

*Cultivating a Social Justice Pedagogy in an Introductory Japanese Language Course
Through Pronunciation Instruction*

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Abstract

Foreign language programs in the US are increasingly urged to cultivate a social justice pedagogy in order to address social issues surrounding language use including gender, race, social class, and identity. One of the social issues in language learning and teaching is the ideology of native-speakerism. This ideology often leads to negative attitudes towards those who speak a language with a foreign accent, which perpetuates discrimination against such speakers. This study sought to examine whether pronunciation instruction (PI) in a foreign language, specifically Japanese, could transform the learners' attitudes toward those who speak their L1/LX with foreign accents. The teacher-researcher prepared and provided a series of Japanese pronunciation lessons as part of an elementary-level Japanese language course and collected data through pre- and post-lesson surveys and comments. The surveys included questions regarding students' attitudes towards their own accents and speakers with foreign accents. The data were analyzed quantitatively as well as qualitatively. The results showed that following PI, students' awareness of the difficulty of pronunciation acquisition increased, resulting in enhanced tolerance and empathy towards speakers with accents. These preliminary results indicate that PI has the potential to positively transform students' attitudes towards foreign accents, dismantling the ideology of native-speakerism. This study explores an approach to foster social justice in foreign language instruction through teaching pronunciation of the target language and provides recommendations for implementation in foreign language programs.

Keywords: Pronunciation Instruction, Japanese, Native-Speakerism, Social Justice Pedagogy, Transformative Language Learning and Teaching

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Introduction

Given the increased emphasis on developing students as global citizens who can address social issues, foreign language programs in the US are increasingly urged to cultivate a social justice pedagogy. Both applied linguistics and world language teaching acknowledge the significance of addressing social issues related to language use, such as gender, race, social class, and identity (e.g., Avineri & Martinez, 2021). Randolph and Johnson (2017) argue that the scope of social justice can be effectively included in transformative learning, which has started receiving attention in the field of language teaching and learning and aims for personal change as an outcome. As Leaver (2021) highlights the potential of foreign language learning to bring about changes in learners, such as shifts in “thinking, behavior, acceptance of the other, values, mindset, and/or emotion” (p. 16), transformative learning and social justice have a place in language pedagogy.

One of the language use issues on a societal level is the ideology of native-speakerism. This ideology assumes that first language (L1) speakers of a language are considered superior to those who speak it as a second or third language (LX; i.e., those who learned an additional language after the age of three, previously called nonnative speakers, Dewaele, 2018). Despite the fact that the ideology of native-speakerism can be determined by various factors, “accents matter” (De Costa, 2019, p. ix). Accented speech is frequently subject to negative perceptions and provokes stereotyping, false assumptions, and stigmatization of LX speakers, resulting in discrimination across different contexts, including employment, call centers, and academic settings (e.g., Lippi-Green, 2012). Moreover, research from the learners’ perspective has indicated that language learners often aspire to attain native-like pronunciation (e.g., Derwing, 2003) and hold negative perceptions of foreign accents (e.g., Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011). Such negative attitudes and beliefs towards accents can impact interactions among speakers (Holmes, 2013), resulting in diminished engagement and missed opportunities for meaningful social interactions, cultural exchanges, and connections between individuals from diverse backgrounds (e.g., Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010).

These negative perceptions of accents underscore the importance of pronunciation instruction (PI), which traditionally focuses on learners’ pronunciation development (e.g., Saito & Plonsky, 2019), but PI also can promote transformative learning. For instance, it can enhance students’ ability to listen to and comprehend speakers with accents (Derwing & Munro, 2014). Some studies have demonstrated that interventions aimed at L1 English speakers reduce negative stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions regarding the accented speech of learners (LX speakers) (e.g., Kang et al., 2015). Moreover, these studies suggest that such interventions can foster listeners’ empathy and willingness to engage in conversations with individuals who speak with accents (e.g., Derwing et al., 2002). Given the importance of fostering connections among individuals from diverse backgrounds in the globalized 21st century (Tohsaku, 2021) and recognizing that successful communication requires efforts from both speakers and listeners, it is imperative for both parties to address obstacles that impede effective interactions.

