha, 2006) while others give the RP followed by the GA pronunciations (Konishi & Minami, 2006). None of the subjects gave the THOUGHT vowel as an example of a different pronunciation in GA and RP (see Table 2). There were five words in the recordings with the THOUGHT vowel: “thought,” “all,” “call,” “walking,” and “walks.” There were 15 with the LOT vowel: “opera,” “not,” “got,” “job,” “cough,” “longer,” “stronger,” and “dog.”

Table 5 shows the average numbers of American and British pronunciations of the five words with THOUGHT vowels. Pronunciations not like BrE/AusE or AmE were judged to be errors.

Table 5 Group Means of the Five Pronunciations of the THOUGHT Vowel

	AmE	BrE	Errors
Kanagawa U.	1.29	2.88	.83
Non-returnees	.90	3.38	.72
Exchange	2.60	2.20	.20
M.A.	.67	3.66	.67
Returnees	4.00	.92	.08

The exchange students and the returnees pronounced more American THOUGHT vowels, but the other three groups had more than twice as many British-sounding as American-sounding pronunciations.

Seven students pronounced “thought” with the diphthong /oʊ/, probably influenced by the spelling. The two “walk” words

(“walking” and “walks”) involved a number of problems including spelling pronunciation, confusion between the BrE, AmE, and JE pronunciation, and hypercorrection with *pvr* (Maeda & Saito, 2007).

The RP LOT vowel does not have a close equivalent in Japanese, but Japanese [o] is closer to RP /ɒ/ than to GA /ɑ/. Both the Japanese and the British vowels are mid back rounded, while GA /ɑ/ is open back unrounded. One or two subjects said that GA /ɑ/ is difficult for Japanese learners to pronounce. It may just be that the “o” spelling of many LOT words makes the vowel difficult to associate with a sound which is nearer to Japanese [a] than to Japanese [o].

Table 6 Means of Pronunciations the Fifteen LOT Vowels

	AmE	BrE	Other
Kanagawa U.	2.88	8.94	3.18
Non-returnees	5.65	8.00	1.35
Exchange	7.80	7.20	0.00
M.A.	4.22	8.44	2.34
Returnees	11.17	3.08	0.75

The TUFs non-returnees had more AmE vowels for “not/got” and “cough” but more BrE-sounding vowels for “job.” They may have heard “not/got” frequently enough in AmE recordings to associate the “o” with the GA vowel, and they may have checked the pronunciation of “cough” because of the confusing spelling. The frequent use of “job” as a loanword probably influenced their pronunciation.

Of the 52 students who were not returnees, only eight students had more than half AmE pronunciations for THOUGHT vowels, and ten had more than half for LOT vowels.

Words with the BATH vowel

Words with this vowel were “dance” (7), “half” (2), and “fast” (1). In GA, this vowel is /æ/, and in RP /ɑ:/. In both varieties, the vowel is

relatively long. The *katakana* pronunciation of “dance” has a short [a], and the *katakana* pronunciation of “half” and “fast,” have long [a]. The quality of the Japanese vowel is between /æ/ and /ɑ:/.

There were three frequent characteristics of the students’ pronunciation of “dance”:

- 1) The vowel was short.
- 2) It ranged in quality from a British-sounding open back [ɑ] through Japanese open-mid [a] to American closer front [æ].
- 3) Within a single student’s reading of one text, “dance” commonly had three different pronunciations, giving an impression that the students were confused about how to pronounce the vowel.

The word “dance” appeared seven times in the first news story. Nine returnees from the US were judged to have pronounced all AmE /æ/. Two returnees had three vowels which sounded Japanese, and two had one RP-sounding /ɑ:/. The returnee from Britain had two RP-sounding /ɑ:/ and five vowels which sounded like Japanese short [a]. This vowel is similar in length and quality to the vowel in northern England where she lived.

“Half” and “fast” were in the fourth news story. “Fast” and “first” are written in the same way in *katakana*, with a long [a]. Some students confused “fast” with RP “first” or GA “first,” and some pronounced “fast” with RP /ɑ:/ followed by pvr, [fa:rst]. Although the loanwords “dance” and “half/fast” have short and long vowels respectively, the length in the loanwords did not seem to influence the length of the students’ vowels.

