Japan Association of Language Teachers JOURNAL

VOLUME 4

OCTOBER, 1982

Japan Association of Language Teachers JOURNAL

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OCTOBER, 1982

A Monthly Journal of Transactions

THE JALT JOURNAL

Volume 4 October, 1982

JALT JOURNAL

THE JOURNAL OF THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS

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COMMUNICATIVE NEEDS IN FOREIGN LANAUAGE LEARNING*

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The theme of language and the learner's communicative needs is a familiar one in language teaching. In recent years applied linguistics has been revitalized by attempts to describe how language reflects its communicative uses, and by demonstrations of how syllabus design and methodology can respond to the need for communicative uses of language in classrooms and teaching materials. This paper attempts to contribute to our general understanding of how language use reflects underlying communicative needs by considering some central aspects of communication. Five assumptions about the nature of verbal communication will be discussed; that communication is proposition based, conventional, appropriate, interactional and structured. These will be discussed in relation to the communicative needs of second or foreign language learners.

I COMMUNICATION IS PROPOSITION-BASED

Let us begin by examining basic survival language needs; those, for example, of a learner who has an active vocabulary of perhaps two hundred words, a minimal knowledge of the syntax of English, but who is in a situation where English is required for simple basic communicative purposes. The most immediate need of the speaker is to be able to refer to a core of basic "referents" or things in the real world, that is to be able to name things, stages, events, and attributes using the

* A plenary address given at the Japan Association of Language Teachers' Convention, Tokyo, November 21, 1981.

words together to make predictions. This is what I mean by the term *proposition.* A proposition is the linking together of words to form predications about things, people and events. For example the words *book* and *red* constitute a proposition when we understand the meaning of *The book is red.*

Propositions are the building blocks of communication, and the first task in learning to communicate in a language is to learn how to create propositions. Language is comprehensible to the degree that hearers are able to reconstruct propositions from a speaker's utterances. When the child says "hungry" to its mother, the mother understands "I am hungry"; from "no hungry" the mother understands the child's message as being "I don't want to eat." (Wells, 1981) From these examples we see that sentences do not have to be complete or grammatical for their propositional meaning to be understood. We often make good sense of a speaker who uses very broken syntax, just as we can understand a message written in telegraphese; *no money send draft.*

Sentences may contain more than one proposition. *The girl picked the red flower* contains the propositions *the girl picked the flower, the flower is red.* Sentences may contain the same proposition but differ in what they say about it. The following sentences contain the proposition *John married Mary* but differ in what they say about it;

When did John marry Mary?
Why did John and Mary get married?
Mary and John have been married for ages.

"Survival-level" communication in a foreign language however consists of more than the construction of propositions. Speakers use propositions in utterances in a variety of ways. They may wish to ask a question about a proposition, affirm a proposition, deny or negate a proposition, or express an attitude towards a proposition. Now while the adult native speaker of English can use the resources of adult syntax to code propositions in the appropriate grammatical form, the beginning foreign language learner finds that the demands of communication often exceed his or her knowledge of the grammar of English. The learner's immediate priority is

to construct a way of performing such operations as stating, affirming, denying, or questioning propositions, in the most economical way, using a partial knowledge of the vocabulary and syntax of the target language. Here the learner has similar needs to the child learning its mother tongue. Child language is characterized by its ability to express complex propositional meanings within the limits of a restricted grammatical system. Mother talk—that variety of speech which mothers use when talking to young children—is coded to make propositions more readily identifiable (Goody, 1978). Mothers' questions to children, for example, contain far more Yes-No questions than Wh questions, because propositions are more readily identifiable with Yes-No questions.

How do foreign language learners communicate propositional meanings when they lack the fully elaborated grammatical and discourse system of the target language? To answer this question, let us consider how a learner might try to express the meanings contained in the following sentences;

> John ought to have come on time.
> I regret I wasn't able to get to your class on time.
> I can't afford to buy that dress.

One strategy learners adopt in communicating complex meanings is to "bring propositions to the surface" by expressing propositions directly rather than indirectly and by expressing lexically, aspects of meaning that are coded in the auxiliary system, in complex clauses, and by grammatical devices in the target language (Richards, 1981; Dittmar, 1981). The first sentence for example, contains the proposition *John came late* together with the speaker's attitude towards the proposition. The meaning is roughly *Speaker dissapprove that John came late*. This could be communicated by saying;

> Why John late? (said with non-approving intonation), or
> John late. that bad.

The second sentence contains the proposition *I am late*

together with the speaker's expression of regret. It might be communicated by saying;

> I late, So sorry.

I can't afford to buy that dress contains the propositions;

> *The dress is expensive. I don't have enough money to buy the dress.*

It could be restated;

> The dress expensive. Cannot buy.
> Can't buy the dress. No money.

This type of "restructuring" is seen in the following examples in which utterances in simplifiedlearner syntax are compared with standard adult grammar.

L2 utterances	*Equivalent in standard adult syntax*
1. Mary lazy. No work hard.	1. Mary can work hard if she wants to.
2. Tomorrow I give money.	2. You will have your money tomorrow, I promise you.
3. You no money. I lend you.	3. I will lend you some money if you need any.
4. This way. See the map.	4. According to the map, this ought to be the way.
5. One day I go to England.	5. I would like to go to England some day.

Teachers too often resort to this type of language in communicating with speakers of limited language proficiency. The following examples were produced by teachers who are native speakers of English.

1. A teacher is explaining the meaning of *wash*. "In your house you . . . a tub . . . you (gestures) wash."
2. Here is a teacher explaing how to take telephone mes-

sages. "I want to speak other person. He not here. What good thing for say now?"

3. A teacher explaining an interview procedure produced: "Not other student listen. I no want. Necessary you speak. Maybe I say what is your name. The writing not important."
4. And here is a teacher reminding her students to bring their books to class. "The book . . . we have . . . (hold up book) . . . book is necessary for class. Right . . . necessary for school. You have book."

The examples above illustrate a linguistic system which can be used for communicating basic propositional meanings. Such a system is known as *child language* when it is produced by infants learning their mother tongue, *interlanguage* when it is produced by foreign language learners, *teacher talk* when it is used by teachers, and *foreigner talk* when it is produced by native speakers communicating with foreigners. The linguistic system of syntactic, lexical, and semantic organization behind this type of communication is one which uses a basic "notional-functional" core of vocabulary items, a syntax which depends on simple word order rules (such as the formation of negation by placing the negative word in front of the proposition) and in which the communication of meaning is not dependent on grammatical systems of tense or aspect, auxiliaries, function words or plural morphemes, at the initial stages of communication.

The ability to use such a communicative system is crucial in the first stages of foreign language learning. We should consequently be tolerant of grammatical "errors" from learners who are at this stage of the learning process. Learners should not attempt active communication too soon, however. Before the learner is ready to begin speaking a foreign language, he or she should have a vocabulary of at least 200 words and a feel for the basic word order rules of the target language. The learner needs to develop a feel for the system of basic word order (in English, subject predicate sentence order, adverb and adjectival positions, negation, question formation, etc.). When speaking is taught, the initial goal

should be the production of comprehensible utterances through expressing basic propositional meanings.

II COMMUNICATION IS CONVENTIONAL

While much of the learner's efforts in speaking a foreign language center on developing the vocabulary and syntax needed to express propositional meanings, it is native speaker syntax and usage that is ultimately the learner's goal. As language acquisition proceeds, the learner revises his or her ideas about how propositions are expressed in English. The learner's syntax complexifies as knowledge of negation, the auxiliary system, questions, words order, embedding, conjoining, etc. expand. In short, the learner begins to develop grammatical competence.

Both linguists and applied linguists in recent years have emphasized the creative properties of human grammatical systems. Language users were said to possess as part of their grammatical competence, the ability to produce an infinite number of sentences, most of which are novel utterances. The learner's task was said to be the internalization of the rules needed to generate any and all of the possible grammatical sentences of English. The primary focus of language teaching was to create opportunities for these grammatical abilities to develop in language learners.

The fact is, however, that only a fraction of the sentences which could be generated by our grammatical competence are actually ever used in communication. Communication largely consists of the use of sentences in conventional ways. There are strict constraints imposed on the creative-constructive capacities of speakers, and these serve to limit how speakers are entitled to code propositional meanings. In telling the time for example, we can say, *It's two forty*, or *it's twenty to three*, but not *it's three minus twenty, it's ten after two thirty*, or *it's eight fives after 20.* If I want you to post a letter for me I may say, *Please post this letter for me*, or *Would you mind posting this letter for me*, but I am unlikely to say, *I request you to post this letter*, or *It is my desire that this letter be posted by you.* Although these

sentences have been constructed according to the rules of English grammar, they are not conventional ways of using English. Though they are grammatically correct "sentences" they have no status as "utterances" within discourse, since they would never be used by native speakers of English.

This fact considerably complicates the task of foreign language learning. Once learners have progressed to the stage where they are beginning to generate novel utterances, they find that a considerable percentage of their utterances fail to conform to patterns of conventional usage, although they are undoubtedly English sentences. Constraints which require speakers to use only those utterances which are conventional affect both the lexical and grammatical structure of discourse. Constraints on lexical usage manifest themselves in idiosyncracies and irregularities of usage which effect particularly verb, noun, preposition, and article usage, and are usually rationalized as "exceptions" or collocational restrictions in teachers' explanations.

Thus teachers must explain that *a pair of trousers*, refers to one item, but *a pair of shirts* to two, that we can speak of *a toothache* or *a headache* but not *a fingerache*; that someone may be *in church*, but not *in library*. Conventionalized language is seen in many other dimensions of discourse. For example:

(a) *Conversational openers. How are you?* may be used to open a conversation in English, but not *Are you well?* or *Are you in good health?*
(b) *Routine formulae.* Some conventional forms are expressions whose use is limited to particular settings, such as *Check please* said when a bill is requested in a restaurant.
(c) *Ceremonial formulae.* These are conventional phrases used in ritualized interactions, such as *after you*, said as a way of asking someone to go before you when entering a room, and *how nice to see you*, said on encountering a friend after an absence of some time (Yorio, 1980).
(d) *Memorized clauses* (Pawley and Syder, in press). The concept of conventionalized language usage may be applied to a broader class of utterances. These are clauses

which do not appear to be uniquely generated, or created anew each time they are required in discourse, but which are produced and stored as complete units. Pawley and Syder cite the following examples:

Did you have a good trip?
Is everything ok?
Pardon me?
Please sit down.
Call me later.
I see what you mean.

They argue that speakers of a language regularly use thousands of utterances like these. Unlike "novel" utterances, (those which speakers put together from individual lexical items), these are pre-programmed and run off almost automatically in speech production. Researchers in second language acquisition have likewise observed that language learners often use conventional formulae and memorized clauses as crutches which make communication easier. There is often a high frequency of such forms in their speech in the early stages of conversational competence (Schmidt, 1981).

The observation that language is conventional has important implications for language teaching. Firstly, it suggests that there is reason to be skeptical of the suggestion that language cannot be taught, but only "acquired." Many of the conventionalized aspects of language usage are amenable to teaching through various pedagogic formats. Secondly, applied linguistic effort is needed to gather fuller data on such forms, through discourse analysis, and frequency counts, with a view to obtaining information of use to teachers, textbook writers and syllabus designers.

III COMMUNICATION IS APPROPRIATE

Mastery of a foreign language requires more than the use of utterances which express propositional meanings and are conventional forms of expression. The form of utterances must also take into account the relationship between speaker and hearer and the constraints imposed by the setting and

circumstances in which the act of communication is taking place. *What's your name?* is a conventional utterance for example, but it is not an appropriate way of asking the identity of a telephone caller, for which purpose *May I know who is calling?* is considered a more appropriate way of requesting.

Communicative competence includes knowledge of different types of communicative strategies or communicative styles according to the situation, the task, and the roles of the participants. For example if a speaker wanted to get a match from another person in order to light a cigarette, he or she might make use of one of the following utterances, according to the speaker's judgment of its appropriateness:

1. Make a statement about his need: "I need a match."
2. Use an imperative: "Give me a match."
3. Use an embedded imperative: "Could you give me a match?"
4. Use a permission directive: "May I have a match?"
5. Use a question directive: "Do you have a match?"
6. Make a hint: "The matches are all gone I see." (Ervin-Tripp, 1976)

Young children learning their mother tongue soon become skilled at using communicative strategies which they judge to be appropriate to different types of situations. Thus a child who wants something done for her may bargain, beg, name call or threaten violence in talking to other children, reason, beg, or make promises in requesting to parents, or repeat the request several times or beg in talking to grandparents.

The choice of an appropriate strategy for performing a communicative task or speech act is dependent on such factors as the age, sex, familiarity and role of speaker and hearer, which will determine whether a speaker adopts conversational strategies which mark *affiliation*, or *dominance*. In the former case, "got a match" may be considered an appropriate way of requesting a match, and in the latter, "I wonder if I could bother you for a match." (Brown and Levinson, 1978) Foreign language learners typically have less choice available to them for performing speech acts

appropriately. They may use what they think of as a polite or formal style, for all situations, in which case they may be judged as being over-formal, or they may create novel ways of coding particular speech acts, such as the use of *please + imperative* as a way of performing requests, regardless of who the speaker is talking to: For example "Please, you carry this suitcase" said by a non-native speaker to a friend, where "How about carrying this suitcase for me" would be a more appropriate form, or "Please bring me more coffee," said to a waitress, where a more appropriate form would be "Could I have another cup of coffee, please?" (Schmidt, 1981)

Canadian researchers investigated the problem non-native speakers have when they are put in a situation where they feel they lack the means of speaking appropriately, such as when a person who has been taught to use a formal type of French, needs a style of speaking suitable for communication in informal situations. It was hypothesized that speakers would show considerable discomfort in using a casual style of speech and that they would handle this discomfort by downgrading the personality of the interlocutor and by judging that the interlocutor had formed a bad impression of them. It was argued that subjects would have some awareness that they were not speaking in a suitably friendly and casual manner, and would conclude that they really did not like the person they were speaking to anyway. The results of the study supported this prediction. "These findings have certain implications for second language learners who have only mastered basic vocabulary and syntax in their new language but have not developed skills in the domain of linguistic variability. Such people may find social interaction with native-speakers in their new language to be a relatively negative experinece and may become discouraged from pursuing language practice with native speakers" (Segalowitz and Gatbonton, 1977, 86). Language learning texts have only recently begun to focus on the strategies learners need to use to code various types of speech acts appropriately. The emphasis is not simply on teaching functions and their exponents, but on coding functions or speech acts appropriately in different types of communicative situations. Textbooks

thus need to give practice in using particular speech acts with interlocutors of different ages, rank and social status and practice in varying the form of speech acts according to these social variables.

IV COMMUNICATION IS INTERACTIONAL

The use of utterances which are appropriate manifestations of speaker-hearer roles reflects the fact that conversation is often just as much a form of social encounter as it is a way of communicating meanings or ideas. This may be described as the interactional function of conversation. It is the use of language to keep the channels of communication open between conversationists and to establish a suitable atmosphere of rapport. Goffman has argued that "in any action, each actor provides a field of action for the other actors, and the reciprocity thus established allows the participants to exercise their interpersonal skills in formulating the situation, presenting and enacting a self or identity, and using strategies to accomplish other interactional ends" (Cited by Watson, 1974, p. 58). We see the evidence of this at many levels within conversation. In the initial stages of conversation with a stranger for example, conversationists introduce uncontroversial topics into the conversation, such as small talk about the weather, the transport system, etc. These topics are carefully chosen so that there is a strong likelihood of mutual agreement between speaker and hearer. "The raising of safe topics allows the speaker the right to stress his agreement with the hearer, and therefore to satisfy the hearer's desire to be right or to be corroborated in his opinions . . . . The weather is a safe topic for virtually everyone, as is the beauty of gardens, the incompetence of bureaucracies, etc." (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 117) These are examples of what has been called "phatic communion." "Much of what passes for communication is rather the equivalent of a handclasp, or an embrace; it's purpose is sociability" (Bolinger, 1975, p. 524).

The mechanisms of phatic communion include (a) the speaker's repertoire of verbal and visual gestures which signal

interest in what our conversational partner is saying, such as the use of *mmm, uh uh, yeah, really*, etc., (b) the speaker's stock of "canned topics" and formulaic utterances which are produced at relevant points in discourse, such as the small talk which is required to make brief encounters with acquaintances comfortable and positive, (c) knowledge of when to talk and when not to talk, that is, appropriate use of turn-taking conventions.

Adequate management of these dimensions of conversation is essential to create a sense of naturalness in conversational encounters. Non-native speakers who lack the ability to use small talk and to manipulate the interactional aspects of communication may find many encounters awkward and may avoid talk where talk is appropriate. A foreign couple with a good command of English but lacking the ability to provide an ongoing output of conversational small talk were judged as cold, stand-offish and reserved by their American relatives (personal observation).

Communication as interaction is thus directed largely to the face needs of speaker and hearer, which require that we feel valued and approved of. If our conversational teaching materials emphasize primarily transactional skills, such as how to ask directions, how to order a meal, etc., learners may not have the chance to acquire the interactional skills which are also an important component of communicative competence.

V COMMUNICATION IS STRUCTURED

The last aspect of communication I wish to consider is the ongoing organization of discourse. This can be considered from two perspectives, a "macro" perspective which looks at differences in rhetorical organization which reflect different discourse "genres" or tasks, and a "micro" perspective which considers how speech reflects some of the processes by which discourse is constructed out of individual utterances.

A. *Task structure.*

Communication consists of different genres of discourse, such as conversations, discussions, debates, descriptions,

narratives, and instructions. These different rhetorical tasks require the speaker to organize utterances in ways which are appropriate to that task. When we tell a story, for example, we follow certain conventions as to how stories proceed and develop. Stories consist of a setting, followed by episodes. The setting consists of states in which time, place, and characters are identified. Episodes consist of chains of events and conclude with reactions to events. Most stories can be described as having a structure of this type and it is this structure which gives coherence to stories or narratives. Just as a sentence is grammatical to the extent that it follows the norms of English word order and structure, so a story is coherent to the extent that it follows the norms of semantic organization which are used in English.