Accordingly, this study sought to examine whether PI in a foreign language, specifically Japanese, could transform the learners’ attitudes towards those who speak their L1 or LX with foreign accents. Specifically, the current research explored whether PI prompted learners to recognize the difficulties involved in mastering Japanese pronunciation and whether this recognition resulted in attitudinal changes towards foreign accents, particularly in terms of developing empathy for other people with accents in any language.

Literature Review

Transformative Language Learning and Teaching

Transformative learning theory, long established in the field of adult education (e.g., Mezirow, 1991), is defined as “the learning process that takes place when adults reevaluate previously held beliefs and attitudes and begin to interpret experiences in a new way” (Johnson, 2015, p. 18). In the context of foreign language education, the theory has gradually been introduced as a novel approach known as transformative language learning and teaching (TLLT; see Leaver et al., 2021). This approach was promoted by the recognition of the significance of language and cultural competence in response to social and political changes, as well as the need to address the challenges associated with proficiency-based language learning, leading to a shift away from the transactional educational approaches, including communicative language teaching (Johnson, 2015; Leaver, 2021). TLLT is a particularly valuable and critical approach for addressing political issues, such as diversity and social justice (Randolph & Johnson, 2017), as it enables learners to critically reassess and transform their behavior, emotions, and thinking by encountering diverse linguistic forms and cultural norms different from their own. To facilitate the transformation of learners, particularly in terms of their attitudes towards accented speech, language teachers can introduce PI as a means to encourage learners to engage with and compare various phonological aspects of the target language with their acquired languages. Research in pronunciation has shown that such instruction can encourage L1 listeners to engage in conversations with LX speakers who have foreign accents.

Transforming Listeners’ Attitudes Towards LX Speakers and Accented Speech

With the growing recognition of the listeners’ role in communication, particularly in interactions between L1 and LX speakers, researchers have explored the development of L1 listeners’ ability to comprehend LX speakers with accents. This skill is valuable in higher education because U.S. universities aim to cultivate students as proficient global citizens and equip them with the capacity to gather information from international scholars and peers (Kang et al., 2015). Some studies suggest that foreign language courses facilitate interactions with individuals from diverse backgrounds. For instance, Rubin and Smith (1990) and Kang et al. (2015) found that students better understood accented speech when they took more language-related courses (such as linguistics and foreign languages) or courses taught by international instructors. These results align with those of other studies demonstrating that increased familiarity with accented speech is generally associated with improved comprehension and more positive evaluations of such speech (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1984).

Subsequent studies have attempted various interventions to specifically target L1 listeners, aiming to identify more effective and targeted approaches to transform positively their attitudes towards LX speakers with accents (see Derwing & Munro, 2014 for an overview). Creating an environment where L1 listeners engage in interactions with LX speakers yielded mixed results. Rubin (1992) found limited effects, whereas Kang et al. (2015) demonstrated a positive impact on the comprehension of LX speech. Additionally, Weyant (2007) employed a perspective-taking approach that involved explicitly instructing L1 listeners to empathize with LX speakers by imagining themselves in the speaker’s position and writing about the speaker using the first-person pronoun after listening to an LX speaker’s speech passage. The study demonstrated that engaging in perspective-taking could mitigate listeners’ tendency to

stereotype LX accented speech, as compared to the group that did not engage in perspective-taking.

Derwing et al. (2002) investigated the changes in attitudes of L1 English listeners towards LX speech by providing them with explicit linguistic instruction on the pronunciation characteristics of a particular accent variety, specifically Vietnamese English. The study revealed that the group receiving explicit instruction developed empathy for and willingness to engage in conversation with individuals with accents, as the instruction enabled participants to appreciate the challenges faced by language learners and equipped them with the ability to attentively listen to the accented speech. A similar explicit intervention conducted by Lindemann et al. (2016) demonstrated the effectiveness of explicit training in improving listening comprehension of a specific accent variety. Such interventions that target listeners' attitudes towards accents, therefore, potentially contribute to fostering successful interactions with LX speakers by mitigating negative stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions that listeners may have regarding accented speech. However, these studies primarily focused on providing explicit instruction to L1 speakers rather than LX speakers.