Summary of sounds which are different in RP and GA

The students, excluding the returnees, on average pronounced more than half of the pvr, but the pvr were short and the preceding vowel was not r-colored. Students who pronounced more pvr pronounced more voiced **t**, so it is likely that pvr and voiced **t** are salient to the students. American THOUGHT and LOT vowels were

probably not salient or were more influenced by Japanese pronunciation, and the same seemed to be true for yod-dropping. Finally, there was considerable confusion with the BATH vowel.

Australian English

Six subjects had possible AusE influence in their speech. All had either stayed for at least a few weeks in Australia, or had one-to-one contact with Australians or New Zealanders, or had had Australian or New Zealand ALTs in high school. Only one student had AusE pronunciation as her target. She was enthusiastic about Australian culture but she had no AusE in her pronunciation. A student who had not been to Australia, but who had had teachers from Australia and New Zealand, showed the most AusE/NZ influence in her pronunciation. Two judges judged her English to be mainly influenced by BrE and secondarily, AusE. The other judge at first considered the main influence to be BrE and then changed the judgment to AusE. The student’s target was BrE. The words in Table 7 which were pronounced only by this student with AusE vowels were “commercial,” “may,” “make,” “need” and “been.”

Table 7 Australian-Sounding Pronunciations

Lexical sets	Words in the recordings
NURSE	version (2), service (2), worst (2), commercial (1)
PRICE	guide (5), exercise (1), I (1)
FACE	able (3), may (1), make (1)
FLEECE	need (1), been (1)
NEAR	atmospheres (2)

Note: The numbers in parentheses refer to the number of subjects who pronounced the words with Australian-sounding pronunciation.

The following description of the vowels which sounded Australian is based on Wells (1982).

NURSE: “version, service, worst.” The AusE vowel in the first syllable [ə:] is closer than the BrE vowel /ɜ:/, with some lip-rounding.

FACE: “able.” General Australian [ʌɪb]. One student pronounced the General Australian vowel first, and then corrected herself to /eɪb/.

PRICE: “guide, I.” The first part of the diphthong was higher and further back than in RP or GA. It is transcribed [aɪ] for the General Australian diphthong or [ɔɪ] for the Broad Australian diphthong.

FLEECE “need” and “been” were diphthongal, starting with a more central vowel: [iɪ].

NEAR: In General Australian, the last vowel in “atmospheres” is a long monophthong. The last vowel was close: [fi:z] or between [ɪ:] and [i:].

Overall impressions of recordings

Of the 21 students who said they were aiming at BrE, five were judged to sound mainly British, including a returnee. She had lived in England for one year from age 12 to age 13. One student had attended a British conversation school in Japan for five years and had stayed in England for one month. Another had studied in Britain for one year as a graduate student in Phonetics. One student had not been abroad but said she wanted to speak “perfect” BrE. She had listened to British recorded materials both at home and in high school. The fifth student was an M.A. Interpreting student who had had short stays in Britain and had interpreted for British clients.

Of the 12 students who answered that they were not aiming at any particular variety, six sounded predominantly American, four predominantly Japanese, and 2 had mixed pronunciation (JE, AmE and BrE).

Nearly all the students either sounded mainly Japanese or mainly American. Few of those who said they wanted to speak BrE actually

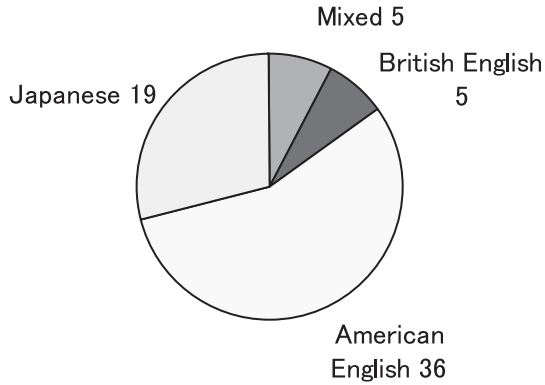


Figure 6 Impressions of influence on students' English.

sounded mainly British.

Discussion

Which variety of English are Japanese learners learning and which variety of English should they be taught? Most students want to learn AmE, some want to learn BrE, and some only have intelligibility as their aim. Wells writes that an important consideration for the language teacher is “the student’s aims and aspirations in language learning.” Some students only want to learn English at a basic level. “Others aim to achieve the best they possibly can,” and some fall somewhere between (2005). He argues that students who are aiming at a target can do so without being discouraged by the reality that they are almost certain never to reach it.