Other types of rhetorical acts derive coherence from norms of structural organization. When we describe something, for example, coherence in our description is determined by how appropriately we deal with such elements as the level of the description, the content, the order in which items are described, and the relations between items mentioned in the description (Clark and Clark, 1977). In describing a landscape, for example, the writer must decide on the appropriate level of the description, and decide whether to focus on the general impressions of the scene or focus on every detail, as for example in a police report. The writer must also make decisions concerning content, which will determine which elements of the scene to include or exclude. Then the elements must be arranged in an appropriate order and the relations between the things mentioned must be decided. Some objects may be highlighted in the description for example, and other items related to them. The result will be a description that is coherent, that is, which is organized according to appropriate norms for that type of discourse. Similar decisions must be made when we describe people, rooms, states or events. If we adopt solutions that are conventional, we create rhetorical acts which are coherent.

Other types of rhetorical acts develop in ways which are also organized and structured. Conversations, for example, begin with greetings and progress through various ordered

moves in which speaker and hearer roles are ascertained, topics introduced, rights to talk assumed, new topics introduced, and at an appropriate time, the conversation terminated in a suitable manner. The development of communicative competence in a foreign language is crucially dependent on the speaker's ability to create discourse that is coherent. Schmidt (1981), in his study of the development of communicative competence in a Japanese adult, studied how the subject developed in his ability to perform coherent narratives and descriptions. At an early stage in his language development, the subject's attempts to narrate events suffered through the inclusion of excessive details presented in a random order, which made comprehension difficult.

B. *Process structure*

When we talk, much of our verbal output is made up of words and phrases which indicate how what we are going to say relates to what has been said. For example, our reaction to an idea or opinion may be to expand it, to add something to it, to disagree with it, to substantiate it, to give a reason for it or to explain it. The following are examples of phrases or lexical items which may serve these or related functions:

> When it comes to that, and another thing, all the same, consequently, in my case, all the same, to give you an idea, yes but, well maybe, actually, anyway, as a matter of fact, to begin with.

These have been termed conversational gambits (Keller, 1981), and are signal directions and relations within discourse. Evidence suggests that these contribute significantly to the effect of fluency in conversation. Course materials are now available which focus just on these aspects of conversational competence. They can be used inappropriately however, if used too often or in the wrong places, as in the following example:

> To my mind I'll have another cup of coffee.

CONCLUSIONS

Theories of how we teach a foreign language reflect our view of what the nature of language is. While it is no innovation to define language as a system of communication, the way the dynamics of the communicative process influence the form of verbal communication is often less fully appreciated. ESL materials have too often focused only on the finished *products* of communication, rather than on the *processes* by which people communicate. A deeper understanding of the effects of communicative needs on non-native speaker discourse should make us more understanding of our students' difficulties in using English, and more tolerant of their partial successes.

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LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY INTERVIEW TESTING: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores and discusses the usefulness and limitations of language proficiency interview testing. The prominent testing model is described and critiqued. Limitations of this model and this type of testing are discussed and the resultant modifications are surveyed. A process for the development of interview tests which are valid, reliable and practical is proposed and explained, and numerous practical suggestions concerning the designing, administering and rating of such interview tests are made.

I INTRODUCTION

"Language as communication" is a familiar theme found in journal articles, textbook prefaces, and in discussions among teachers and students of English in Japan today. By relating the two, writers and discussants are typically trying to redefine what language teaching — and language learning — must be concerned with — the acquisition of communicative competence in social settings. Learning another language as a communicative tool is hastened by a variety of factors, including academic use, commercial and technological uses in international trade, and touristic and other needs. Learning foreign languages in Japan has also become related to notions of "internationalism" and "intercultural communication." Language learning, then, has widened in scope and become a more practical endeavor than ever before.

Viewing language learning in such practical terms has focused critical attention on language education and its aspects: needs assessment, program design, methodology, evaluation. Increasingly, questions about language learning phrased by students, teachers, and others, relate to the authenticity and practicality of the language taught and the efficiency of the methods employed. Students want to know how they can learn "real" English, and teachers are attempting to bring "the real English-speaking world" into the classroom itself. Research has become preoccupied with the tasks of defining and describing needs, mounting courses, and evaluating progress.

Further, viewing language as a communicative tool requires increased sophistication in this evaluation. Assessing only a student's ability to manipulate discrete, separate elements of language on paper gives the teacher and administrator information of dubious value. A practical ability in speaking a second/foreign language demands evaluative procedures that can certify progress, diagnose weakness, and predict performance. Proficiency testing, therefore, is an essential part of any course or program which claims to teach language for use.

This paper will explore and discuss the usefulness and limitations of language proficiency interview testing, or, more specifically, the direct testing of speaking proficiency in the interview setting. Readers in mind are those of the English language teaching community, both native and non-native speakers, who teach language for communicative use. Also included are those who assess speaking proficiency on a more formal basis in company-wide, governmental and other programs in which a higher proficiency rating can lead to promotion, an overseas post, a certificate for employment and other career-related opportunities. After definitions of terms and anecdotes of recent experience, a model of language proficiency interviewing will be described and critiqued in Section II. Its limitations will be discussed in Section III and modifications of the model will be surveyed. Section IV will provide guidelines and suggestions for designing, administering, rating, and improving language proficiency interview tests.

Clark (1979, p. 36) distinguishes between direct, semi-direct, and indirect measures of speaking ability. Direct measures include all those procedures in which the "examinee is asked to engage in a face-to-face communicative exchange with one or more human interlocutors." Indirect measures require no active speech production by the examinee but depend on paper-and-pencil varieties of cloze tests and other such "productive" techniques. Semi-direct measures of speaking ability elicit active speech but by means of tape recordings, printed test booklets and other "nonhuman" elicitation procedures. Only direct measures involve actual oral exchanges and contain what Carroll (1980, p. 54) calls oral interaction: "constructive interplay with unpredictable stimuli."

Further, for our purposes, the evaluation of an individual's language proficiency must be distinguished from that same individual's language achievement. Proficiency refers to overall or global competence in a language, regardless of how that competence was acquired. Achievement evaluation, on the other hand, measures an individual's acquisition of specific linguistic features of the language that have been presented in, for example, a particular language course. (Clark 179, p. 39) Therefore, we can define such language proficiency interviews as described above as evaluative sessions in which one or more persons perform communicative tasks elicited or assigned by one or more examiners who subsequently observe and rate the resultant speaking performance to determine speaking proficiency.

Anecdotal comments relayed from examining partner to partner and from colleague to colleague frequently pose rather significant questions about the usefulness and limitations of language proficiency interview testing. Some examiners complain that judging speaking proficiency is so subjective that the results of such tests are all too suspect; others reject such interview testing on the grounds that the "real" elements of language (grammar, vocabulary, etc.) cannot be fairly tested in this manner. A second category of difficulty related to interview procedure. Examiners sometimes aren't sure how they are to elicit speech samples

and exactly what they are to evaluate: the whole, the parts, the overall impression, what. And examiners working together who do not discuss criteria of evaluation beforehand often rate the proficiency of the same individual in very different ways. And even when checklist scales are used during interviews, some examiners question if "dismembering the discourse" is an appropriate way to judge the communicative proficiency of the interviewee. These concerns and numerous variations are frequently expressed. How, then, are we to regard the element of subjectivity in language proficiency interview testing? And what procedures can aid us in eliciting appropriate speech samples and evaluating them efficiently? These and other questions will be discussed in Sections II, III and IV below.

II A TESTING MODEL: DESCRIPTION AND CRITIQUE

In the minds of many, the direct testing of speaking proficiency by interview is nearly synonymous with the procedure developed by the U.S. Foreign Service Institute (FSI). Most teachers and testers have at least a passing familiarity with this procedure as it has been widely though incompletely described in major teaching methods and testing texts (Valette 1977, p. 157-51; Rivers 1981, p. 368, 497-99). As much of the research and many of the modifications discussed in the literature are related to this particular testing model, perhaps it is wise to explore it briefly to distinguish its specific purpose, target population, and procedures.

Wilds (1975, p. 29-44) has provided the most comprehensive description of the FSI interview test. The procedure, first adopted in 1956 and somewhat revised since then, was devised to assess the foreign language speaking abilities of U.S. Government personnel, especially diplomatic, military and aid officials, and, later, Peace Corps volunteers. The evaluation takes place in an interview conducted by two examiners for a sole interviewee. The trained examiners engage the interviewee in a conversation to determine his speaking proficiency level as defined by the functionally-based FSI Proficiency Ratings (Appendix A). In FSI usage,

the team of examiners consists of a senior member, a native-speaking certified language examiner or a linguist thoroughly familiar with the target language, and a native-speaking junior member who elicits the samples of speech to be evaluated. The senior member, though an interested participant, usually refrains from actual elicitation. The speech samples of the interviewee are judged to range from elementary proficiency through limited working proficiency, minimum professional proficiency, and full professional proficiency, to native or bilingual proficiency. These five proficiency levels, which are further divided with plus (+) notations to indicate half-level proficiencies, were devised in response to the specific needs of the testing population.

The taped interview begins with simple social formulae which, if handled badly, leads the examiner to put a ceiling on the difficulty of subsequent questions (and thus the rating level) of the interviewee. If the initial queries are dealt with satisfactorily, the examiner will go on to more difficult topics of an autobiographical or professional nature. Informal oral interpretation between examiners is sometimes assigned to elicit certain desired grammatical or lexical items unused by the interviewee. The interview ranges from fifteen to less than thirty minutes in length. Final rating occurs either during the interview or directly after its conclusion. The examiners may (but are not required to) use a "Checklist of Performance Factors" (accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension) and a weighted conversion table (Appendix B) to reach their conclusions. The examiners may also report specific weaknesses to the interviewee at the interview's end or fill in a "Factors in Speaking Ability" chart designed for the same purpose (Clark 1979, p. 40).

In terms of validity, reliability and practicality, the three imperatives of test design and administration, the FSI oral interview appears to be an excellent measure of the speaking proficiency of the target population. Consisting of an interview in which oral interaction occurs, it holds both *face* and reasonable *content* validity as it "measures what it is supposed to measure"—the ability of the person to speak the language (Clark 1979, p. 37). It has also demonstrated high

statistical reliability (Oller 1979, p. 392; Hendricks, et al. 1980, p. 78). The interview is also practical, at least for the FSI, as it can be administered, rated and interpreted with ease (Wilds 1975, p. 29-30).

There are a number of practical factors, however, which underlie the validity and reliability of this procedure. Oller (1979, p. 326) states that interview validity (and hence reliability) depends on three factors: (1) how the speech acts are elicited; (2) what the rating scale(s) are referenced against (the criteria chosen for deciding proficiency); and (3) who is a qualified rater. It is in these practical aspects, the details of the procedure, that the reasons for its success can best be viewed.

The *Manual for Peace Corps Language Testers* (1970, p. 11) defines the purpose of the language proficiency interview in this way: "It is *not* simply a friendly conversation on whatever topics come to mind . . . It is rather a specialized procedure which efficiently uses the relatively brief testing period to explore many different aspects of the student's language competence in order to place him into one of the categories described." This definition emphasizes the importance of the elicitation of speech samples, the grading of them in reference to the predetermined proficiency criteria and ratings, and, further, implies the necessary training of the human administrators who must elicit and rate skillfully and reliably. These procedural requirements are fulfilled in various ways at the FSI. Wilds (1975, p. 34) reports that, for languages that are tested often (more than 60 languages are tested), there are libraries of tapes of previous tests of all levels for the training rater to use. In addition, there is a "substantial amount of written material aimed at clarifying standards and suggesting appropriate techniques." A much experienced staff also helps guide others in the achievement and maintenance of testing competence. But, it may be asked, does this training and the accumulated experience of the examiners, though impressive, fully explain the success of the FSI interview? What, if anything, underlies these aspects of interview test success?

The element of subjectivity, that of the examiner's per-

sonal judgement, present in judging oral performances has long been pinpointed by some as a major disadvantage, and one that inhibits its more extensive use. Without doubt, the examiner's personal judgement is present in the eliciting and rating of speech samples. It is obvious that the examiner must inject himself into the test by deciding which questions to ask and how to phrase them, and how the multitude of possible responses are to be rated in accordance with the still loosely-defined criteria. But how shall this subjectivity be regarded? As a disadvantage, even an obstacle? Or as a benign or even beneficial component of the process?

Much has been done at the FSI to limit the influence of subjective judgement on testing: the Proficiency Ratings, based on functional use, have been devised; examiners have learned techniques of elicitation that furnish speech samples considered valid and appropriate for rating; raters are carefully trained to differentiate good, fair, and poor performances reliably according to defined criteria. Subjectivity, then, or at least its more negative influences, has been limited. Rivers (1981, p. 69) observes that oral evaluation is essentially subjective but notes that raters can be trained—as they are at the FSI—to reach basically comparable results. Oller (1979, p. 328) defines oral evaluation as judging "subjectively according to loosely stated criteria." Further, Oller (p. 48) notes that objective procedures in evaluating oral performance are not necessarily more reliable than subjective ones. "Certain aspects of language performances may simply lend themselves more to subjective judgement than they do to quantification by formula." Clark (1979, p. 41) agrees by noting studies that demonstrate that subjective rating of oral performances should not be regarded as "intrinsically unreliable." In addition, it may be unreasonable and unwise to ask that rating of oral performances be accomplished in a more "objective" manner. For, considering the paucity of our present knowledge and understanding of oral interaction, how and in what form would objective rating take place? In fact, instead of asking if the element of subjectivity is appropriate or not in proficiency rating, it may be more reasonable and useful to ask to what extent subjectivity,

granted an informed varient, is necessary to the process. For this reason, it may be concluded that the FSI interview test is successful not only because of its established criteria and rating system and the careful training of its examiners, but also precisely because of the controlled or informed subjectivity exercised by those examiners during the interview process.

III LIMITATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

Up to this point, the design, procedure and rating system of the FSI interview test has been briefly reviewed. Its usefulness in assessing speaking proficiency has been outlined. Also, the reasons for its success have been explored. From now, attention will be shifted to the limitations of language proficiency interviewing, and the FSI model in particular. Also, modifications of the model will be surveyed to demonstrate how teachers and researchers have dealt with these recognized limits of use.

Language proficiency interviewing leaves much to be desired. The described FSI procedure, although efficient with the specific group for which it was designed, has a number of limitations in its general applicability. Chief among these is its absolute scaling of performances. Absolute scaling requires reliable, consistent judgements by different examiners over time. Individuals tested today must have their performances rated under the same conditions as those rated previously, and those who will be rated in the future. The essence of absolute scaling, then, is consistency. Relative or normative scaling, on the other hand, seeks only to differentiate among members of a particular group at a particular time. There is no specific, absolute need for consistency over time. Relative scaling, in the classroom and at the employment agency, is the normal method, while absolute scaling is only for rare, special situations. The difficulty of the matter becomes apparent when one considers the training of the examiners charged with the rating responsibility. The need to maintain reliability over time further burdens, and strictly formalizes, the training of FSI examiners. Other, relative

raters need not be so burdened. In addition, while the increased amount of this examiner-training and lengthy interview sessions may not be prohibitive for the FSI and other select groups, these requirements are burdensome for other testers. And, though the basic 5-level Proficiency Ratings discriminate abilities well enough for the FSI, these same ratings do not distinguish abilities well enough for secondary school and college learners with more limited proficiency (Reschke 1978, p. 80–1). Finally, the inclusion of listening comprehension as a checklist performance factor by the FSI is seen by many as undesirable as examiners, no matter how skillful, are exposed to so little evidence of comprehension that it is unlikely a fair and complete assessment of this important skill can be made in an interview alone. Therefore, although the FSI model is suitable for its designed purpose, it cannot be freely transferred to dissimilar testing situations. The implicit (and sometimes explicit) recommendations for its unmodified use by some writers need to be softened and qualified.

Other sorts of limitations of the FSI model have been indicated by "integrative" and "pragmatic" testers. This approach, backed by Carroll (1980), Cohen (1980), and Oller (1979), among others, differs most significantly from the FSI model in the scoring and rating of speech samples. Oller (p. 305) believes that scoring techniques used in interviews should relate not only to morphology and syntax as now, but also to the overall meanings contained in utterances. Thus, he calls for a wider array of criteria for judging speech beyond the traditional FSI set (accent, grammar, vocabulary, etc.). Other researchers (Callaway 1980, p. 111; Hendricks et al. 1980, p. 85; Mullen 1980, p. 101) have statistically examined the present FSI scoring techniques and found them wanting. This research suggests that using integrated or unitary scaling for scoring interviews, rather than the FSI multiple checklist scales, is preferable because there is not adequate evidence to prove that the FSI checklist scales actually measure different things. Mullen, in particular, noted that an overall scale of proficiency appeared to represent a composite of the four other scales in her research and was, statistically, more

reliable—thus preferable. Qualified findings on unitary/multiple scaling has been reported by Bachman and Palmer (1981, p. 67). Callaway, in researching raters, found that the overall comprehensibility of speech behavior is what motivates examiner's evaluations of proficiency, thus further supporting arguments for unitary scaling in interview scoring techniques. In addition, these "pragmatic" critics also encourage the use of other criteria (naturalness, clarity, suitability) in the rating of speech (Cohen, 1980, p. 20–23). Rating an individual's performance by such criteria as these, they argue, is pedagogically more useful and communicatively more accurate. An extended 9-level interview assessment scale of this type, designed by Carroll (1980, p. 135) is included as Appendix C.