Pronunciation Instruction and Research for LX Learners

Pronunciation is widely regarded as one of the most challenging skills to master (e.g., Fraser, 2010). Given the centrality to speech and its crucial role in achieving intelligibility, most studies in L2 speech acquisition have focused on various aspects of LX speakers' pronunciation (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2015). Several studies on pronunciation have specifically targeted local features (e.g., Saito & Lyster, 2012 for teaching English /ɹ/ to Japanese learners of English) and examined the global dimensions of speech (comprehensibility, fluency, and intelligibility: e.g., Derwing et al., 1998). These studies have demonstrated that these targeted features can be improved through the implementation of PI. Additionally, meta-analytical research has provided evidence of the positive impact of PI on the enhancement of LX speakers' pronunciation (e.g., Saito & Plonsky, 2019). Nevertheless, despite the positive improvements observed in empirical studies, PI is frequently overlooked in language teaching, particularly in beginner-level courses (Pennington, 2021), due to various factors, including time constraints (see Darcy, 2018 for additional constraints).

Another crucial aspect that researchers have explored in the realm of pronunciation studies and teaching revolves around the tension between striving for native-like pronunciation and prioritizing intelligibility (as exemplified by the Nativeness Principle versus the Intelligibility Principle; Levis, 2020). The primary goal in language teaching often involves achieving a level of pronunciation that is indistinguishable from that of L1 speakers and minimizing learners' accents (e.g., Thomson & Derwing, 2015). Furthermore, LX learners also aspire to attain pronunciation similar to that of L1 speakers (e.g., Derwing, 2003). However, some researchers (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2015; Levis, 2020) endorse the Intelligibility Principle, which posits that learners should strive for intelligible and comprehensible speech while retaining L1-influenced accents. They claim that possessing a strong accent does not automatically result in unintelligible and incomprehensible speech (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 1997), and that the degree of accentedness (how far different the speech is from that of a target language variety) is unlikely to be altered through PI, unlike comprehensibility (the ease of comprehending speech, e.g., Saito, 2021). Language teachers can effectively support learners' pronunciation development in their classrooms by targeting features that might impede listeners' comprehension. While these features have been extensively studied, primarily within the English language context (e.g., Trofimovich & Isaacs, 2012), such

features in other languages, such as Japanese, remain unclear and warrant further investigation.

Motivation of the Current Study

TLLT has the potential to encourage learners to transform their perspectives on accented speech. Research has shown that PI can positively impact learners' pronunciation, and interventions targeting L1 listeners can influence their attitudes towards speakers of the target language with accents. Nevertheless, little research has been conducted to examine whether PI for LX learners can lead to attitudinal changes towards accented speech. Moreover, PI is rarely offered to beginning-level learners, despite its benefits and the importance of teaching pronunciation in beginner-level classes (Zielinski & Yates, 2014). Developing language learners as both "active listeners and eloquent speakers" (Derwing et al., 2014, p. 76) is crucial for facilitating successful communication among diverse individuals across language varieties in today's globalized society (Kang & Yaw, 2021). This study, therefore, introduced PI for Japanese language learners in an elementary-level course and addressed the following two research questions:

- (1) How do Japanese language learners feel about having received Japanese PI in an elementary-level course?
- (2) Does Japanese PI transform Japanese language learners' attitudes towards those who speak their L1/LX with accents?

Method

Design of the Study

The current study was conducted as action research, employing a pretest-intervention-posttest design in a classroom setting. Over an eight-week period within a sixteen-week timeframe, the author, who was also the teacher-researcher, delivered six pronunciation lessons as a part of classroom activities. Survey questionnaires were administered immediately before and after the series of pronunciation lessons.

Target Students & Course

The study targeted twenty-nine undergraduate students enrolled in a Japanese elementary-level course at a university in the southern United States. The course was offered during the second semester of the 2022-2023 academic year to students who had no previous experience learning Japanese before the first semester. The course consisted of two 75-minute in-person sessions and one 50-minute Zoom meeting per week, targeting the four general language skills and cultural components of Japanese language and society. The instructor primarily used English to explain target grammar items, while students had ample opportunity to engage in Japanese with their peers during the lessons.

Of the 29 targeted students, 16 students attended all the pronunciation lessons; only their responses were analyzed. These students were from China, Korea, Taiwan, and the United States, and grew up speaking Chinese ($n = 10$), English only ($n = 3$) and English plus another language at home ($n = 2$), and Korean ($n = 1$). The students' ages ranged from 18 to 38, with a mean age of 21.2. They pursued diverse non-language related majors. While many students had experience learning other languages (such as Chinese, English, and Spanish), only a few

had received PI, and none in Japanese. Their exposure to Japanese outside the classroom was limited except for some weekly or daily exposure in watching and listening to Japanese videos and music.