Students’ motivation for learning pronunciation is underestimated. Many learners welcome pronunciation teaching as fresh. High school education has concentrated on the skills necessary for entrance examinations which do not include speaking skill. Unlike the teaching of vocabulary, grammar or reading, pronunciation teaching is a new experience for many students. Some will only need teaching of pronunciation points when they cause problems with intelligibility.

Others are aiming at AmE, but many are interested in BrE.

For students who are aiming only at intelligibility, Japanese pronunciations, for example of the word “dance,” do not need to be corrected. If necessary, confusion about how the vowel is pronounced can be dealt with by teaching on a receptive level about the AmE and BrE vowels and comparing them with the Japanese vowel. However, word pairs like “fast/first” and “work/walk” involve at least three competing pronunciations, AmE, BrE, and loanword pronunciation, and the confusion of these sounds causes problems with intelligibility. Pronunciation of these words needs to be taught on a productive level. In the author’s experience, Japanese learners find the American vowel in “first” and “work” easier to pronounce than the British vowel, so teaching the American sound may be the best solution. Jennifer Jenkins’s proposal to teach whichever sound is easiest, regardless of variety, is a good solution for students who are only interested in being intelligible. The American pronunciation of “work” and “first” could be taught and the THOUGHT vowel can be left as British/Japanese.

Teaching about more than one variety is essential for the development of listening skill. Lack of awareness of voiced **t**, for example, can cause problems with listening comprehension as can the GA pronunciation of the THOUGHT vowel.

TESOL theorists are arguing for the acceptance of a broader range of varieties of English, not limited to the Englishes of Inner Circle countries, as models for learners. Some writers believe that an International English without close associations to the United States or Britain may develop as a result of the global spread of English, or that a culturally neutral variety of English should be promoted. It is unclear how this may be realized or what kind of English it would be. Some students see English as a Lingua Franca and feel that it is not necessary to remove Japanese features from their English. Many students have strong views about which variety of inner Circle English they want to learn.

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Appendix I Five news stories

What sort of dances were they doing in England two hundred years ago? The main dances were the country dance and the reel. The same dance could be done to many different tunes, and one tune could have many different dances set to it. Ten or twenty years later, new versions of the country dance were introduced. In some of them, there were fewer couples, and they danced in a circle.

My name is Ann Martin. I'm an opera singer. When I became an opera singer, I gave up going out because of cigarette smoke. Smoky atmospheres can make me unable to sing for up to a week. When I was a student, I worked in a pub. There was so much smoke that I got a bad cough and left the job.

The worst experience I had was when I flew from China to India. The plane was full of smokers and I got a bad chest infection. I thought I might not be able to continue to sing opera.

Do you ever find that you hear a tune in a commercial and it stays in your head all day? Here's a new service called "What's that tune?" It's a guide to music in TV commercials.

Everyone should do thirty minutes of exercise per day. Half an hour of fast walking makes your heart stronger and helps you to live longer. A stronger heart doesn't need to work so hard to pump blood. Even half an hour of housework or gardening will make your heart stronger.

It may be the Year of the Dog, but man's best friend has seen better days. A bitter winter has left dogs suffering indoors. The snow has prevented dogs from going for walks and they are suffering mentally. The snow this winter is the worst it's been for twenty years.

Appendix II The Questionnaire

English Learning Experience

(You can tick more than one box.)

1. In junior high school, were you taught by native English speakers?
 - never
 - once a term or less
 - several times a term
 - once a week or more
 Were the teachers American/Canadian
 British
 Australian/New Zealand
 Other _____?

2. In high school, were you taught by native English speakers?
 - never
 - once a term or less
 - several times a term
 - once a week or more
 Were the teachers American/Canadian
 British
 Australian/New Zealand
 other _____?

3. In junior high school, did your Japanese English teachers use tapes or CDs?
 - never just a little sometimes a lot
 If YES, were the tapes or CDs American British
 I don't know

4. In high school, did your Japanese English teachers use tapes or CDs?
 - never just a little sometimes a lot
 If YES, were the tapes or CDs American British
 I don't know