Finally, in a general way, interview testing has important limitations that every tester must be aware of. Although interviews are planned to replicate as closely as possible everyday communication, in several ways they are atypical. Clark (1979, p. 38) has observed that "talking to the examiner isn't the same as speaking to a waiter, taxi driver or friend." The psychological and affectional components of communication present in the interview also differ from ordinary communication (Jones 1975, p. 14). In addition, the usefulness of interview-based evaluations may be lessened by differences in communication style transferred from another language and culture by the interviewee to the target language. Richards (1981, p. 7–26) details some of the problems that occur in conversations as a result of this communication style transference. These recognized limitations, however, do not invalidate interview tests as measures of speaking proficiency. They merely require that such interviews be designed and conducted with the utmost care and flexibility necessary.

Modification of a model is a natural consequence of recognized inadequacy. And, as the FSI model is limited in a number of practical ways, changes in its design and use have readily been made. These changes, briefly surveyed, come in six areas. The first, the use of a sole examiner instead of two at the FSI, is unavoidable for most teachers and testers due to the number of interviewees and the burden

of other work. Further, examiner self-training (through reading, experience, heightened awareness) is a related accommodation to practical circumstances. The third common change, a shortening of interview-time, is also an obvious accommodation. Though the FSI can extend interviews to nearly half an hour, few teachers or testers can possibly do so. This has inevitably resulted in interviews being conducted in between five and ten minutes per interviewee. It is important to note here that the Educational Testing Service (Clark 1978, p. 227–8) has determined that interviews in the five-to-seven minute range are adequate for valid and reliable rating by trained examiners. The fourth common change is to increase the efficiency of the interview by testing groups instead of individuals. Reschke (1978, p. 82) has suggested testing from three to five persons at each session. The present writer has much successful experience with groups of three. The fifth general modification concerns the checklist and rating scales. Clark (in Valette 1977, p. 161) has simplified and shortened the FSI checklist scales to make them more useful in the classroom. Schulz and Bartz have developed "pragmatic" scales that score the level of communication present in the interviewee's speech sample. The Schulz Communicative Competence Scale (in Valette 1977, p. 161) rates "fluency," "comprehensibility," "amount of communication," and "quality of communication." Bartz' scale (in Valette 1977, p. 150–1) mirrors Schulz' except that "effort to communicate" is interchanged with "comprehensibility" (Appendix D). The sixth and final major area of change from the FSI model is the specific use of the interview for other purposes. Although the majority of these other uses will be outlined in Section IV, the use of the interview for strictly diagnostic purposes has been discussed by Graham (1978, p. 33–9).

These modifications demonstrate that the general format of the FSI oral interview is adequate as a model for the design of language proficiency interviews. Though the FSI model is strictly appropriate for only the specific purpose for which it was designed, it can be modified to serve wider

testing requirements. Properly understood, the FSI interview model can aid both classroom teachers and more formal testers in their design, administration, and rating of proficiency interview tests.

IV A PRACTICAL PRIMER: GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS

The purpose of this section, plainly, is to provide some guidelines and practical suggestions for the designing, administering, and rating of language proficiency interviews. The three former sections presented a rationale for this kind of testing, described and critiqued the most prominent model, and surveyed limitations and modifications. This section is to be a practical conclusion. But, before launching into practicality, I would like to extend the discussion to include the many practical uses of proficiency interviews. These popular uses went largely unmentioned before in order to avoid unnecessary confusion during the description and critique of the FSI model. Now it aids in the effort to recognize these other purposes: the language proficiency interview (LPI) as a part of a formal or informal course or program needs assessment study; the use of the LPI in ability-grouping and as a motivational and self- and peer-grading technique; the LPI as a diagnostic evaluation instrument and as a practical means of establishing and maintaining classroom and program goals of communicative language use; and the use of the DPI to maintain certain course or program proficiency requirements or standards (foreign-language teacher certification, etc.). These common uses demonstrate that interviewing can also be instrumental means to various practical teaching and administrative ends.

The design of an appropriate LPI procedure implies more than the mere adoption of a recommended rating scale. In fact, proper design requires the employment of a process than can ensure a valid, reliable and practical test instrument. The FSI model, itself, is the successful product of just such a design process—a process others can use to create proficiency interview tests suited to their particular circumstances.

This process of design is the main subject of discussion below.

Ryan and Frederiksen (1951), cited and discussed by Jones (1979, p. 52–3), developed a process for the preparation of performance tests which are valid, reliable and practical. Though intended as a general process for a wide variety of testing needs, it can be adapted to the more specific needs of language proficiency interviewing. Ryan and Frederiksen listed seven steps in performance test design: (1) make a job analysis; (2) select tasks to represent the job; (3) develop a rating form; (4) survey the practical limitations; (5) develop a tentative operating plan; (6) try out the test and revise it; and (7) prepare directions for administration and use of the test.

This general process can be adapted to serve LPI testing. By re-wording and grouping some of the steps, the process can be reduced to five easily remembered stages: (1) analyze the needs; (2) select representative tasks; (3) develop a rating form; (4) accommodate the limitations; and (5) train the examiner. By following these steps carefully, the test designer can devise an instrument for the specific group of learners which takes into account all of the variables of their language needs and use, as the FSI instrument does for those of its target population. These stages of test development are discussed separately below.

1. *Analyze the communicative needs of the interviewee(s)*

For what reason is the interviewee being tested? To decide if his speaking proficiency is adequate or not for a certain job? To rank his ability in relation to his fellow learners? Questions of this type are critically important at this first stage. Before it is possible to decide *how* to conduct the interview, the need for which the interview is being held must be specified. Needs range from the communicatively narrow (taking customers' orders in a restaurant) to the very broad and complex (negotiating contracts for the purchase of computer components). Needs can also be teacher-derived (diagnosis) and program-centred (certification requirements). Once this need is specified clearly, the process of designing the interview test can proceed smoothly; without its description,

the testing will be a hard and likely fruitless task.

Practically speaking, this need should be written down as the purpose statement of the test, for the designer's later reference when he is planning how to elicit and rate the speech samples. This written description should also include information relating to the target communicative settings (formal/informal business meetings, academic seminars, touristic exchanges, etc.), needs for expert knowledge (scientific, commercial, etc.), other special requirements (speech-making, for instance), and the tolerance of error allowable in the interactions. Further, the statement should list at least some of the functional uses of language that will be required. Most teachers and testers are familiar with the writings of D. A. Wilkins (1976) and J. A. van Ek (1976) on the notional and functional uses of language in communication. Van Ek (p. 45–49) proposes a list of functions (accepting an offer or invitation, expressing capability or incapability, expressing disappointment, etc.) that can aid in this need specification of the interviewee. John Munby (1978, p. 123–131) also provides a taxonomy of language skills which can be consulted for this purpose.

2. *Select representative communication tasks for testing*

At this stage, a representative sample of the communication tasks of the targeted need must be selected. Obviously, the interviewee cannot be tested for all of the needs that have been identified. Therefore, a small but appropriate sample must be chosen for the brief testing period. Sampling should range from the easy to the more difficult functional tasks (greeting, apologizing, explaining, defending, etc.) and deal with the specific areas and topics of discourse that have been pinpointed. Therefore, when interviewing electrical engineers, for example, some of the tasks must relate to true-to-life engineering topics, possibly the individual's special field or research. Asking only social/general questions of an individual being tested for engineering-specific speaking proficiency results in inadequate knowledge of his true proficiency and a wasted interview.

The second challenge of interview test design, then, is

deciding what questions to ask and how to ask them. In a conversational format, two strategies for efficient questioning can be recommended. The first is the use of carefully prepared "ceiling questions" which are designed to test the interviewee's proficiency at the top of each level of the proficiency rating scale. Appropriate greetings and such opening formalities may convince the examiner that the interviewee possesses sufficient proficiency to be tested on the next higher level. Responses to subsequent "ceiling questions" may suggest that a certain level should be further explored for difficulty. When this tentative rating level has been found, the second strategy, that of asking several related questions of increasing difficulty on a specific topic, may be used. The purpose of this strategy is to make certain the rating level and explore the breadth of the interviewee's vocabulary and his general ability to engage in topical discussion. It has been noted by Morrow (in Carroll 1980, p. 12) that language is essentially interactive, unpredictable, purposive and contextualized. Therefore, the greatest care should be taken to ensure that the communicative exchanges initiated by the examiner replicate as closely as possible genuine language use. Both types of questions, in sufficient quantities, should be prepared ahead of time and written down for instant reference.

Direct interview testing, as defined in Section I, also includes the use of role-play, informal oral interpretation, reversal of roles, situational problems, group discussions on prepared topics, and other techniques. These techniques are especially useful when more than ten minutes is available for each interview, and when group interviews are held. I have found that "interviewing" groups of three students engaged in a pre-planned discussion without notes for thirty minutes is both a useful and enjoyable way to assess speaking proficiency.

Speeches, both extemporaneous and prepared, however, should not be assigned as proficiency evaluation tasks. This communication form, though oral, lacks the essentially inter-

active nature of genuine oral communication.

As long as the questions asked and the tasks assigned are directly related to the needs of the interviewees and are not so contrived as to tax the imagination unduly, these approaches to eliciting speech samples will be successful.

3. *Develop a Rating Scale*

Much has already been written about checklist and rating scales, and examples have been placed in the appendix for the reader's review. Jones notes in his discussion (1979, p. 53) that "the key to achieving objectivity in a performance test is the checklist and rating scale." While this may be true of non-language tests, we have seen that clear objectivity in interview tests cannot be achieved completely due to the variety and complexity of oral communication. Nonetheless, predetermined rating criteria must be used to "channel" the examiner's attention toward those factors considered most important in this communication. Criteria chosen for general consideration should include not only the traditional set (accent, grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and, to the degree possible, comprehension) but also the so-called criteria of communication: quality and amount of communication, effort to communicate, and communicative effectiveness. In my experience, it is best to place emphasis on the latter group and allow the former set to qualify or explain the conclusions reached. Thus, I value the extent to which an individual can communicate his desires clearly in the language more than his excellence in pronunciation. Pronunciation, in fact, should only be considered a factor when it detracts from the interviewee's communicative ability in a specific setting. Vocabulary and grammar, likewise, become significant when the specified topics raised cannot be discussed with accuracy and in sufficient detail.

In attempting to judge communicative effectiveness, it is useful to qualify one's overall impression with the interviewee's use of rhetorical behaviors. These behaviors come into play as the proficiency of the individual increases. Einhorn (1981, p. 217-228) has isolated six such behaviors

(identification with interviewer, argument support, organization, style, delivery, and images conveyed) that determined success or failure for applicants in job interviews. Such behaviors are also significant factors in the effectiveness of interpersonal oral communication.

How one uses these chosen (and weighted) criteria in arriving at rating decisions is much in dispute. While the formal FSI model suggests that final rating is decided by the computation of five separately scored factors, in fact FSI examiners rarely use this procedure. Apparently, they are so familiar with the characteristics that differentiate one rating level from another that they can easily categorize performances. Whether they even analyze performance in terms of the five factors specifically is uncertain. Callaway (1980, p. 111) states that dividing oral performance into components is superfluous as raters make holistic unidimensional judgements. My experience suggests that it is unnecessary to compute separate scores but that intimate knowledge of the rating levels is necessary so that the rater can transfer his essentially subjective judgements to that scale efficiently. Criteria, written down as reference, are essential to maintain the examiner's approach to performance rating for all interviewees. Practical knowledge of the rating scale grounds the criteria in function.

With the foregoing in mind, a rating scale must be developed that relates directly to the interviewees. The FSI scale, gross in units (only five) and stretching from intermediate speaking ability to more advanced, may be appropriate for few testing situations. More detailed is the business-oriented Daiei scale (Appendix E) and Carroll's scale. The latter seems good for general academic use, and language school courses. In any case, as proficiency rating charts are extremely difficult to construct, especially when several levels of proficiency must be differentiated, it is recommended that already available scales be adapted for specific purposes. With adequate experience and special need, custom-made proficiency ratings can be devised.

4. *Accommodate the Limitations*

Accommodating the limitations is the sub-process of fitting the interview test to the circumstances. At this stage of design and preparation, the test has already been shaped in a variety of ways, perhaps subconsciously, by the limits of time, ability level, urgency or importance of purpose, etc. The designer has likely already decided the length of each interview, whether individuals or groups will be tested, the amount of preparation required of the examiner, and other factors. It is useful, nonetheless, to review the form of the interview and its operating schedule to see if any improvements can be made or if anything has been forgotten. One factor that seems to be often neglected is examiner-fatigue. This is a malady which invariably attacks examiners about half-way through planned interview schedules. To lessen its effects, a regular rest break should be taken during each hour of interviewing.

5. *The Training of the Examiner*

What remains to be accomplished is the training of the examiner and the pilot-testing of the planned interview test —two requirements that complement one another rather well. Just as the interviewees must have prepared themselves over their learning period to perform successfully, so must the individual examiner prepare himself to elicit and rate well. This preparation takes two forms, general and specific. General preparation involves the examiner's intellectual understanding of the interview as a forum of communication and as a testing vehicle. This form of preparation requires study in the disciplines of testing, discourse analysis, and related areas. It also requires an increased sensitivity toward language use and a keen ability to differentiate genuine and effective oral performances. Specific training is best accomplished in the interview process itself. As noted before, the FSI uses tapes of previous tests and anecdotal materials prepared by experienced examiners in the training of new raters. Few, if any, ordinary testers have an opportunity for such a careful training. Novice testers, however, can ask to join in interviews conducted by colleagues, or do "mock"

interviews during class time to gain experience. Further, the novice can "test" the English of native-speakers and fluent non-native speakers as means of setting appropriate expectations of performance for later interviews. There are many daily opportunities to evaluate speech, and these can be used for training purposes. In fact, the design of the interview test includes "training" in needs assessment, task selection, criteria choice, and measurement scale design. In the final stage of examiner training, the planned interview test can be pilot-tested with an unrelated group of individuals to test its actual practicality and the ability of the examiner to elicit and rate efficiently. These pilot-testings can be cassette-recorded and reviewed later. Thus, in any number of ways, examiners can prepare themselves for the difficult tasks involved in interview testing of speaking proficiency.

CONCLUSION

In Japan, perhaps more than elsewhere, testing defines learning. Learners readily identify the nature and worth of the experience by the form and difficulty of the test. Therefore, in language classes where the guiding aim has been shifted to communicative use, proficiency interview testing has a special role to play.

This proficiency interviewing has much to recommend it. In the classroom, it dramatically demonstrates the goal of the activities. Learners soon realize, at the time of the diagnostic group-interview, that it is their speaking proficiency, not their memorization skills, that is important. and "framing" a course with a beginning diagnostic interview and an ending proficiency evaluation is a powerful encouragement for taking all of the classroom communication activities seriously. Oral performances, characteristically both open and personal, force learners to monitor their own progress more carefully.

Valid and reliable proficiency interviewing is within the grasp of all teachers and testers. The process of test design and examiner training, though time-consuming initially, opens up new ways of thinking about language use—and language teaching and learning.

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APPENDIX A

The FSI Proficiency Ratings

Level 1: *Able to satisfy routine travel needs and minimum courtesy requirements.* Can ask and answer questions on topics very familiar to him or her; within the scope of his or her very limited language experience can understand simple questions and statements, allowing for slowed speech, repetition or paraphrase; speaking vocabulary inadequate to express anything but the most elementary needs; errors in pronunciation and grammar are frequent, but can be understood by a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners attempting to speak his or her language. While elementary needs vary considerably from individual to individual, any person at level 1 should be able to order a simple meal, ask for shelter or lodging, ask and give simple directions, make purchases, and tell time.

Level 2: *Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements.* Can handle with confidence but not with facility most social situations including introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information; can handle limited work requirements, needing help in handling any complications or difficulties; can get the gist of most conversations on nontechnical subjects (i.e. topics that require no specialized knowledge) and has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to express himself or herself simply with some circumlocutions; accent, though often quite faulty, is intelligible; can usually handle elementary constructions quite accurately but does not have thorough or confident control of the grammar.

Level 3: *Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics.* Can discuss particular interests and special fields of competence with reasonable ease; comprehension is quite complete for a normal rate of speech; vocabulary is broad enough that he or she rarely has to grope for a word; accent may be obviously foreign; control of grammar good; errors never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker.

Level 4: *Able to use the language fluently and accurately on all levels normally pertinent to professional needs.* Can understand and participate in any conversation within the range of his or her experience with a high degree of fluency and precision of vocabulary; would rarely be taken for a native speaker, but can respond appropriately even in unfamiliar situations; errors of pronunciation and grammar quite rare; can handle informal interpreting from and into the language.

Level 5: *Speaking proficiency equivalent to that of an educated native speaker.* Has complete fluency in the language such that his or her speech on all levels is fully accepted by educated native speakers in all of its features, including breadth of vocabulary and idiom, colloquialisms, and pertinent cultural references.

APPENDIX B

The FSI Checklist of Performance Factors and Descriptions

Accent

1. Pronunciation frequently unintelligible.
2. Frequent gross errors and a very heavy accent make understanding difficult, require frequent repetition.
3. "Foreign accent" requires concentrated listening and mispronunciations lead to occasional misunderstanding and apparent errors in grammar or vocabulary.
4. Marked "foreign accent" and occasional mispronunciations that do not interfere with understanding.
5. No conspicuous mispronunciations, but would not be taken for a native speaker.
6. Native pronunciation, with no trace of "foreign accent."

Grammar

1. Grammar almost entirely inaccurate except in stock phases.
2. Constant errors showing control of very few major patterns and frequently preventing communication.
3. Frequent errors showing some major patterns uncontrolled and causing occasional irritation and misunderstanding.
4. Occasional errors showing imperfect control of some patterns but no weakness that causes misunderstanding.
5. Few errors, with no patterns of failure.
6. No more than two errors during the interview.