Instruction Approach and Content

As shown in Table 1, the lesson content covered basic Japanese pronunciation features that were considered to be crucial in Japanese, with a focus on segmental and suprasegmental features. To determine the target items, various materials were consulted, including a practice handbook by Akagi et al. (2010) and online training modules such as *eNunciate!* [<https://enunciate.arts.ubc.ca/japanese/introduction/>] and the Tobira website [<https://tobirabeginning.9640.jp/>]. Based on these references, the instructor created six instructional handouts (see Figure 1), ensuring that the content fit the students' proficiency and linguistic knowledge in Japanese. The teacher-researcher conducted nearly one pronunciation lesson per week, with each lesson taking 15-20 minutes of the regular class time. In each lesson, the instructor displayed the handout on PowerPoint slides (see Figure 1) and followed a traditional pronunciation teaching approach: description of the sound system, reading aloud, repeating and imitating a model. The model was based on standard Tokyo Japanese, which the instructor grew up speaking.

Table 1: *The Schedule and Content of Pronunciation Lessons*

Lesson	Date	Content
1	Jan 11 th	Pre-survey Introduction
2	Jan 18 th	(1) Segmental a) Japanese vowels, consonants, and basic sounds b) Voiced, voiceless, and semi-voiced sounds c) Katakana d) Japanese R
3	Jan 25 th	e) Contracted sounds / Consonant clusters f) Devoiced vowels g) Distinctive sounds
4	Feb 15 th	(2) Intonation 1 (Mora & Duration) a) Mora b) Contracted sounds / Long & Short vowels c) Single & Double consonants d) The Japanese syllabic nasal sound
5	Feb 22 nd	(3) Intonation 2 (Pitch) a) Word-level
6	March 1 st	b) Sentence-level (Statements, questions/invitations, casual speech) c) Pause Post-survey







Figure 1: An Example Handout and PowerPoint Slides

Japanese Pronunciation Lesson 2





(1) Segmental
 ② Voiced, voiceless, and semi-voiced sounds
 ③ Katakana
 ④ Japanese R

<1-② Voiced, voiceless, and semi-voiced sounds>
 • The consonants [k], [s], [t], and [h] sounds have their voiced versions, [g], [z], [d], and [b], respectively.
 • [h] sounds change to their semi-voiced sounds [p].
 • Japanese relies on **voicing** to differentiate sounds (cf. aspiration in Chinese).
 • Your vocal cord is **vibrating** when making voiced sounds.







p	b	h	d	t	z	s	g	k	
ぱ	ば	は	だ	た	ざ	さ	が	か	a
び	び	ひ	ち	ち	じ	し	ぎ	き	i
ぶ	ぶ	ふ	つ	つ	ず	ず	ぐ	く	u
べ	べ	へ	で	で	ぜ	ぜ	げ	け	e
ぼ	ぼ	ほ	ど	と	ぞ	ぞ	ご	こ	o

1. 仕事: job  しごと	2. 鉛筆: Pencil  えんぴつ	3. 漢字: Kanji  かんじ
4. バス: Bus  ばす	5. 電話: Call  でんわ	6. ポケモン  ぽけもん

<1-③ Distinctive sounds (つ vs ちゅ)>

しゅうまつ 	ちゅうしゃじょう 
げつようび 	ユーチューブ 

<3-① Word-level>
 • The meaning of some words can change depending on their pitch pattern.

HL あめ (雨: rain) 	かき (牡蠣: oyster) 	はし (箸: choosticks) 
LH あめ (飴: candy) 	かき (柿: persimmon) 	はし (橋: bridge/厩: edge) 

Note. On the left is a page of a handout; on the right are two PowerPoint slides.

Measurements

In order to elicit learners' attitudes towards their own pronunciation and others' pronunciation, two questionnaires for pre- and post-intervention were created, including both nine-point scale and open-ended question items (see Appendix), some of which were borrowed from previous research regarding pronunciation attitudes (Derwing et al., 2002; Foote et al., 2012; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011; Tsunemoto & McDonough, 2021). For most of the questions, a nine-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* – 9 = *strongly agree*) was utilized, while a different nine-point scale was adapted (1 = *very poor* – 9 = *excellent*) for Q2-8 and 9 items. An online survey platform, *Microsoft Forms*, was used to collect students' responses, and students completed the questionnaire before and after the intervention during the regular class time.