Vocabulary

1. Vocabulary inadequate for even the simplest conversation.
2. Vocabulary limited to basic personal and survival areas (time, food, transportation, family, etc.).
3. Choice of words sometimes inaccurate, limitations of vocabulary prevent discussion of some common professional and social topics.
4. Professional vocabulary adequate to discuss special interests; general vocabulary permits discussion of any nontechnical subject with some circumlocutions.

5. Professional vocabulary broad and precise; general vocabulary adequate to cope with complex practical problems and varied social situations.
6. Vocabulary apparently as accurate and extensive as that of an educated native speaker.

Fluency

1. Speech is so halting and fragmentary that conversation is virtually impossible.
2. Speech is very slow and uneven except for short or routine sentences.
3. Speech is frequently hesitant and jerky; sentences may be left uncompleted.
4. Speech is occasionally hesitant, with some unevenness caused by rephrasing and groping for words.
5. Speech is effortless and smooth, but perceptibly non-native in speed and evenness.
6. Speech on all professional and general topics as effortless and smooth as a native speaker's.

Comprehension

1. Understands too little for the simplest type of conversation.
2. Understands only slow, very simple speech on common social and touristic topics; requires constant repetition and rephrasing.
3. Understands careful, somewhat simplified speech directed to him or her, with considerable repetition and rephrasing.
4. Understands quite well normal educated speech directed to him or her, but requires occasional repetition or rephrasing.
5. Understands everything in normal educated conversation except for very colloquial or low-frequency items or exceptionally rapid or slurred speech.
6. Understands everything in both formal and colloquial speech to be expected of an educated native speaker.

The FSI Weighting and Conversion Tables

FSI Weighting Table

Proficiency Description →	1	2	3	4	5	6	
Accent	0	1	2	2	3	4	_____
Grammar	6	12	18	24	30	36	_____
Vocabulary	4	8	12	16	20	24	_____
Fluency	2	4	6	8	10	12	_____
Comprehension	4	8	12	15	19	23	_____
						Total:	[ ]

FSI Conversion Table

Total Score	Level	Total Score	Level	Total Score	Level
16-25	0+	43-52	2	73-82	3+
26-32	1	53-62	2+	83-92	4
33-42	1+	63-72	3	93-99	4+

APPENDIX C

Carroll's Interview Assessment Scale

Band	
9	Expert speaker. Speaks with authority on a variety of topics. Can initiate, expand and develop a theme.
8	Very good non-native speaker. Maintains effectively his own part of a discussion. Initiates, maintains and elaborates as necessary. Reveals humour where needed and responds to attitudinal tones.
7	Good speaker. Presents case clearly and logically and can develop the dialogue coherently and constructively. Rather less flexible and fluent than Band 8 performer but can respond to main changes of tone or topic. Some hesitation and repetition due to a measure of language restriction but interacts effectively.
6	Competent speaker. Is able to maintain theme of dialogue, to follow topic switches and to use and appreciate main attitude markers. Stumbles and hesitates at times but is reasonably fluent otherwise. Some errors and inappropriate language but these will not impede exchange of views. Shows some independence in discussion with ability to initiate.
5	Modest speaker. Although gist of dialogue is relevant and can be basically understood, there are noticeable deficiencies in mastery of language patterns and style. Needs to ask for repetition or clarification and similarly to be asked for them. Lacks flexibility and initiative. The interviewer often has to speak rather deliberately. Copes but not with great style or interest.
4	Marginal speaker. Can maintain dialogue but in a rather passive manner, rarely taking initiative or guiding the discussion. Has difficulty in following English at normal speed; lacks fluency and probably accuracy in speaking. The dialogue is therefore neither easy nor flowing. Nevertheless, gives the impression that he is in touch with the gist of the dialogue even if not wholly master of it. Marked L1 accent.
3	Extremely limited speaker. Dialogue is a drawn-out affair punctuated with hesitations and misunderstandings. Only catches part of normal speech and unable to produce continuous and accurate discourse. Basic merit is just hanging on to discussion gist, without making major contribution to it.
2	Intermittent speaker. No working facility; occasional, sporadic communication.
1/0	Non-speaker. Not able to understand and/or speak.

APPENDIX D

Bartz' Rating Scale

A.	Fluency	1	2	3	4	5	6
B.	Quality of Communication	1	2	3	4	5	6
C.	Amount of Communication	1	2	3	4	5	6
D.	Effort to Communicate	1	2	3	4	5	6

The levels of the scales are defined as follows:

A. *Fluency* (similar to the Foreign Service Institute scale)

B. *Quality of Communication*
   1. Speech consists *mostly* of inappropriate isolated words and/or incomplete sentences with just a *few* very short complete sentences.
   2. Speech consists of *many* inappropriate isolated words and/or incomplete sentences with *some* very short complete sentences.
   3. Speech consists of *some* inappropriate isolated words and/or incomplete sentences with *many* very short complete sentences.
   4. Speech consists of *hardly any* isolated words and/or incomplete sentences with *mostly* complete sentences.
   5. Speech consists of isolated words only if appropriate and *almost always* complete sentences.
   6. Speech consists of isolated words only if appropriate, otherwise *always* "native-like" appropriate complete sentences.

C. *Amount of Communication*
   1. *Virtually no* relevant information was conveyed by the student.
   2. *Very little* relevant information was conveyed by the student.
   3. *Some* relevant information was conveyed by the student.
   4. *A fair amount* of relevant information was conveyed by the student.
   5. *Most* relevant information was conveyed by the student.
   6. *All* relevant information was conveyed by the student.

D. *Effort to Communicate*
   1. Student withdraws into long periods of silence, without any apparent effort to complete the task.
   2. Student makes *little* effort to communicate, what he does do is "half-hearted," without any enthusiasm.
   3. Student makes *some* effort to communicate, but still shows a rather "disinterested" attitude.

4. Student makes an effort to communicate but does not use any non-verbal resources, such as gestures.
5. Student makes a real effort to communicate and uses some non-verbal resources such as gestures.
6. Student makes a special (unusually high) effort to communicate and uses all possible resources, verbal and non-verbal, to express himself or herself.

APPENDIX E

The Daiei's English Proficiency Level Breakdown
(slightly revised)

(A) Level – International Executive Level
Fluent both in daily conversation and in specific situations, he can be precise in many fields. His high-level command of the language enables him to participate effectively, intelligently and logically in international conferences, to manage the overseas branch of a company, can conduct reliable negotiations, with perceptive understanding of Western thinking. Can fully comprehend Western speech and can convey the finer nuances as well as colloquial speech. May be competent enough to occasionally act as interpreter in social or formal situation. Can cope with study abroad, alone, e.g. post-graduate work, etc.

(B) Level – International Business Level
Competent and fluent enough to participate actively in conversations with Westerners, can discuss business without too many difficulties. May make some grammatical errors, minor or otherwise, but no serious problems in vocabulary, sentence structures, patterns, pronunciaion, etc., in communicating. Can express himself relatively well and can be considered for job abroad. Though some lack of self-confidence may be shown, he should be able to handle most unexpected problems social or job-wise, without due stress. His fluency may not be on the par of the Westerners', but his comprehension and perception is almost up-to-par. Can be considered and is willing for long-term study or job abroad.

(C) Level – Basic Business Level
Can handle uncomplicated business related conversations, capable of most daily conversations on a social level, but fluency is not up-to-par with comprehension. Can express himself, though with some difficulty. Responses may be a little slow due to his concern regarding his English ability, and may be slightly ill-at-ease with Western speech and/or Westerners. Can fulfill overseas job, but may not handle it alone, easily, on a long-term basis. May be able to handle himself linguistically

working as a trainee at an overseas branch. May be capable of auditing undergraduate work in an overseas university.

(D) Level – Basic Fluency Level
As he has already acquired basic vocabulary, sentence structures and patterns, he can generally understand daily conversation. Understands and is able to communicate only in very specific situations: meeting or assisting customers or guests, check-in and out of hotels, able to deal with people on a basic level, but not ready for more complicated discussions. Cannot convey complicated opinions and/or information. In a business conversation, can handle only on limited basis. May be able to fulfill his overseas duties if in a group on a short-term basis. Whether he is ready for working overseas may be questionable, and up to the discretion of his employer.

(E) Level – Basic Social Level
Can conduct simple social, basic conversation, greetings, etc. Can comprehend partially what the speaker says, but has difficulty in responding and expressing himself. His practical knowledge of advanced structures or vocabulary is lacking. If a lack of self-confidence is evident, in both himself, his job, etc., and his English, one can anticipate many problems, particularly if sent abroad alone only to be aggravated further by his too limited English.

(F) Level – Elementary Level
If the subjects are limited to simple, daily matters, he can converse, somewhat, though in a highly unskilled way and with frequent death pauses, and sometimes or often responds incorrectly. There are still deficiencies in fundamental sentence structures, vocabulary, etc. Can understand to some extent if spoken to slowly, repetitively, and using simple words.

(G) Level – Introductory
Very basic level in English conversation. Can understand simple phrases and sentences only, and if spoken to slowly and clearly. Though restricted to the above level, he can respond, though his response may be long overdue and in a one or two word answer. Exchange of opinions and/or ideas almost impossible. Acquisition of further, intensive study of basic English is a necessity. Real conversation ability at this level is almost nil.

SPECULATIONS INTO THE DISTRIBUTIVE FUNCTION OF CONSONANTS AND VOWELS IN ENGLISH AND JAPANESE*

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ABSTRACT

It is proposed in this paper that the air pressure involved in producing the speech sounds of English is much stronger than that required in Japanese. Some analyses of the composition of English and Japanese words in terms of the ratio of consonant to vowel sounds in a syllable are presented to prove the point. Through this discussion, some peculiarities in the composition of English words are revealed in support of the theory of stronger air pressure being necessary in the production of English speech sounds. The proposition is further elucidated through the examination of phenomena peculiar to English.

This paper concludes that the differing levels of air pressure involved in the production of speech sounds in English and Japanese should be studied much more carefully than has hitherto been done.

This paper is an attempt to show what the most striking difference in the production of speech sounds between the English speaker and the Japanese speaker is, making use of somewhat subjective observations about the phenomena in English that might be considered as accidental coincidences unless concerned care is focused upon them.

* This paper was first presented at the Naha, Okinawa Chapter meeting of JALT held on March 31, 1982, at the University of Ryukyus.

There may be many phonological differences between English and Japanese. There does not seem, however, to be any more conspicuous difference between the two languages than the ways in which both of the languages distribute consonantal sounds and vocalic ones in their vocabulary. When we closely examine what this difference could mean to both languages, it becomes possible to speculate that the way the English language distributes its consonants among vowels shows a preference toward strong air pressure in pronunciation, whereas Japanese structures its vowels between consonants so frequently and regularly that it may be said to show a reverse inclination.

First, let's consider English consonants and their distributions. Even a casual analysis of the number of English consonants used per vowel seems to point to the clear difference between the two languages. For example, take the following English words and see the ratio of consonants in the syllables:

S C R I P T S T R O N G S T R U G G L E
1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5 1 2 3 4 5

The number of consonants used per vowel is five to one. Although such a combination is not the only one, English has many words of this ratio, while such a combination would be impossible in the way in which Japanese arranges consonants against vowels. The most one can expect in Japanese as a ratio of consonants to vowels is two to one in words such as:

MINNA (everybody) KITTA (cut, past form)
GAKKO (shool)

Although English consonants can cluster around a vowel in numbers of more than three, such combinations of consonants can never, in any circumstances, occur in Japanese. This unmistakably clear difference of consonantal vowel ratio should not pass unnoticed as the carrier of an important phonological difference between the two languages.

Consonants, however, are not the only English speech sounds that behave so dramatically differently from those in Japanese. The vowels in the two languages do have a marked

difference in their manners of appearance. For example, a combination of three or four straight vowels constituting a word, without a single consonant in it, can be found in Japanese in various forms as follows:

Examples of three vowels constituting a word:

AOI (blue, adj.) AOU (Let's meet.) IAI (a skill in Japanese swordplay) IEI (a poem by the deceased) EII (a position of honor) OOI (many) OUI (the throne) IEE (no) IOU (sulfur)

Examples of four vowels constituting a word:

AIOI (be born together, or grow together)
IIAU (argue) OIOI (gradually)

Such generous combinations of straight vowels do not exist in English. Therefore, some possibilities of vowel combinations may be unthinkable to the English speaker as; (1) a Japanese word can contain three or four identical vowels in a consecutive series; (2) an utterance in Japanese can collect 13 consecutive vowels in a straight series. Some examples are:

OOOKU (the inner palace)

OOOJI (granduncle)

OOOTOKO (a giantic man; an extremely big man)

OOBA (grandaunt)

KARERA WASONO HITO NO

O	O	I	A	O	I	I	E	O	A	U	I	E	NI
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	

SURU KOTO NI KIMETA.

(A translation can be: they decided on the blue house with many people as a meeting place.)

The possibility or permissibility of such a great number of straight vowels in Japanese is significant, as will be made clear in the latter section of this paper.

Differences between English and Japanese consonants and

vowels in the manner of their appearance, as dicussed above, may not seem to reveal anything further than different combinations both peoples employ in arranging speech sounds. However, what Ladefoged tells us about the production of consonant sounds (Ladefoged, 1975) reveals a property of English consonants which has become a source of many speculations related to the theme of this paper.

"In order to form consonants, the airstream through the vocal tract must be obstructed in some way."[1] If, as Ladefoged says, the production of consonant sounds entails some obstruction of the airstream, English words such as "script, strong, struggle," having many more consonants around a vowel than any word in Japanese can have, should result in a much greater obstruction of air in their production. If so, the process also requires much stronger air pressure. Figure 1 depicts the passage of air in the cases of both a consonant and a vowel.

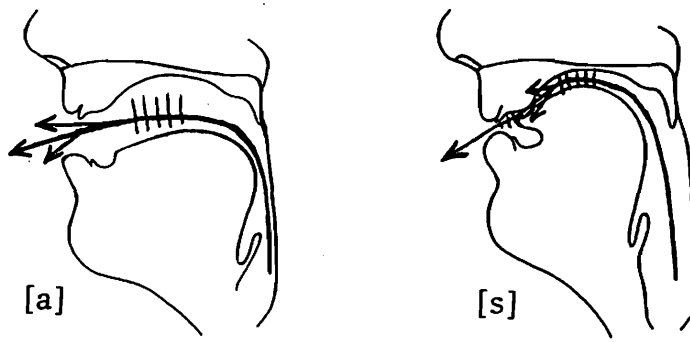

Figure 1

The two illustrations in Figure 1 are meant to show that the vowel [a] has an unobstructed airstream, whereas the consonant [s] has its airstream obstructed in two places, one at the area of the alvelar ridge and another at the raised tip of the tongue. What can be speculated from these observations is that air obstructed against a wall of solid substance, as in the case of the pronunciation of [s], can easily build up more air pressure than air pushing against a wall of air

as the atomosphere enveloping the speaker's face, as in the production of a vowel sound such as [a]. Moreover, [s] has the opening gradually narrowed for the release of the compressed pulmonic air output from the oral cavity and this is also instrumental to make the air pressure in the oral cavity greater than for the vowel sound [a], which has a greater opening vailable for the release of the same output. For these reasons it can be surmised that the areas with diagonally crossed lines close to the lips should have different air pressure in the pronunciation of the two sounds, and in the case of the consonant [s] the air pressure should be stronger.

One can conduct a simple experiment to test this. While pronouncing the vowel [a], raise the tongue to the exact articulatory position of [s] and then stop voicing while maintaining equal pulmonic air output. The consonant [s] cannot be produced in this way unless there is an increase of air pressure by running the air faster within the oral cavity to make a strong hissing sound required for a correctly pronounced [s].

Similar experiments with all the other English consonants seem to prove that, concerning increased air pressure, the same can be said of almost all the English consonants. These consonants are:

[p, b, t, d, k, g, f, v, θ, ð, s, z, ʃ, ʒ].

Some exceptions seem to be:

[m, n, r, j, w, l.].

However, even with these consonants, an effort to increase air pressure in pronouncing them makes for clear pronunciation.

If the above point is granted, it becomes possible to say that each addition of a consonant sound around a vowel or in a word can result in the accumulation of air pressure in its pronunciation. If so, a generalization is now possible that because many English words have more consonants around a vowel or in a word than those in Japanese do, much more air pressure is inherently required in their pronunciation.

This simple generalization has a still greater implication

when the distribution of English vowels is examined and it is proved that they, too, are arranged in such a manner as to assist the pressure of air in the oral cavity to be as high as possible. This observation leads to the ultimate conclusion of this paper; that the native speaker of English is extremely conscious of air pressure in the production of his speech sounds, whereas the native speaker of Japanese has little air pressure consciousness in his production of both Japanese and English speech sounds. An awareness of air pressure differences may deserve to be brought to the attention of the Japanese learner of English as a second language.

In order to develop this awareness, it may be best to start with a brief discussion of the manner in which the air pressure in the oral tract can be raised to its highest point in the production of a vocalic speech sound in English. If an equal amount of air, with equal pressure, were pushed out of the lungs and reached the lips, just about to pass through between them, the air pressure by then would be highest if the oral cavity and tract were narrowed to make the area of the air passage the smallest. One way in which a person can realize this effect is to lift the blade and the tip of the tongue to the height that almost reaches the alvelar ridge, and the result is the creation of a higher air pressure than the oral tract creates when the tongue is in a rest position. The resulting vowel, when phonated, is of course, the speech sound named a high front vowel, and this is the first sound in a word such as "eat".

It is important to notice that the highest air pressure among the English vowels, produced in the manner explained above, creates this sound [i], because [i] is the most frequently used vowel sound (although sometimes unstressed) in the English vocabulary. One way to prove this point seems to lie in the actual count of vowel distribution in utterances of some length by a native speaker of English. To find the vowel distribution of the Japanese version of the very same text in English, the choice of the passages tested for this study was made on the ground that a reliable translation of the original English was available. For this reason, the first couple of paragraphs from the bilingual edition of

Somerset Maugham-4 with translation and annotation by Yagi, Tsuyoshi and Goto, Mitsuyasu were chosen.[2] The paragraphs were first transcribed into broad phonetic transcription and then all the vowels in the passage were counted according to the following 8 groups of vowels. The numbers on the right side of the table are the result of the vowel count from the passage.

(1) High front vowels	[i , ɪ]	283	29%	of the total	vowels
(2) Mid front vowels	[e , ɛ]	103	11%	"	"
(3) Low front vowels	[æ]	71	7%	"	"
(4) Mid central vowel	[ə]	265	27%	"	"
(5) Low central vowel	[ʌ]	33	3%	"	"
(6) High back vowels	[u , ʊ]	64	7%	"	"
(7) Mid back vowels	[o , ɔ]	77	8%	"	"
(8) Low back vowels	[a , ɑ]	70	7%	"	"

According to the count, the high front vowels proved to be the most numerous vowels, and the second largest percentage the mid-central unaccented vowel (schwa). It is of some interest to note that [ə] can be pronounced either with the tip of the tongue raised higher than the high front vowels [i, ɪ] or lower than these. In the former case, the air pressure in the oral cavity can be maintained higher than the high front vowels. When the occurences of high front vowels and schwa are added together, they make up 56 percent of the entire vowels, which is more than half of the total vowel sounds in the passage.

When the consonants from the same passage are counted they number 1,462, and this number divided by the total of the vowels, 966, yields 1.51. This means that the consonant-vowel ratio is 1 to 1.5. As we do not have half a sound, we may form the structure CVC as the basic structure of a monosyllabic word in English. This count and its consequent form of CVC, though gathered from very small data, conform to the basic structure of monosyllabic words in the Germanic languages, as V. Y. Plotkin states in his *Dynamics of the English Phonological System*; "CVC is the cononic shape of the Germanic monosyllable."[3]

If this is the case, the frequency of the presence of the high

front vowel can be mathematically calculated. As three of the vowels, when put together, constitute more than a half of the entire vowel distribution, one of them will appear in every other syllable. In other words, when a disyllabic word consists of CVCCVC, either one or the other V in that structure has to be one of the following [i, ɪ, ə]. As these vowels can keep the air pressure nearly as high as that of the consonants between the vowels, and considering the effect of coarticulation, the structure CVCCVC may, in some cases, depending upon the environments which surround the vowels, be even closer in the maintained air pressure to the form of either CCCCVC or CVCCCC. This arrangement of vowels seems to support the theory of high air pressure in the oral cavity, as no other vowels in English are allowed to appear with the same degree of frequency.

In the matter of vowel distribution, the count from the Japanese text shows quite a different result. However, a word about the transcription system employed for the purposes of this paper should be added before the data is studied. That is, the transcription is not that of phonetics but a direct replacing of what appears in a Japanese hiragana rendering of the text into romaji; or, Roman letters. The reason for this is that in Japanese, while some letters or sounds are devoiced in some cases, their actual mora duration is present in the speech. The devoiced sounds are, however, clearly present in writing, showing the combination of a consonant and its accompanying vowel which is left out in speech. Therefore, all the vowels that are present in Japanese hiragana writing are counted, without exception. However, this does not alter the results significantly, because the numbers of devoiced sounds are not large enough.

The vowel count from the Japanese text are shown in the figures opposite.

The most significant difference that emerges out of the study of the ways in which both Japanese and English speakers distribute their vowel sounds in their languages (as show in the data opposite) is that the acoustic properties of the most frequently appearing vowels in the two languages

A	348	26% of the total vowels		
I	409	24%	"	"
U	283	17%	"	"
E	162	10%	"	"
O	396	23%	"	"
	1688			

are diametrically opposed: One is high and front and the other is low and back. This leads to a natural speculation that in English, due to the three frequently appearing vowels [ɪ ɩ, ə], and even more numerous apperances of consonants, the oral cavity tends to maintain its narrow volume. On the other hand, Japanese offers an exactly reversed picture; that is, the most frequently appearing vowel sound, [a], necessitates a great number of wide openings of the mouth, and the vowels in Japanese are surrounded by a small number of consonants. Therefore, the consequence is that a large volume of air is kept in the oral cavity with frequent wide openings of the mouth.

If the greater mouth opening in production of speech sounds is the rule of thumb for Japanese, it would be extremely difficult for the Japanese to speak their language with as much air pressure as the English speakers apply in their speaking. If a Japanese wants to apply the same pressure in speaking Japanese, it would require maintenance of greater pulmonic air pressure, because, at one end of the oral tract sits a great opening constantly releasing the coming airstream with generosity. This is quite inconceivable for other reasons, too, which are not only phonological or linguistic but also sociological and psychological. For example, a Japanese would find a speaker who used an unemotional, even tone and reserved manner of speech more polite, judicious, and pleasing than a speaker with an untrameled manner of speech, using great intonational variety and loud stress.

This discussion concerning the vowel count and its results shows the great presence of high front vowels in English vocabulary. There are many other ways to support the results of the count, and they are included in the following section of the paper.

A simple and quick way to see the overriding frequency of the high front vowels in English is to look at the English alphabet and the names of the letters in it. The way the English speaking people have arranged their speech sounds and decided on their pronunciations for the purpose of either convenience or euphony is shown in the names of the letters.

Figure 2 shows each letter of the English alphabet in order, with respective pronunciations, after which is presented a close look at the vowel constituents of each.

A	B	C	D	E	F
[eɪ]	[bi]	[si]	[di]	[i]	[ef]
G	H	I	J	K	L
[dʒi]	[eɪtʃ]	[aɪ]	[dʒeɪ]	[keɪ]	[el]
M	N	O	P	Q	R
[em]	[en]	[oʊ]	[pi]	[kju]	[ar]
S	T	U	V	W	
[es]	[ti]	[ju]	[vi]	[dəblju]	
X	Y	Z			
[eks]	[wai]	[zi]			

Figure 2

Out of twenth-six sounds represented in the alaphabet of English, 14 of them are pronounced with a high front vowel. Therefore, the percentage of high front vowels present in the pronunciation of the letters in the alphabet is 54%. The frequency of the high front vowels in quite consistent with the finding from the vowel count: the high front vowels are the most frequently appearing vowels among the vowels in English.

The much-favored high front vowels in English do not seem to receive the same favorable treatment in Japanese: a high front vowel [i] and a high back vowel [u] are the only two vocalic sounds that are entirely excluded from the standard Japanese vocabulary when they are combined with certain limited consonants. A study of the syllabary of Japanese may be necessary to see this difference clearly:

A	KA	SA	TA	NA	HA	MA	YA	RA	WA	N
I	KI	SHI	CHI	NI	HI	MI	I	RI	I	
U	KU	SU	TSU	NU	HU	MU	YU	RU	U	
E	KE	SE	TE	NE	HE	ME	E	RE	E	
O	KO	SO	TO	NO	HO	MO	YO	RO	O	

The fourth column in the syllabary shows that [ti] and [tu] are not found in the set; this is because these two sounds are not used today in standard Japanese. The substitutes for these two missing sounds are, as represented in the preceding set, "CHI" and "TSU". There is a voiced set of the consonants for "K, S, T, H." in Japanese, which are "G, Z, D, B.", but the voiced counterpart of "T" also receives the same exclusion. That is, [di] and [du] are not used in the vocabulary in standard Japanese. These four excluded speech sounds, [ti, tu, di, du.], can only find their presence in borrowed words of mostly Western origin, or in some dialects one can find in the prefecture of Okinawa.

The preceeding discussion again shows that the high front vowels are the most favored vocalic speech sounds in English. As for Japanese, according to the syllabary, it may be said that the high front vowel and high back vowel are the least favored vocalic speech sounds. One reason for this differing treatment of the vowel sounds [i] or [u] may lie in the different attitude the two language groups have in terms of the air pressure needed in the oral cavity to pronounce the sounds. In order to see what the above hypothesis means, some knowledge of the property of the vowels [i, u] should be helpful. Peter Ladefoged refers to the degree of sonority of the front vowels [i, u] as follows:[4]

> The sonority of a sound is its loudness relative to that of other sounds with the same length, stress and pitch. Try saying just the vowels [i, e, a, o, u.]. You can probably hear that the vowel [a] has greater sonority (due, largely, to its being pronounced with a greater mouth opening). You can verify this fact by asking a friend to stand some distance away from you and say these vowels in a random order. You will find that it is much easier to hear the low vowel than the high vowels [i, u.].

The same author gives estimates of the acoustic intensity of a group of sounds on comparable pitches with comparable degree of length and stress by the bar graph in Figure 3:[5]

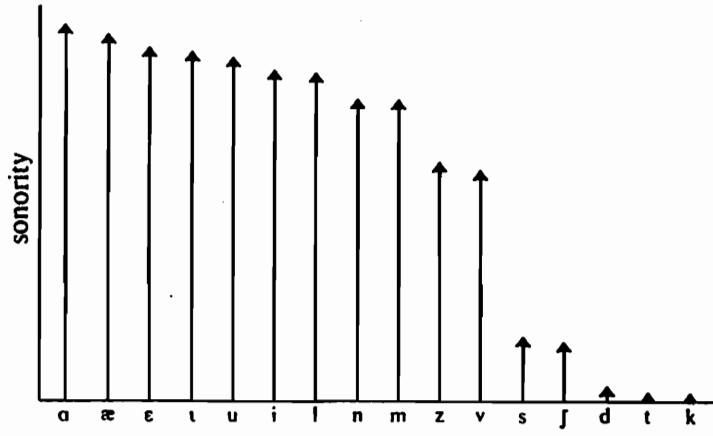

Figure 3

According to the bar graph, the high front vowel is the vowel with least sonority. It may mean that greater energy has to be applied in order to pronounce the vowel to be heard as clearly as others that have greater sonority. This fact may account for the Japanese exclusion of the vowel in some combinations, whereas English capitalizes on the very same quality of the sound. This hypothesis gains a little more ground when the consonants that have little or

almost zero sonority on the graph are checked. These consonants are (d, t.] and [k]. Out of the three, two of the least sonorous consonants, [d] and [t], are excluded from Japanese in combination with the vowels which have least sonority, that is, [i] and [u]. Unlike the other two consonants [k] is not excluded, and this can also be understood from the degree of air pressure it builds up in the oral cavity. Unlike [d] and [t], [k] allows greater opening of the mouth; and, therefore, its sonority becomes higher than the two without the air pressure high in the oral cavity. Therefore, out of the three least sonorous consonants [d, t] and [k], that might be avoided in combination with the least sonorous vocalic sounds [i] and [u], only [k] is being used in combinations with [i] and [u] in Japanese.

We have observed the frequent appearances of the high front vowels in the pronunciation of the English Alphabet, and the same result can be obtained by a simply devised chart using all the English consonants and all the English vowels to examine all the monosyllabic English words having an initial consonant and an open syllable in them.

	[i, ɪ]	[ʌ]	[u, ʊ]	[e, ɛ]	[o, ɔ]	[æ]	[ə]	[a]
[m]	me							ma
[n]	knee		new					
[ŋ]								
[p]	pea, "P"				paw			pa
[b]	be, bee, "B"		boo					baa
[t]	tea, tee, "T"		to, too, two				to	
[d]	"D"		do					
[k]	Key		coo					
[g]	ghee		goo					
[f]	fee						for	
[v]	"V"							
[θ]					thaw			
[ð]	thee						the	
[s]	sea, see		sue		saw			
[z]	"Z"		zoo					

	[i, ɪ]	[ʌ]	[u, ʊ]	[e,]	[o, ɔ]	[æ']	[ə']	[a]
[ʃ]	she		shoe					
[ʒ]			Jew					
[w]	we		woo					
[r]			rue		raw			
[j]	ye		you, "U"					
[l]	lee		lieu					
[h]	he		who					
[tʃ]			chew					
[dʒ]	"G", gee				jaw			

The table shows that there are 26 words with high front vowels, the most frequently occuring vowels in English. Excepting [u], which are also high vowels, no other vowels can even come close in number of meaningful combinations to the high front vowels. The rest of the vowels are seen in only half a dozen words at best, [o, ɔ] and zero in some cases: [ʌ, e, ɛ ,æ].

Even such a simple test using arbitary combinations of English consonants and vowels shows very clearly that the high front vowels are the most frequently occuring vowels. Consequently, we can assume that in proportion to the frequency of high front vowels in English, the speaker's need of high air pressure to pronounce words containing them should increase. From this point of view, let us make some further observations concerning the ways in which the high front vowels appear in English words.

The discussion has only dealt, so far, with words that are mostly monosyllabic, yet the frequency with which the high front vowels appear in polysyllable words in English is also unique. In the following discussion, attempts are made to point to the possibility that it may be only high front vowels that can occur in three consecutive series to make up English words. Such a combination with other vowels is either non-existent or, if ever, extremely rare. However, with the high front vowels the case is different.

As an initial example, it is interesting to note the number of [i] s found in the following word:

"indivisibility ˈindiˌviziˈbiliti [-zəˈb-,-ləˈt-]"

The pronunciation is taken from the way it is listed in *An English Pronouncing Dictionary*.[6]

There are seven straight [i]s in the word without any other vowels found in the same word. Such a word with a persistent usage of 7 identical vowels to the exclusion of all the other vowels is very hard to find in English. In fact, with other vowels, such a combination simply doesn't exist. (Note: various English language dictionaries list different readings of the word, such as [ində-vizə-bilə-ti].)

A word with seven identical vowel sounds in succession alternating with other consonants is not easily found in English, yet three or even four high front vowels in a straight cluster in a word without any other vowels are easy to find. Schwas in some of the following words should probably be considered, judging from orthography, as high front vowels in origin. A few words should suffice as examples to prove the point:

easy- - - -easily	repeat- - -repeated- - -repeatedly
busy- - - -busily	infinite- - -infinitive- - -infinitely
insist- -insisting	increase- - -increasing- - -increasingly
desist- -desisting	decrease- - -decreasing- - -decreasingly

The list of the words with three or four high front vowels without any other vowel sounds in the word may be counted by hundreds and may even go up to thousands, yet such a combination utilizing other than high front vowels in a word is so scarce that it almost looks as if the combination is totally absent from the English vocabulary.

The discussion so far has not shown conclusively that the high front vowels are systematically employed in English on a consistently more frequent basis than other vowel sounds. As the words studied in the preceeding discussion were collected arbitrarily, this point needs further clarification. In order to do this in a brief manner, a simple set of personal

pronouns are listed and studied in terms of the presence of the high front vowels.

I HE SHE WE THEY YOU

The pronunciation of all the personal pronouns given here except "you" end with a high front vowel. Although "you" looks like one exception, there is historical evidence that "you" also utilized a high front vowel before it came to be in its present form. The archaic form of the second person pronoun was "ye", and the pronunciation was; [ji]. This pronunciation is very close to the third person pronoun "he", yet evidently "ye" and "he" must have been used contemporaneously in the past. The similarity of pronunciation of these two pronouns may have caused confusion, resulting in "ye" being gradually replaced by "you".

In addition, the second person pronoun "you" used to have other forms: "thou, thy, thee." There might also have been a confusion between the forms "thou, they, thee" and "they, their, theirs."

The high front vowels are the only vowels used in the set of personal pronouns, although there are in English many other vowels available to make the last syllables of words. When the possibility that other vowels could have been brought into the personal pronoun set is considered, a point can be made that dominant usage of the high front vowels is apparent, without regard for clarity of communication.

Finally, it would be interesting to see how the high front vowel sounds [i, ɪ] appear in sentences. All the previous discussions show that [i, ɪ] are the most frequently occurring vowel sounds in English, and as such, one can easily find an utterance or a sentence in English that collects a dozen [i, ɪ]s without any other intervening vowels:

He didn't see these three people eating tinned fish
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

here with me in the evening
11 12 13 14 15 16 17

She, the evil green witch, feels ease in killing sweet
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

little people with these six thin spears, which is
12 13 14 15 16 17 18 18 19

indeed weird.
21 22 23

No other vowels in English, besides the high front vowels, seem to allow such a construction. In a Japanese sentence, such a consecutive appearance of a vowel sound can only be found with two back vowels; [a] and [o]. Three of the other vowels appearing in Japanese, [i, u, e], do not seem to allow such a combination with the same degree of easiness as the other two. A couple of sentences, as examples, are:

ANATAGATA DAKARA
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

W A K A R A N A K A T T A N DESU
9 10 11 12 13 14

Meaning:You did not understand because you were what you were or (because of your situation.)

DAREKA GA GAKE KARA SONO OTOKO
1 2 3 4 5

TO KODOMO O OTOSO TO KOKOROMITA
6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17

Meaning: Someone tried to push the man and the child off the cliff.

The discussion up to this point has attempted to show that in the spoken English language, there is an uncommonly favored distribution of high front vowels. One reason for this is ascribed to the consciousness of high air pressure in production of speech sounds among English speakers. In Order to further examine this point, some attempts are presented in the following section of this paper.

In the preceeding discussion, the overriding frequency in

occurrence of the high front vowels in the English langauge has been utilized as a possible proof of the English speaker's air pressure consciousness. The above assumption pertains to a method of inclusion or addition, for the critical question depends on how often or how many high front vowels are included in the English vocabulary. If a method of inclusion or addition to satisfy some property of a language, such as the overriding usage of a given vowel found in English, is used, it will be a highly feasible assumption that a method of exclusion to maintain exactly the same property of the language wanted is also systematically employed in that language. For this reason, the following discussions attempt to show that it is possible to look at some aspects of English using the method of exclusion, on the grounds that these phenomena received hierarchical imposition by virtue of the existence of a property of the language which has a high priority.