Data Analysis

The questions relevant to the research were first analyzed quantitatively using a web-based statistical tool called *Langtest* (<https://langtest.jp/>). Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were conducted separately for each question to examine the differences between pre- and post-test responses regarding the students' attitudes. Qualitative data analysis was then conducted using a thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) with the assistance of *MAXQDA* software. The qualitative data were entered into the software and underwent coding, categorization, and theme creation. The theme names were reviewed with an English Language Specialist at the university to ensure alignment between the themes and responses.

Results

In order to answer the research questions, both quantitative and qualitative data are presented accordingly; all names used for students' comments are pseudonyms. For the first research question, the focus was whether acquiring Japanese pronunciation was challenging. Based on the statement 'acquiring Japanese pronunciation was challenging' (Q1-6), the quantitative

data showed no significant difference pre- ($M = 6.06$, $SD = 1.44$) and post-instruction ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.55$). In the post-survey responses, the challenges were related to specific challenging pronunciation features (e.g., Japanese R and word-level pitch accent), linguistic differences between Japanese and their L1/LX, and required investment of time and practice. However, some students did not feel challenged due to positive language transfer and the facilitating effect of input outside the classroom.

Furthermore, when students were asked if it was possible to improve their Japanese pronunciation without PI (Q1-7), they responded negatively. The mean scores were generally low ($M = 4.62$) in the pre-instruction, and even lower in the post ($M = 3.88$), although a significant difference was not found. These lower scores indicate that PI appeared to be necessary to improve their pronunciation. On pre- and post-responses, many of the students affirmed their belief in the necessity of PI. In particular, the students attested that, by providing guidance and teacher assistance, PI facilitated their pronunciation learning, increased explicit pronunciation knowledge, and reinforced their existing knowledge. Other students, however, believed that exposure to input outside the classroom and practice in output would help them improve their pronunciation. Therefore, while receiving the pronunciation lessons was partly challenging, many of the students perceived them as necessary.

Concerning the second research question, the data regarding the question items (Q2-1~12) on students' attitudes towards others' accents were analyzed. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for these question items. The results of the quantitative data indicated no significant differences for most of the question items. However, on one question item 'rate your ability to understand speakers with foreign accents in your L1' (Q2-9), the result showed a significant difference between pre- and post-instruction scores. That is, students felt their ability to comprehend interlocutors speaking their L1 with a foreign accent increased following PI.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics for the Question Items Related to Attitudes Towards Others' Accents*

Items	Questions		M (Md)	SD	Z	p (Effect size r)
*Q2-1	When I hear someone start to speak with a foreign accent in English, I expect that it will be difficult to understand them.	Pre	5.18 (6)	2.18	0.38	.71 (.08)
		Post	5.09 (6)	1.81		
Q2-2	When I hear someone start to speak with a foreign accent in my first language, I expect that it will be difficult to understand them.	Pre	3.06 (3)	1.57	0.76	.45 (.13)
		Post	3.38 (3)	1.63		
Q2-3	I believe people should eliminate their foreign accents.	Pre	3.88 (4)	1.75	0.4	.69 (.07)
		Post	4.25 (5)	2.29		
*Q2-4	I would hesitate to communicate with speakers with accents in English.	Pre	3.36 (3)	2.34	0.59	.55 (.13)
		Post	3.36 (3)	2.38		

Q2-5	I would hesitate to communicate with speakers with accents in my first language.	Pre	1.88 (1.5)	1.09	0.1	.91 (.02)
		Post	1.81 (1)	1.52		
*Q2-6	When I communicate with speakers with accents in English, their accents would distract me.	Pre	4.55 (6)	2.21	0.6	.48 (.13)
		Post	4.18 (4)	3.09		
Q2-7	When I communicate with speakers with accents in my first language, their accents would distract me.	Pre	2.69 (3)	1.54	1.21	.23 (.21)
		Post	2.31 (2)	1.25		
*Q2-8	Rate your ability to understand speakers with foreign accents in English.	Pre	6.18 (6)	1.33	0.65	.52 (.14)
		Post	5.91 (6)	1.58		
Q2-9	Rate your ability to understand speakers with foreign accents in your first language.	Pre	6.88 (7)	1.75	2.03	.042 (.36)
		Post	7.79 (8)	1.01		

Note. *M* = Mean, *Md* = Midian, *SD* = Standard Deviation

* indicates the analysis was conducted for the data answered by LX speakers of English ($n = 11$).