Before proceeding to a further discussion of the phenomena being studied, it may be of some help to depict all the sounds of English in graph form. This would make it easier to study how many parameters are available and how many are excluded from the possible combinations in terms of conditions and environments. In the following are figures for the English consonants and vowels given by Ladefoged.[7]

The two figures 4 and 5 give 13 vowels and 23 consonants (including [h, tʃ, dʒ] added in the explanation below the Figure 4) that are available for the possible combinations of speech sounds in English. If no restriction in particular is placed in the choice of speech sounds to be combined in order to compose words in the language, equal distribution of these sounds in every environment would seem to be the natural outcome. Further, ease in communication would be more efficiently attained by the equal participation of all available sounds in every available environment. However, this is not the case for the English language: out of twelve vowels (excluding a rarely used [ɒ] five of them are always excluded from appearing at the end of English words. These vowels are [ɪ, ɛ, æ, ʊ, ʌ]; the set of vowels classified as lax vowels. This exclusion of lax vowels from the English

Manner of articulation \ Place of articulation	bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	palato-alveolar	palatal	velar
nasal	m			n			ŋ
stop	p b			t d			k g
fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ		
(central) approximant	(w)			r		j	w
lateral (approximant)				l			

Figure 4

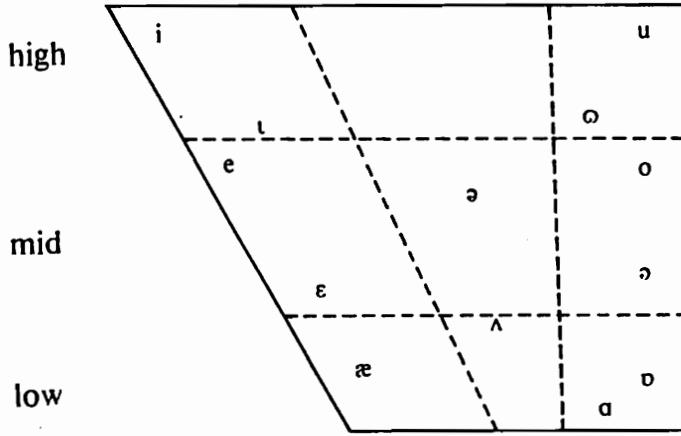

Figure 5

vocabulary in forming open syllables at the end of words results in the cutting almost in half of the possible number of open syllables in this position in English. This restriction, "numerically neutral" so to speak, is quite a heavy exclusion and selection.

Ladefoged refers to the three sets of vowels in pairs of a tense and lax vowel, [i, ɪ], (eɪ, ɛ] and [u, ʊ]: "In each of these pairs the lax vowel is shorter, lower, and slightly more centralized than the corresponding tense vowel."[8] The quality of the tongue position being lower and slightly centralized in pronouncing these vowels can be viewed in terms of air pressure as follows: When the tongue is lower and more centralized, the air pressure in the oral cavity is also low. The exclusion of [ʌ] and [æ], also, may be attributed to this effect of lowering the air pressure in the oral cavity. By the same token, [ə] is not excluded from the vowels that can form open syllables, because a schwa can be pronounced with the tip of the tongue higher than any other vowels, thus never decreasing the air pressure as drastically as other lower vowels. Therefore, the schwa has an ability to maintain the air pressure in the oral cavity and it is allowed to form open syllables, whereas the lax vowels tend to decrease the air pressure in the oral cavity and therefore are excluded as not being desirable in forming open syllables at the end of words.

Ladefoged also mentions that lax vowels are shorter than tense vowels, and this seems to stand to reason if the pronunciation of them is considered from the point of air pressure in the oral cavity. If these lax vowels do not create enough air pressure in pronouncing them, shorter duration in pronouncing them will work better toward the preservation of the air pressure in the oral cavity that might be weakened by longer duration in pronunciation, which may make the preservation of air pressure, or the creation of it after the weakened air pressure, slightly more difficult.

If exlcusion, as explained above, is reflected in the manner in which the vowels at the end of the words are arranged, it seems to be a reasonable assumption that any sound that comes at the end of the word and decreases the air pressure

in the oral cavity should be prevented from occurring at the end of the word. This should be applied to the consonants of English as well. Examination of the distribution of the English consonants proves this to be the case.

However, most of the English consonants require some obstruction of air; therefore, they meet the requirement of air pressure consciousness of the speaker. There is one consonant, though, that does not require a closing of the lips, nor a raising of the tongue to seriously obstruct the coming airstream from the vocal tract. This rare consonant is [h]. The search for the [h] in a final position shows zero distribution in this place. Therefore, this seems to be best explained as the phenomenon of air pressure consciousness at work among English speakers.

If such strong consciousness of air pressure in speech sound production is reflected in the manner in which English words end, it is again quite reasonable to assume that the same reflection should also be found in the manner in which English words deal with the initial sound or sounds of a word. This prediction is not entirely without support, and the point may be best explained by a brief discussion of the ways in which English consonants and vowels are produced.

Consonants are produced by some obstruction of the airstream in the oral cavity. As consonsants constitute the majority of the English speech sounds, many more words start with consonants than with vowels. A word with a consonant at the beginning of it does not cause any trouble as regards the pressure of the air in its pronunciation. In case of a vowel in the initial position of a word, the matter is somewhat different, because no lip closing occurs and the air in the oral tract flows out of the oral cavity with least obstruction. When one's breath runs out of the oral cavity without any obstruction, it becomes very difficult to maintain high air pressure in the oral cavity. When two vowels appear in a consecutive series in conversation, the amount of the air that flows out of the oral cavity and subsequent lowering of the air pressure in the oral cavity can be quite strong. Therefore, if the speaker considers the preservation of air pressure in the oral

cavity as some property of linguistically high priority, the generous airflow in pronouncing two vowels in a consecutive series has to be prevented one way or another. Here, some device can be found in the manner the English speaking people follow some linguistic rule. In the following is a set of English nouns with grammatically correct articles placed in front of them.

(1) a tree, a flower, a river, a cat, a pig, a monkey, a girl.
(2) an egg, an apple, an organge, an eagle, an American.

What this grammatical mandate forbids is such a comination as

(3) a egg, a apple, a orange, a eagle, a American

One reason for this may be found in the degree of priority the English speaker feels in maintaining high air pressure in the oral cavity: combinations of vowels in such words as "a apple, a orange, etc." require the pronunciation of two consecutive vowels and unobstructed air flow of some duration equal to the length of the two vowels combined. The result would be a drastic decrease of the air pressure in the oral cavity.

As "an" came from "one" in Old English, the presence of [n] here may not be a conscious selection, yet as the form, "an tree, an pig, etc." is not the final reduction from "one tree, one pig, etc." some reason must have interfered in the simplification of "one" into two distinct forms of the indefinite article; that is, into "an" or into "a". In a natural situation simplicity may be preferred provided that function sees no damage in simplification. Therefore, if, although only if, simplicity was the highest priority among the reasons for the reduction of "one" to "an" and "a", either one of the forms given below might have been the most natural result of the reduction:

(1) a tree, a egg, a flower, a apple, a cat, a orange, a American
or
(2) an tree, an egg, an flower, an apple, an cat, an Englishman.

As this is not the case, the present forms can be said to be a complication of the old form that utilized a single pattern: "one tree, one apple, one pig, one orange, etc.".

All the nouns listed above can take the definite article "the", yet the pronunciation of this article differs according to the quality of the sound immediately following. When followed by a consonant, it is [ðə] and when a vowel it is [ði]. The raising of the tongue before the vowel sound in producing [ði] seems to be consistent with the high consciousness of air pressure in the oral cavity. As with [n] in "an", [i] pronounced before a vowel instead of a relaxed schwa [ə] seems to work better to sustain air pressure by narrowing the space in the oral cavity by its lifted tongue position.

If two consecutive vowels are banned from the desired combination of English speech sounds by one facet of grammatical inhibitions, it will be of some value to see if this phonological exclusion has cast any restriction on this vocalic combination in some additional environments available in the English language. English, unlike Japanese that allows double or even triple or greater vocalic combinations, does not favor the combination of two vowels in consecutive series within a word. What comes close to this combination can be found in what is classified as diphthongs in English. An examination of one quality of dipthongs can provide some additional insight into the manner in which a combination of vowels (which might be a double vocalic construction in other languages) is treated in English.

Ladefoged cites six dipthongs and explains them.[9] These six dipthongs are; [aɪ, eɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, oʊ, ju]. As the dipthongs involve a change in quality within one vowel, and the change can be described as a movement from one vowel to another, the direction of the movement can be graphed as in Figure 6.

A reordering of the six dipthongs from the order Ladefoged cites according to the proximity of the last vowel can show the direction of the movement within the vowel: that is, [aɪ, eɪ, ɔɪ, aʊ, oʊ, ju]. All the last vowels in these six dipthongs are high vowels which are equally distributed in a set of three between the front and back vowels. Therefore, all the arrows showing the direction of the movement in figure 6 except one, are upward, which means narrowing

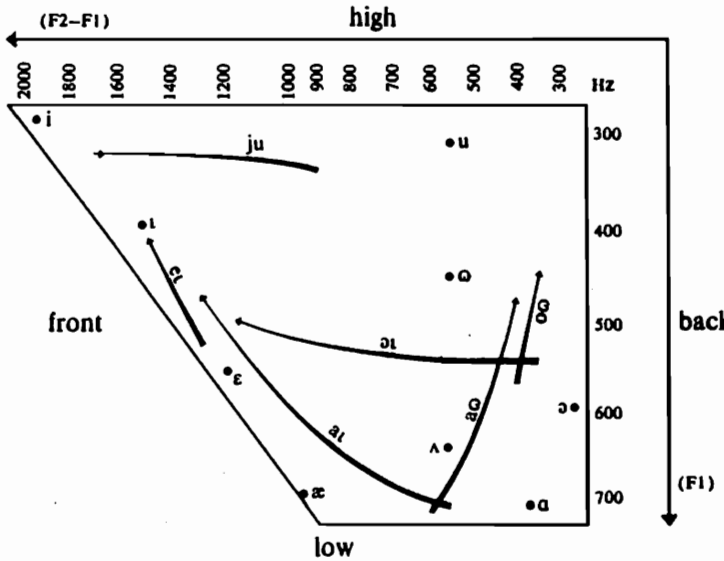

Figure 6 The relative auditory qualities of some of the vowels of American English

the space of the oral cavity. Consequently, the pronunciation of any of these diphthongs builds up pressure toward the end of the sound. One exception seems to be [ju], for the arrow seems to show a downward direction. In pronouncing [ju], however, one can find the direction of the movement from [i] to [u] tends to build more pressure than the reverse movement; that is from [u] to [i]. One reason for this may be found in a possibility that the oral cavity is more narrowed and constricted toward the last vowel in the former case.

This quality of diphthongs in English is one of the signs of air pressure consciousness because diphthongs are composed in such a manner as to preserve some air pressure toward

the end of the sounds. By the same token, a possible support can be derived from the fact that a diphtongal construction that results in the reverse movement of the vowels is not found as such. In other words, there are no English diphthongs whose movements of the arrows in the graph can be downward, which would be described as [ɪa , ɪe , ɪɔ , ɷa, ɷo , ʊj]. These diphthongs, if they existed, would necessitate a greater opening of the mouth toward the end of the sound, thus decreasing the air pressure in the oral cavity. Such a quality of diphthongs should go against the intuitive perception and requirement of sustained air pressure in the oral cavity among the English speaking people.

In discussing the movement of the vocalic sounds and diphthongs, it should be noted that the present English vowels have not always been in the English words as they are today. Regarding the history of the vocalic movements known as the Great Vowel Shift, Albert C. Baugh has the following explanation to give as quoted in Figure 7.[10]

The diagram given by the author shows that the direction of the changes of the long vowels is only upward. If this is the case, all the changes found in the Great Vowel Shift only increase the air pressure in pronouncing the words containing them. If so, the English speaking people have been trying to lift their vowels toward the high vowels and the efforts have been continued generation after generation, covering many centuries.

The discussion in this paper is presented to point out that those learning English as a second language should realize that there is among English speaking people such a phenomenon as air pressure consciousness in the production of speech sounds. A similar consciousness is not seen in Japanese to any comparable degree. Therefore, in the future, study and research should be more vigorously conducted in comparing the two languages, English and Japanese, in terms of the air pressure involved in the production of their respective speech sounds.

The Great Vowel Shift. The situation is very different when we consider the long vowels. In Chaucer's pronunciation these had still their so-called 'continental' value,—i.e., *a* was pronounced like the *a* in *father* and not as in *name*, *e* was pronounced either like the *e* in *there* or the *a* in *mate*, but not like the *ee* in *meet*, and so with the other vowels. But in the fifteenth century a great change is seen to be under way. All the long vowels gradually came to be pronounced with a greater elevation of the tongue and closing of the mouth, so that those that could be raised (*a*, *ɛ*, *ɛ*, *ɔ*, *ɔ*) were raised, and those that could not without becoming consonantal (*i*, *u*) became diphthongs. The change may be visualized in the following diagram:

Such a diagram must be taken as only a very rough indication of what happened, especially in the breaking of *i* and *u* into the diphthongs *ai* and *au*. Nor must the changes indicated by the arrows be thought of as taking place successively, but rather as all part of a general movement with slight differences in the speed with which the results were accomplished (or the date at which evidence for them can be found).

Figure 7

NOTES

[1] Peter Ladefoged, *A Course in Phonetics* (New York: Harcourt, 1975), p. 6.

[2] Tsuyoshi Yagi and Mitsuyasu Goto, *Somerset Maugham-4* (Tokyo: Nanundo, 1959), p. 1-6.

[3] V. Y. Plotkin, *The Dynamics of the English Phonological System* (The Hague: Mouton, 1972), p. 74.

[4] Ladefoged. p. 219.

[5] Ladefoged. p. 220.

[6] Daniel Jones, *An English Pronouncing Dictionary* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1943), p. 224.

[7] Ladefoged. p. 33–4.

[8] Ladefoged, p. 74.

[9] Ladefoged. p. 70–1.

[10] Albert C. Baugh, *A History of the English Language* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1978), p. 238.

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IMPROMPTU SPEAKING AS A TOOL TO IMPROVE NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS' FLUENCY IN ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

Impromptu speaking can aid advanced ESL students in their confidence in formal speaking situations while improving their general ability to communicate on all levels. The impromptu speaking activity discussed here teaches the students to focus their speaking and listening skills as well as teaching them how to organise their ideas in a logical fashion. The reasons for teaching formal speaking procedures are discussed in addition to suggestions on how to organise an impromptu speaking lesson. Examples of topics and speech frameworks are given along with suggested preliminary exercises to help the student understand the mechanisms of an impromptu speech. A suggested critique sheet is also outlined and explained. this helps students organise both speech development and listening comprehension. In addition, some of the most common formal speaking difficulties are discussed and different solutions are suggested. Finally, the improvements expected from this speaking exercise are outlined.

Impromptu speaking is a much neglected tool to aid the advanced second language speaker in skills such as thought organisation and development. It improves the student's ability to communicate effectively on all levels and generates

poise and confidence. Such a speaking activity can also expand functional vocabulary and provide increasing opportunities for vocabulary use. Above all, impromptu speaking is a technique for improving command of spoken English and listening comprehension and, therefore its principal objectives are fluent and accurate speaking skills.

WHAT IS IMPROMPTU SPEAKING?

Impromptu speaking is a relatively simple formal speaking exercise of a limited duration of time and with limited formal preparation.

WHY TEACH A FORMAL SPEAKING TECHNIQUE?

While students create sequential statements effortlessly in their native language and even in English conversation, they often feel inhibited in speaking English in a formal circumstance. The aim of any of the formal speaking techniques such as extemporaneous speaking, oratory or debate, is not only to teach English communication but also to teach the students to develop their thoughts logically and to deliver these thoughts in a clear and concise way. Surprisingly enough, though students attempting this exercise are already advanced, for many it will be the first time they have actually given a "formal yet unprepared" speech in English. Such speaking exercises teach the student the difference between formal and conversational English. They encourage the development of an extensive and appropriate vocabulary and they develop culturally appropriate use of gesture and body language as well as teaching students to think and speak in an organised and logical manner.

HOW TO ORGANISE AN IMPROMPTU SPEAKING LESSON

First, the teacher must explain what impromptu speaking is and then outline the speaking procedure, i.e. establish the

rules. The rules are briefly, as follows: a student is given the choice of two topics which have not been seen previously. The student has thirty seconds to choose a topic. Then, one, two or three minutes should be allowed for the thinking and writing that constitutes the preparation. The optimum preparation time is one minute (three minutes is for very slow students). The choice of time is at the teacher's discretion.

Impromptu is disarming in its seeming simplicity. It is difficult enough for a native speaker to give a unified and logically developed talk on a topic of consequence. Second language speakers therefore, need to be concise, methodical and prepared. Students should use the preparation time to make a sketchy, yet functional, outline of the speech they intend to deliver.

The objective then, is to train the students so they can select and organise a topic in the otpimum 1.30 minutes (thirty seconds selection, one minute preparation) so they can then deliver a well organised, interesting speech for at least two minutes. It should be considered an equal problem (organisational or otherwise) if the student speaks either under or over time. Maintaining these rules is important if the overall objectives are to be reached.

The teacher will have to determine which organisational technique is best in selecting the topics. Since each student gets the choice of two topics they can either all have the choice of the same two topics and the remaining speakers wait outside the room or a number of topics can be put in a "hat" and each student selects two. This latter process is perhaps better in the initial stages since then all students participate in both the speaking and the listening comprehension exercises.

TIMEKEEPING

The timekeeper should have time cards which begin with 3 minutes and go backwards to ½ minute and STOP. The speaker can stop anytime after the 1 minute card is shown since he/she would then have spoken the required minimum of two minutes (3 minutes is the maximum limit).

Timing is important because it pressures the students to be precise, to keep to the point and to see the necessity of order in their speeches if they are to say everything they wish to say. Timing also gives the students a sense of logical order and as they become better able to deliver speeches it provides them with a system to measure their own progress.

EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF IMPROMPTU SPEAKING TOPICS

Impromptu speaking has a number of types of topics which can be used sequentially or together:

1. The "simple" one word topic; e.g. Money, Racism, Euthenasia
2. The fill in the black conditional; e.g.

   If I were a millionaire I would _____ . or
   If I could change the world I would _____ .

3. The straight-forward fill in the black; e.g.
   The biggest problem in the world today is _____. or
   The greatest evil in society is _____.

4. Sayings and quotations; these are perhaps the most difficult topics to deal with and for that reason should be left until the class is familiar with the speaking technique and the timing confines; e.g.

   "A penny saved is a penny earned" or
   "The pen is mightier than the sword".

The teacher may find it necessary to define some terms (and the smart student may well use the definition in his/her speech). It is, however, important that the teacher carefully select the topics because these speaking skills are best developed through a range of topics which are of universal interest and concern.

SUGGESTED IMPROMPTU SPEAKING SPEECH FORMATS AND EXAMPLES

Certain speeches lend themselves to a chronological/sequential development. This is particularly true of the one word topics. If the student is familiar with history or geography he/she can use this overall system to give the speech structure. For example with the topic "money" a student might choose to discuss money through the ages progressing from barter to the cheques of today and the international money situation or sequentially, the student may choose to discuss the types of money forms in different countries or a combination of both.

A second speech format which the student can learn to adapt quickly and effectively to impromptu speaking is the compare/contrast method. This technique presents both sides to a question and is best used if the student feels that by discussing only one aspect of a question he/she will still be under time. Even though the speaking minimum is only two minutes, thinking of a number of logically connected supporting facts can be difficult. If the student can be trained to focus on the acquisition of ideas this will be helpful in all other aspects of his/her English. For example: "Money"

Good	Bad
life style	takes the challenge away
business	can't guarantee success
travel	doesn't buy health/friends

If the subject area is broad, dividing the topic will help and this gives a clearer framework for idea organisation.

The third method is the expository type of speech format. The main idea might be expressed as a general statement and then specific, concrete details clarify and develop the ideas. Details may be organised in the form of facts of all types, examples or reasons. For an example see (fig. 1) which uses the expository format while demonstrating how to organise the preparation card.

PREPARATORY EXERCISES

All of the above may sound a little overwhelming at first. There are, however, a number of exercises that can be introduced before the teacher actually launches the students into the speaking exercise itself. Such exercises help students organise their thoughts and provide "source" material for immediate recall. One exercise that has proved successful is to train the students to draw on their own life/work experience. All fields of student activity can be explored from mathematics to economics and translated titles of native language texts. Moreover, since examples are often difficult to produce when students only have a minute or so for preparation it's necessary that they develop techniques which enable them to produce supporting details with minimum time.

Such an exercise, entitled "speed thinking", was developed to aid the above recall process. Put three major subject headings on the board; for example, films, books, music and then in seven (?) minutes have the students list as many titles under each heading as they can. Exercise two is another 5–7 minute exercise that follows immediately. Have the students list as many associated ideas as they can for the individual titles. For example, with the title *Hamlet* students might write: madness, love, circumstance etc. Follow this exercise by having individual students read out their lists. This provides other students with additional ideas. Repeat these exercises over a number of days and include some of the same topics each time. Exercise three is integrated into the above and is used to expand the student's active vocabulary. Once the most commonly developed categories (i.e. student preference) have been determined e.g. economics, science, literature, the teacher should prepare vocabulary lists in the related areas in addition to eliciting vocabulary from the students. It is amazing how advanced some students are in areas in which they are interested. Moreover since the areas where vocabulary lists have been developed stem from subject areas of student interest new words will be learned quickly. This vocabulary will be acquired both through the speaking and listening comprehension exercises that follow.

HOW TO ORGANISE AN IMPROMPTU SPEECH

Introduction: The students must understand the necessity of an outstanding introduction. The aim of the introduction is to arouse interest and to convince an audience that the speech is worth listening to. If an audience is lost in the introduction it is never regained. A number of alternatives the student might choose in developing a strong introduction are:

(a) State speaker intention e.g. "I wish to explain exactly why the *pollution* (topic) situation in this city is intolerable!"
(b) Ask a rhetorical question which sets the theme by implication e.g. "I ask you, is the *pollution* situation in this city sufferable?"
(c) Outline the theme or problem in point form.

These are just a few suggestions; there are many ways the students can open their speech topics. Other methods include stories, quotations, personal experiences, a definition of terms or even a rewording and emphatic delivery of the topic sentence (question). Whichever method the student chooses, the theme must be clearly stated and the topic clearly outlined.

Body

Once the student understands the necessity of capturing the audience's attention at the outset he/she must then have enough material on the preparation card (see fig. 1) to carry him/her through the speech. Using the journalistic technique of answering the how, when, where, why questions is an invaluable asset to aid student idea organisation and development. In this way points can be logically linked, one to another, in support of the student's overall premise. So, for example, if the topic is 'money' the student could first draw on the "speed thinking" exercises and could refer to Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice" or the last class English reader or a recent newspaper article on inflation (the source doesn't have to be an English language newspaper) or an economic text. If this exercise fails then the

student can use the journalistic approach. All such ideas provide "meat" (evidence) to support the premise and to develop the body of the speech.

Conclusion

This part of the speech is naturally very important and there are a number of ways to teach the students how to handle it. As with the other sections these recommendations are far from complete and are only suggested as a guide to the introduction of formal speaking as a valid and worthwhile activity for the ESL classroom.

If time is pressing, a simple and effective method is to restate the original premise of the introduction. A second method is to restate each major point made through the body of the speech (see fig. 1) drawing to a concluding statement. A third method is to end with a quotation or reference. This does not have to be exact or very complex; for example, if the topic were "freedom" a student might recall the reader (novel) *Call of the Wild* by Jack London and say "In concluding I'd like to refer to Jack London's famous book, *Call of the Wild*, which emphasises my point that freedom and life are synonymous." The student may equally prefer to end with another story, statistic or fact. Once a student has made a conclusion he/she should pause a moment to say thank you and then sit down.

The Critique Sheet (fig. 2)

This sheet is an invaluable tool to measure both speaking confidence and listening comprehension. The categories listed are only suggestions and teachers may wish to delete some and add others. The items listed are provided to determine the critiquer's overall reaction to the speech. The major learning importance of the critique sheet is the notetaking section at the bottom. This provides both feedback to the speaker on how well his delivery was organised and a check on how well the listener understood the delivery. The score marking also indicates just how impressed with each category the listener was and emphasises the areas in which the speaker needs to improve most.

The teacher should provide each student with a critique sheet for each of the speakers. The categories and use of the sheet must be explained in detail. This is best achieved if the critique categories are related to the speech preparation outline (refer fig. 1) previously taught. The aim is to teach speakers to give a logically developed speech and to have notetakers be able to comprehend the speech and take down the essential points on paper. The critique sheet can help students do this if the speech is clear and logical and the ideas are separated by previously taught "clue" transition words (for example, following, then, in addition etc.). These sheets also provide the listener with a source of material from which to ask information questions at the end of the speech. The teacher should collect these sheets and note how much each student understood of what was said. It is important that the speaker get the critique sheets as soon as possible. By comparing them with his/her own preparation outline he/she can determine how well the speech was delivered. The teacher should always use the time immediately after each speech for constructive criticism and discussion. Peer support can be utilised as an effective aid in evaluating and analysing speaking content, style and manner. As a follow-up exercise the teacher can ask each student to write an outline of one of the four or five speeches they heard. Students should base this exercise on one of their critique sheets. In this way the teacher can use writing to consolidate the oral-aural work.

SPEAKING PROBLEMS AND SOME SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS

Generally the first hurdle is the student response "I can't" or "I don't know where to begin". In this situation coaxing and exploiting the use of the "wh" questions to structure a speech can help.

If a student suffers from "stage fright" there are a number of ways to assist. Never let the student stand "alone" for a long period of time. When a student feels that he/she cannot continue have him/her sit (but still at the front of the class).

Sitting immediately removes the formality of the situation. Utilise whatever information the student has already given to field questions to the class. Elicit further questions from the class to the speaker. Often in the more relaxed discussion format the speaker will contribute additional information. This process takes time but ultimately the student/speaker will overcome and speaking confidence will increase.

Another method to relieve student tension is to draw attention away from content and organisation to the equally important, yet less difficult to master, stance and body language. Humour is often a valuable asset here. Point out crossed legs/arms, chewing gum, the awkwardness of arms/hands etc., while helping the students feel they are working well with the other aspects of speaking.

In impromptu speaking, in particular, speakers will often draw a "blank" with relatively simple vocabulary and grammar points. The problem is not the blank, because the student knows the word very well "it is on the tip of my tongue" they say, the problem is convincing the student to go around the "exact" word. One of the great assets of impromptu speaking is that speakers learn to adapt to that awkward, but frequent, moment when the non-native speaker can't find the "right" word.

Another common speaking problem is the "bullet speaker". Some students feel that the faster they talk the faster they'll finish and naturally they are right! It is wise to let the first such talk be completed in this manner but thereafter it is better to interrupt. The student will invariably be under time and will learn in the discussion period that follows that his/her peers understood little or nothing of the speech. Often the student is simply not aware how fast he/she is speaking and a tactful interruption will result in a more focused delivery.

It is important to be aware that many speakers will be totally unaware of particular habits they have when speaking; e.g. leaning on the front table, tapping the pencil they forgot to put down, umms and ahs or speaking too quickly. Most of these problems can be handled by pointing them out when they occur or soon after. Students will soon become aware of their own idiosyncracies.

WAYS TO INCREASE STUDENT INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION

Always ask the most confident students to give the first set of speeches. Others will see that the task is less formidable than they had thought and they will be more prepared to accept the assignment when it is their turn.

Emphasise the students' conversational ability. After all, the major aspects of conversation dynamics is the building of one statement on another. Formal speaking is being able to build such sentences quickly and confidently in an organised and developed manner. Emphasize the fact that well chosen impromptu topics have relevance to the students and to contemporary life. This heightens student-interest, expands their horizons and most importantly enables them to express cogent, personal opinions which are supported by facts.

EXPECTED RESULTS

1. Students will acquire the ability to organise and confidently deliver thoughts in English.
2. Students develop the ability to distinguish between main and supporting ideas, to detect implications, interpret facts and reach conclusions.
3. Impromptu speaking provides skills that go beyond merely speaking with accuracy. These skills include an extensive and appropriate vocabulary which develops as the speaker grows more confident.
4. Students will learn to determine relevant information and to recall facts when necessary. They will also develop a sense of the need for oganisation.
5. Impromptu speaking develops the appropriate use of facial gesture and body language as well as developing other non-technical language aspects such as cross-culture awareness and socio-linguistically appropriate usage.
6. Writing should improve in organisation while at the same time writing reinforces and expands the patterns acquired in speaking and listening.

FIGURE 1

IMPROMPTU
A Sample Preparation Card

This is a suggested outline only. It is much larger than one that students would normally have time to prepare. Any one of the A, B, or C divisions would normally be enough to provide a good speech. Where, when, who, why, etc are idea developers only and are by no means compulsory.

The left hand column indicates divisions a student might use. The choice of "wh" words has been arbitrary. The right hand column is an approximation of what a student's outline might look like.

Topic: "money" Premise: not good

Introduction : Where, when, why questions etc.	Quote: The Bible says money is the root of all evil where: Government, Business, Personal
Body : Where . . . . . . example . . . . . . how . . . . . . example . . . . . . who . . . . . . example . . . . . . examples	*A. Government* 1. increase tax *result*: less money for poor, education, arts *Example*: Regan/Thatcher/EEC 2. Increase spending on defense *result*: wars *Example*: Middle East/Africa *B. Business* Multinational industries exploit *Example*: ITT/Chile, BP South Africa 2. Money leads to greed in business *Example*: T.V. show Dallas and J.R. *C. Personal* 1. Story – mother's purse 2. Story – results in change in personality
Conclusions:	Therefore Because of A, B, and C money is . . . OR Because of the previously mentioned points I would like to recall the opening quote and state emphatically that "money is . . . .

N.B. Students will normally abreviate.

FIGURE 2

IMPROMPTU CRITIQUE SHEET

Speakers Name: _____

Critiquers Name: _____

Indicate a value for each category using the following scale:
+ for above average, 0 for average, and — for needs improvment.

		Score
1.	Adequate introduction which catches attention and arouses interest	____
2.	Clarity in Expression of Thought:	
	a. Adequate statement of problem or idea	____
	b. Effective elaboration of the idea	____
3.	Effectiveness in Speech Construction: Continuity of thought through unity, coherence, clearness, force, and attractiveness	____
4.	Delivery:	
	a. Poise, physical gesture	____
	b. Force, fluency, enunciation, and projection	____

Time: _____

Notes:
Introduction:

Body:

Conclusion:

IMPROVING READING SPEED IN READERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Sixty-two students from two sections of Freshman English at a liberal arts college in northern Japan were pretested, trained, and post-tested in an experiment employing two methods to improve reading speed: traditional paper exercises and a reading machine (projector). Scores for the experimental group increased significantly more ($p < .05$) than for the control group. Student reactions are also reported.

One of the problems common to students of English as a foreign or second language is that of the need to increase their reading speed. The habit of concentrating on individual words and expressions in order to grasp their meaning has kept many students from improving their overall ability to assimilate sentences at a rapid pace. They may have, so to speak, "missed the forest for the trees".

Exercises for increasing reading speed have typically consisted of short, timed reading selections followed by a series of questions regarding their content. The allotted reading time is reduced progressively to encourage faster reading. According to some reports, such exercises in the second language can even have beneficial effects in the native language (Bright and McGregor, 1970 p. 96). However, depending upon the maturity of the student, such exercises may do nothing more than to increase tension and thus do little to help the student pace his or her reading in a systematic manner.

For some years, reading machines have been used in American high schools and colleges for remedial reading as well as to increase reading speed for normal readers. These machines project one line of script on a screen at timed intervals using 35mm film strips. The intervals can be shortened or lengthened by turning a dial to the desired speed. If such machines can be used with positive results for readers in their native language, might they not also be effective for readers of English as a second language? It was with the intention of testing this assumption that the experiment described here was conducted.

METHOD

Students from two sections of Freshman English at a liberal arts college in northern Japan were presented, trained, and post-trained as described below. Sections are formed upon entrance to the college by dividing registrants alphabetically; about 50 in each section. Students who missed more than one session were not included in the data for this experiment. All materials used were taken from Tiersch-Allen, "Classics in Therapeutic Readability for Contained Reading", 1979. A schedule for their use was set up and followed as indicated in Table 1. All reading selections were approximately 150 lines in length.

Pretest

To acquaint the students with the materials and procedure, both sections were given a mimeographed chapter (approximately 150 lines) from Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (Tiersch-Allen, ed.) and a test sheet. At a signal from the instructor they studied the story page for 10 minutes at which time they were told to stop and turn their papers over. Then they completed the test during the next 6 minutes. The tests throughout the experiment consisted of 10 multiple choice questions (4 choices each). Students were not permitted to refer to the story while taking the test.

One week later, each section was given eight minutes to read a second chapter and five minutes to complete the test. Immediately following, they were given three minutes to read a third chapter and three minutes to complete the test. This exercise was used to determine the "speed of potential" (Pugh, 177). The results of this test were later used as the base scores for the experiment.

Training

From this point on, the two groups received different treatment over a period of six weeks. The experimental group was exposed to increased reading speeds through the use of the projector. Using a 500 watt A/V Concepts projector with variable speed control, the instructor projected filmstrips on to a large screen. Only one line was visible at one time. Chapter One of the story (*The Time Machine*) was projected at 14 lines per minute (75 wpm) and increased weekly until 40 lines per minute (220 wpm) were projected in the last session. Following each chapter, students were asked to complete the multiple-choice test paper which they had received just prior to seeing the film. The times for the tests were reduced gradually from 4 minutes to 2 minutes-forty seconds.

The control group utilized the same materials in mimeographed form. The time limits were calculated from the lines-per-minute figure used for the projector. Test times were the same as for the experimental group.

Both groups were informed periodically of the progress they were making in terms of lines-per-minute, but were not told that they were participating in an experiment.

Post-test

Following completion of the last chapter of *The Time Machine*, both sections were given a final reading exercise from *The Red Badge of Courage*, in mimeographed form. The time limit for this last exercise was three minutes for reading and two minutes forty seconds for the test. These scores were used for comparison with the pretest scores.

Table 1. Testing/Training Schedule*

	Pretest			Training										Post-test
	1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	4
Reading (minutes)	10	8	3	9	8	7	5	6	5	4.5	4.3	3.8	3.8	3
Testing (minutes)	6	5	3	4	4	3.5	3	3	3	3	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
Session Number	1	2		3		4		5	6		7			8

*Reading selections were approximately 150 lines in length.

RESULTS

Thirty-one students from each group were matched on the basis of their pretest scores. These scores were then compared with the score achieved on the post-test. In the pretest, scores ranged from 0 to 8 (mean 3.48). In the post-test, scores ranged from 2 to 7 for the control group and 3 to 9 for the experimental group. See Table 2. Interestingly, the standard deviation for both groups was the same for the post-test even though the means were different.

The t-test for related measures was used to test for differences between the 2 groups. This two-tailed test resulted in a t score of 2.26, and thus indicated that the experimental group achieved significantly higher scores than the control group ($p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

The results of this experiment lend support for the use of a speed-reading machine in increasing reading speed for readers of English as a second language. Assuming that the tests for the materials used here were, in fact, legitimate measures of content comprehension, it is hard to account for the differences in the two groups in any other way.