To further understand students' attitudinal changes before and after PI, their attitudes towards others' accents were qualitatively analyzed. On the pre-test question items (Q2-10 and 11), when students were asked how they would feel when talking to people with foreign accents in English or their first language, they expressed mixed attitudes. As seen in Table 3, the following themes emerged. On the positive side, students raised themes of the acceptance of accents, positive emotions, and understanding the challenge of eliminating accents; negative responses included concerns about the negative impact on understanding, emotional impact, and novelty. As a neutral theme, the matter of accents depended on overall understanding specifically in terms of degree of accentedness and intelligibility.

Table 3: *Themes and Sub-Themes Regarding Students Talking to People with Accents Prior to PI*

	Themes	Sub-themes
Positive	Acceptance of accents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal • No problem • Representation of cultural backgrounds • Understanding the cause of accents
	Positive emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity of the speaker's origin • Viewing equally • Respect for LX speakers • Likeness of accents
	Understanding the challenge of eliminating accents	

Neutral	Depending on overall understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of accentedness • Intelligibility
	Negative impact on understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree of accentedness • Impact on comprehensibility
Negative	Emotional impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annoyance • Embarrassment • Nervousness • Worry
	Novelty	

Despite these mixed responses in the pre-test, students' perspectives altered after receiving PI. Eleven students answered 'Yes' (compared to $n = 5$ for 'No') to the question item (Q2-10) if the lessons affected any of their perspectives. While acknowledging their increased awareness of pronunciation, some students revealed the impact of PI on their attitudes towards others' accent. Two themes emerged, specifically (1) an understanding of the difficulty of acquiring accurate pronunciation and (2) tolerance towards speakers with accents. Examples of the themes follow:

- (1) *I felt that Japanese is more challenging than I thought, for different intonation and tones can affect meanings of sentence.* (Ferris)
- (2) *I feel like I became more lenient towards speakers with accents of any language. Removing a foreign accent can be really hard.* (Andy)

I next analyzed whether PI affected students' interactions with people with foreign accents in their languages (Q2-12). The theme 'tolerance towards speakers with accents' emerged again. Furthermore, the analysis revealed themes of (3) sympathy and (4) empathy, as students commented:

- (3) *It makes [me] understand some reasons of why people have accents.* (Bob)
- (4) *I can think more on their side about how much time and effort it takes to eliminate that foreign accent.* (Oliver)

The other themes were "students' concern about other speakers' attitudes towards accents" and "the importance of pronunciation in communication."

Finally, students were asked specifically if the lessons affected their beliefs about accents (Q2-11). The responses indicated that their beliefs about accented speech were reversed. Similar to the previous question, the theme of tolerance towards speakers with accents emerged. However, it appeared that the pronunciation lessons also made students realize the importance of less accented speech as seen in the following:

Andy: Pronunciation lessons made me aware of the importance of eliminating accented speech. I knew it was important since the start, I just did not know it was this important.

Jacob: ...*a foreign accent isn't [wasn't] a big issue to me until I realize[d] how difficult it is sometimes to understand my classmates and even my own Japanese through recording.*

Discussion and Conclusion

The current study examined whether Japanese PI induced students to transform their attitudes towards foreign accents and to develop empathy for other people who speak with foreign accents. The analysis of students' responses revealed several transformative effects of PI. Students reported that PI was partly challenging but necessary for improving their pronunciation skills, which, in turn, could transform their attitudes towards accented speakers. PI also raised students' awareness of the difficulty of pronunciation acquisition. Finally, consistent with a previous study (Derwing et al., 2002), PI fostered students' tolerance and empathy towards speakers with foreign accents.

Despite the positive potential of PI, the current study identified some concerns regarding PI. The intervention in this study increased students' awareness of the importance of pronunciation and its potential impact on communication. The responses to questions Q2-12 revealed that PI could serve as an opportunity for students to recognize the adverse influence of pronunciation on their speech, particularly because the lessons emphasized their pronunciation skills more than regular non-PI lessons. As a result, some students felt that speech should not be strongly accented, and that other people might negatively judge their accents. Previous research has reported that imagining negative judgements of pronunciation by other people can provoke anxiety (e.g., Baran-Łucarz, 2014). The current study suggests that some improvements are needed in the instructional approach.