Table 2. Pretest/Post-test scores

		Pretest	Post-test
Control	mn	3.48	4.77
	s.d.	1.63	1.56
Experimental	mn	3.48	5.68
	s.d.	1.63	1.56

Maddox, in his well-known book *How to Study*, says "Mechanical devices are . . . in no way superior to the method of timed practice . . . , at least for mature students." (p. 85). There are those who disparage the use of "mechanical devices" and "gimmicks" of any kind in teaching students to improve reading speed because it is the gimmick that stimulates interest and not the practice itself (Bright and McGregor, p. 96). While overdependence upon machines may be detrimental to sound pedagogy, one would be hard put to show that the motivation lies in the machine and not in the method. Even if it were possible, many a teacher would be willing to try anything if it provided motivation!

This type of mechanical training may be particularly useful to students for whom their native language requires vertical tracking. By mechanically delimiting the field of vision, this method provides a means to train students to concentrate on horizontal symbols in a paced and orderly manner.

One obvious drawback to this type of training is lack of attention to individual differences. Some students may be slowed down by the process; others may be pushed beyond their capabilities. The projector, however, can be used for groups of any size up to 50 or so and, therefore, its effectiveness will depend upon the way it is used.

Available time was limited in this experiment to the first 20 minutes of a 90-minute class that met only once a week. From the results obtained here, it seems likely that

more intensive training would lead to even greater accomplishments. Such intensive training might consist of increased frequency of exposure either in number of times per week or in number of viewings per session as well as in class discussions regarding content of stories. In addition, prolonged exposure over a period of time would help to consolidate the learning progress of the students.

How did the students themselves feel about the use of this method? One week following the experiment, the experimental group was asked to complete a six-item questionnaire regarding the method and its effectiveness. They were asked to respond on a five point scale to the following statements:

1. Comprehension improved: yes - - - no
2. Speed of presentation was: too slow - - - too fast
3. Alotted time was adequate: no - - - yes
4. Method was appropriate: yes - - - no
5. Prefer to continue: yes - - - no
6. Speed-reading ability improved: yes - - - no

Results for the six items were as follows:

	Mean	*s.d.*	*Mode*
1. Comprehension	3.2	1.29	3
2. Speed	4.4	.78	5
3. Allotted time	2.3	1.34	1
4. Appropriateness	1.88	.99	1
5. Continue	2.11	1.33	1
6. Improvement	2.86	1.32	2,4

While students (naturally) felt that the speed of the exercises was too fast (Item 2) and that their comprehension did not improve much (Item 1), they nevertheless felt that the method was appropriate (Item 4), and would not mind continuing the training (Item 5). Moreover, some students indicated privately an interest in continuing this type of training on their own time. One student felt it was especially helpful in her preparation for the TOEFL examination. However, one student complained of difficulty in seeing the projected image clearly.

CONCLUSION

While this method may not be the complete answer to improving reading speed, it does appear that judicious use of a reading projector can be beneficial for college-level students. Used in combination with other types of exercises, this method may provide the extra stimulation necessary to challenge students to read faster. Further attempts to discover an optimum pattern for utilizing a reading machine could bring quite beneficial results.

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THE EFFECTS OF DIRECT AND HEURISTIC CORRECTION ON FIRST YEAR LEVEL COLLEGE COMPOSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

Many experienced teachers of EFL composition have found that withholding specific information about errors in general is a sound technique. Yet, a review of the literature shows that there is no concensus about the kinds of errors that should be left up to the learner to edit and those errors which are best dealt with by the instructor. This study attempts to estimate the efficiency of a direct correction approach compared with a discovery method which requires the learners to edit their own papers with a minimum of guidance from the instructor. Frequencies of particular types of errors were calculated and a comparison was made between group membership and subsequent numbers of individuals making errors in each error category above or below the total mean. This information provides a general index to the types of mistakes that proved to be correctable and those that were not, thus suggesting a heirarchy for direct as opposed to heuristic feedback.

The effect of feedback is thought to be essential in the initial stages of second language learning. Most teachers assume that some sort of correction is necessary, whether it is in the form of overt detailed explanation or heuristic form of feedback which forces the learner to reformulate his existing hypotheses about the problem in question.

Yet, a review of the literature reveals that there is no concensus about the optimal form feedback should take, or even what should or should not be corrected.

A number of researchers in second language learning endorse an approach to feedback which will assist adult learners to apply conscious rules in production. This is especially important in written performance of foreign language skills. Krashen and Selinker (1975, 181) suggest that overt feedback to adults can help them learn to find the environment in which they can apply the passive knowledge they may already possess. Along the same line, Kulhavy (1977, 224) considers feedback on written performance to be optimal only if the original mistakes are the result of faulty interpretation or performance and not because of a basic lack of comprehension or competence.

One common approach to error correction is based on the belief that not all errors are of equal importance. Hendrickson (1978, 396) believes that error correction techniques should be focused on the cognitive dimension of the learner's ability to process the feedback. For this reason, he suggests different approaches to feedback should be based primarily on the proficiency of the learner. Others (Hanzeli, 1975, 431, Burt and Kiparsky, 1972, 4) establish a general heirarchy of priority for corrections; errors that interfere with meaning and clear interpretation should receive immediate priority. Other types of errors, 'local' errors in Burt and Kiparsky's classification, receive secondary attention.

Most researchers and teachers agree that feedback is essential in improving composition skills. The most common approach endorsed seems to be based on some form of self-correction. Corder (1967, 167) proposed a discovery approach whereby learners are given clues about the errors they make. It is thought that this type of feedback helps the learners to make inferences and generalization about the errors they have made. A stronger version of this self-correction approach predicts that error patterns will not change with only teacher generated feedback. Rivers and Temperly (1978, 323) and Cohen (1975, 419) suggest an approach that appears to be based on peer editing or self-correction as opposed to teacher generated corrections.

Between the cognitive approach, which entails detailed teacher generated feedback, and an approach that relies on the learner's ability to discover errors with a minimum of guidance from the teacher is one, as Wingfield (1975, 312) has noted, that is eclectic in nature. Mistakes that appear to be the result of faulty performance, or failure to apply the 'Monitor' (Krashen, 1977, 153) are best left up to the learner to correct. Errors that are indicative of a lack of competence, i.e. syntactic or lexical errors, are best corrected by the teacher. This approach can be empirically tested to determine which categories are indeed accessable to self-correction and which errors are of particular difficulty for a given population of learners.

The study reported below was designed to estimate what differences, if any, would arise in (1) overall composition quality (2) the ability learners develop to edit their own papers, and (3) the frequencies of particular types of errors associated with placement in a direct or discovery feedback group.

Twenty-six first year students enrolled in an introductory level English composition course at Baika Junior College were randomly assigned to two groups. First year students at B.J.C. are blocked into groups, therefore this group took all other required courses together.

The Composition Correctness Score (Brodkey and Young, 1981, 160), an overall assessment of composition skills in English as a second language, was adapted as the method of deriving scores in this study. Each error is normally weighted one, two or three depending on its severity. In this study, however, particular types of errors were given a constant value in order to reduce variability. The sum of all errors in mechanics, punctuation and syntax was then divided into the total number of words written on five compositions written in class and six written at home. The papers were over two hundred words on the average.

Sample score derivation: $\frac{\text{total of words}}{\text{sum of weighted errors}} \quad \frac{225}{40} = 5.61$

FEEDBACK

Feedback was given to one group (N = 13) *directly* in the form of alphabetized marks on the original compositions. On an attached sheet corrections corresponding to each letter were given in order to facilitate an at-home rewriting and editing step. All indexed errors were corrected by the instructor.

Example:

> . . . There is a cake store[A] opposite their.[B] I often go to the store to buy the[C] cake[D] there. The cake[E] of this store is[F] very delicious . . .

Index sheet:	A. bakery	D. cakes
	B. there	E. cakes
	C. ∅	F. are

Learners were encouraged to test their ability to recall the corrections in a second at home rewriting step. All students were given an uncorrected copy of their original compostions as a final editing task after turning in the marked original and all revisions at the beginning of the next class meeting. The photocopy editing task involved underlining mistakes and providing the appropriate corrections.

The *discovery* group (N = 13) was given feedback in the form of a color code which corresponded to a list of sample mistakes and corrections. The errors on the original papers were marked over in transparent color pencils. All errors were subsumed into a list of twenty-one colors that represents the most common types of errors first year level Japanese writers make. This group had to refer to the guide exclusively in order to correct their own errors. The at home rewriting steps and subsequent in class copy editing were also included to provide information about the efficacy of this method of correction.

Example:

	Correction Code
Color	*Error Class*
vermillion	definite, indefinite or generic article
yellow	prepositions
cerulean blue	surrogate subject pronouns

RESULTS

Weekly Composition Correctness Scores on papers written in class and at home were summed and mean scores for each group were compared with the use of t tests to determine what differences evolved. Of particular importance were the in-class compositions which were written in a narrative style based on Bryne's (1967) picture composition text.

The results indicate that no significant differences between the two groups arose over the twelve week course. (Fig. 1) This finding supports Hendrickson's (1977, 393) conclusion that teacher generated correction has little short term significance, and also supports the Rivers and Temperly (1978, 323) and Cohen (1975, 419) predictions about the ineffectiveness of teacher corrections alone.

The photocopying editing task was designed to determine the facility and accuracy learners in either group might develop if they are asked to rely on their own memory or ability to apply conscious grammatical knowledge. Here again, t tests were used to measure differences between group means from week to week (Fig. 2). The results indicate that the direct feedback group could establish a significantly higher percent of accurate identification and correction of errors in this task. Unfortunately, this recall skill apparently did not seem to carry over to either at-home or in-class writing, suggesting that they could 'cram' before the editing task to get a high score. Learners in the discovery group were, of course, limited to correction errors which

were the result of surface level performance slips. Other more fundamental errors were frequently supplanted by equally erroneous attempts in the editing task.

The overall comparison of group means and comparisons of the editing task means reveal that short term changes cannot be expected with either method of correction. However, these two approaches were meant to represent the direct and discovery methods in more or less pure forms, and the results of the overall comparisons perhaps obscure whatever other discrete advantages one method may have over the other.

One other measurement was employed to estimate which kinds of errors were amenable to detection and correction by either group over the twelve weeks of the semester. In this comparison a grand mean was calculated from the fourth, ninth and eleventh compositions for the eleven most common categories of errors. Tallies were taken on the frequency of each kind of error on papers written by members of both groups. Individuals either scored lower or higher than the grand mean for all the papers written in the week in question. The Chi Square test of independence was used to determine if direct or discovery group membership is associated with frequency of error in any category. (Fig. 3)

INTERPRETATIONS

The comparison of the frequency of errors suggests that the discovery group appears to gain comparable control over certain categories of errors that are evidently accessable to conscious rule application, i.e. prepositions, object pronouns, tense and plurals. Other categories of errors appear to remain equally distributed between both groups. This finding suggests a heirarchy of the types of mistakes commonly made by a group of learners might be divisable into those which can be edited by the learners and those which are more reflective of the overall competence level of the group and might best be dealt with by the instructor.

Errors which were not readily corrected with only heuristic feedback included spelling, choice of verbs, punctuation,

lexical errors and determiners. The reasoning offered here for direct teacher correction of these types of 'opaque' errors is that self-correction by the students would require considerable dictionary and reference grammar work. In light of the fact that first year EFL composition classes are characteristically very large and meet infrequently, many learners do not find the time to get individual help when they are unsure of their corrections. Conversely, those errors which can be corrected with careful self-editing might best be left up to the learner to reanalyse. This suggests that an approach to correction based on frequency and correctability will be best for different groups of learners.

FIGURE 1

Weekly comparisons of Composition Correctness Score means

Week #	*Direct*		*Discovery*	
1*	13	N	13	
	4.74	mean	4.92	t = .272 df = 24
	1.94	S.D.	1.38	
2	13		13	
	6.35		7.64	t = 2.034 df = 24
	1.55		1.68	$p = < .10$
3	13		13	
	6.94		8.90	t = 1.509 df = 24
	2.05		4.21	$p = < .20$
4*	13		13	
	6.62		7.46	t = .987 df = 24
	2.47		1.84	
5	13		13	
	5.60		5.53	t = .986 df = 24
	2.16		1.37	
6*	13		13	
	4.74		4.05	t = 1.327 df = 24
	1.61		0.96	$p = < .20$
7	13		13	
	6.82		4.75	t = 2.091 df = 24
	3.32		1.31	$p = < .05$
8	13		13	
	6.86		6.66	t = .191 df = 24
	3.01		2.25	
9*	13		12	
	5.33		6.47	t = 1.245 df = 23
	1. 63		2.87	
10	12		12	
	6.11		8.52	t = 2.260 df = 22
	1.76		3.23	$p = < .05$
11*	13		13	
	5.42		6.82	t = 1.785 df = 24
	1.37		2.48	$p = < .10$

* Indicates compositions written in class under controlled conditions.

FIGURE 2

Photocopy editing task score means

Week #	*Direct*		*Discovery*	
1	12	N	13	
	.754	mean	.770	t = .2212 df = 22
	.233	S.D.	.092	
2	12		12	
	.871		.806	t = 1.187 df = 22
	.150		.116	
3	12		13	
	.863		.825	t = .7470 df = 23
	.107		.143	
4	13		13	
	.869		.855	t = .1947 df = 24
	.210		.152	
5	12		12	
	.762		.793	t = .5255 df = 22
	.166		.119	
6	13		13	
	.900		.665	t = 3.779 df = 24
	.070		.213	$\rho = < .001$
7	11		12	
	.942		.811	t = 4.941 df = 21
	.046		.076	$\rho = < .001$
8	13		13	
	.935		.783	t = 4.797 df = 24
	.057		.099	$\rho = < .001$
9	13		13	
	.920		.862	t = 1.640 df = 24
	.094		.086	$\rho = < .20$

FIGURE 3

Tests of Independence

	Week 4		Week 9		Week 11	
	mean		mean		mean	
	−	+	−	+	−	+
Prepositions						
Direct	6	7	4	9	6	7
Discovery	8	5	10	3	8	5
	χ^2 .619		χ^2 5.57***		χ^2 .619	
Articles						
	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	6	7	8	5	6	7
Discovery	6	7	10	3	10	3
	χ^2 .000		χ^2 .722		χ^2 2.60*	
Lexis						
	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	10	3	3	8	8	5
Discovery	8	5	5	7	5	8
	χ^2 .722		χ^2 .157		χ^2 1.38	
Verb Choice						
	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	9	4	8	5	9	4
Discovery	7	6	9	3	10	5
	χ^2 .650		χ^2 .519		χ^2 .195	
Punctuation						
	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	7	6	10	3	7	6
Discovery	8	5	10	3	5	8
	χ^2 .157		χ^2 .000		χ^2 .619	
Spelling						
	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	7	6	11	2	9	4
Discovery	9	4	7	6	9	4
	χ^2 .650		χ^2 2.88**		χ^2 .000	

Tense

	Week 4		Week 9		Week 11	
	− mean	+	− mean	+	− mean	+
Direct	8	5	9	4	6	7
Discovery	7	6	9	4	10	3
	χ^2 .157		χ^2 .000		χ^2 2.60*	

Object Pronouns

	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	5	8	4	9	11	2
Discovery	9	4	10	3	11	2
	χ^2 3.84***		χ^2 3.93***		χ^2 .000	

Syntax

	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	10	3	8	5	8	5
Discovery	7	6	8	5	8	5
	χ^2 1.52		χ^2 .000		χ^2 .000	

Subject-Verb Concord

	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	10	3	8	5	4	9
Discovery	12	1	6	7	6	7
	χ^2 1.18		χ^2 .619		χ^2 .650	

Plurals

	−	+	−	+	−	+
Direct	7	6	8	5	7	6
Discovery	8	5	7	6	11	2
	χ^2 .157		χ^2 .157		χ^2 2.88**	

*** indicates $p < .05$
** indicates $p < .10$
* indicates $p < .20$

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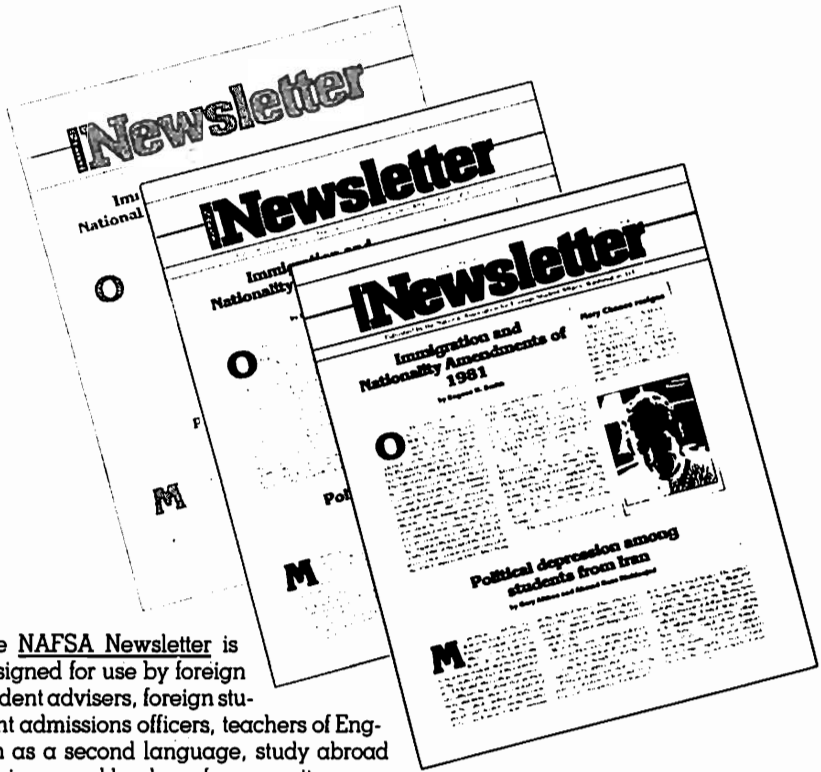

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