Before concluding, some limitations should be noted, including the number of lessons, limited time, and the single model. Only six lessons, each lasting 15-20 minutes, were conducted during the normal lesson time, and the teacher-researcher served as the sole model for students to listen to and imitate. Moreover, due to the scope of this study, it was not possible to include a large number of student responses or measure the actual development of pronunciation (i.e., intelligibility and comprehensibility). Importantly, this research stands as action research in a classroom context, suggesting further research is needed to generalize the findings.

Despite the limitations, it can be concluded from the current study that PI can cultivate a social justice pedagogy. PI for a target language has the potential to increase awareness of pronunciation and to promote empathy for and willingness to communicate with speakers who have accents, but it may also foster the idea of accent fallacy. Therefore, a revised approach to PI should (1) prioritize intelligibility and comprehensibility over achieving perfect nativeness (e.g., Derwing & Munro, 2015; Levis, 2020), (2) explicitly address the relationship between accents and intelligibility (Munro, 2003), and (3) incorporate speech recordings of diverse speakers (e.g., Darcy, 2018). According to Darcy (2018), teaching pronunciation fosters diversity by acknowledging a range of speakers, including not only L1 speakers but also LX speakers of the target language. Implementing this suggestion would enable language teachers to promote social justice pedagogy in pronunciation instruction, even in elementary-level courses.

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Appendix

Scales

A nine-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree* – 9 = *strongly agree*) was utilized for Q1 and Q2-1~7.

For Q2-8 and 9 items, a different nine-point scale was adapted (1 = *very poor* – 9 = *excellent*).

Q1: Attitude toward one own pronunciation

Q1-1 (Pre/Post): Pronunciation is important to communicate with people of a target language.

Q1-2 (Pre/Post): Acquiring pronunciation like speakers who grew up in the target language environment is important to make yourself understood by interlocutors.

Q1-3 (Pre/Post): I am confident in my Japanese pronunciation.

Q1-4 (Pre/Post): I would like to eliminate foreign accents as much as possible.

Q1-5 (Pre/Post): I am afraid that Japanese people do not like my accented speech.

Q1-6 (Pre/Post): Acquiring Japanese pronunciation is/was challenging. [Describe the reason for post]

Q1-7 (Pre/Post): I believe it is/was possible to improve my Japanese pronunciation without pronunciation instruction. [Describe the reason]

Q2: Attitude toward others' pronunciation

Q2-1 (Pre/Post): When I hear someone start to speak with a foreign accent in English, I expect that it will be difficult to understand them.

Q2-2 (Pre/Post): When I hear someone start to speak with a foreign accent in my first language, I expect that it will be difficult to understand them.

Q2-3 (Pre/Post): I believe people should eliminate their foreign accents. [Describe the reason]

Q2-4 (Pre/Post): I would hesitate to communicate with speakers with accents in English.

Q2-5 (Pre/Post): I would hesitate to communicate with speakers with accents in my first language.

Q2-6 (Pre/Post): When I communicate with speakers with accents in English, their accents would distract me.

Q2-7 (Pre/Post): When I communicate with speakers with accents in my first language, their accents would distract me.

Q2-8 (Pre/Post): Rate your ability to understand speakers with foreign accents in English.

Q2-9 (Pre/Post): Rate your ability to understand speakers with foreign accents in your first language.

Q2-10 (Pre): How would you feel when you talk to people who speak English with a foreign accent?

What do you think of them? [Describe the detail]

Q2-11 (Pre): How would you feel when you talk to people who speak your first language with a foreign accent? What do you think of them? [Describe the detail]

Q2-10 (Post): Have the pronunciation lessons affected part of your perspectives? <Yes/No> [Describe the detail]

Q2-11 (Post): Do you think the pronunciation lessons have affected your belief about accented speech? <Yes/No> [Describe the detail]

Q2-12 (Post): Do you think the pronunciation lessons have had an effect on your interaction with people with foreign accents in the language(s) you speak? <Yes/No> [Describe the detail]

Q2-13 (Post): How were the pronunciation lessons? [Describe the detail]

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