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# A Speedy Way to Listening Comprehension

— by listening to BBC&CNN —

— BBC&CNN を聴くことによる —

聴解力速達法

Sono Takeda

英語ⅢLLでは学生達が国際社会に対応できるように実践英語聴解力を目指しBBC&CNNを利用している。筆者はBBC&CNNを聴くことにより学生達の聴解力を養うことが最短距離で最も実践的な習得法であると確信している。指導法を要約するとBBC&CNNのニュースを学生に選択、ダビングさせ、内容・一字一句が聞き取れるまで聴かせる。1回目プレゼンテーションでは、ニュースを日本語で逐次通訳もしくは要約させる。2回目プレゼンテーションでは、BBC&CNNのニュースキャスターと同じ速度・話し方を真似て、学生達自身がニュースキャスターになりニュースを報じる。本実践報告では、学生達の聴解力並びに発話力が好教材により最短距離で上達していることを報告したい。

## Introduction

As head of the English III LL (Language Laboratory) Program designed by the Institute of Foreign Language Education and Research at KANSAI UNIVERSITY, I train my students' practical English listening comprehension to meet a current international level by listening to BBC & CNN. I believe it is the shortest and the most practical way for acquiring English listening comprehension.

I have one thing that I do want to emphasize, that is, the instruction of English pronunciation, which is indispensable for listening and speaking, so I deliver this course, teaching English pronunciation at the same time.

I summarize the instruction:

Whilst studying the basic English pronunciation, students,

First, freely choose an excerpt of BBC or CNN news and dub it.

Second, students will listen and listen to it until they understand the content, including every word, phrase, and sentence as much as possible.

Third, as the first presentation, students will interpret or summarize it in Japanese.

Finally, as the second or last presentation, they themselves will read the news imitating a professional newscaster's manner of speech and speed.

I hope this class report will lead the reader to understand what the most practical way to English listening comprehension is.

## **What is the Most Practical Way to English Listening Comprehension?**

### **Getting Used to English Pronunciation – A Precursory Condition**

### **Exposure to News Level Speed of English – A Drastic Approach**

#### **Getting Used to English Pronunciation**

This is **A Necessary Precursor of English Listening Comprehension**. Very first of all, I do emphasize on teaching students 'an overview of English pronunciation'. However, to our regret, in Japan, English pronunciation education has not yet been fully or thoroughly taught, so Japanese people are in general poor at listening to and speaking English. Getting used to or knowing English pronunciation is essential for listening to and speaking English.

The basic items we must study on English pronunciation are as follows:

- Vowels ( monophthongs, diphthongs )
- Consonants ( plosives, nasal sounds, fricatives, affricates, lateral, semi-vowels )
- Stress and Rhythm
- Liaison or Linking
- Reduction and Assimilation
- Intonation
- Phrasing
- Relaxed Speech (as an appendix)

I teach English pronunciation to listening comprehension classes taking at least 15 minutes of a ninety minutes lesson. The title and some parts of the textbook which I co-authored and is now being used in my classes are shown in the next lines.

**BETTER ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION**<sup>1)</sup>, THE HOKUSEIDO PRESS

(From the List of English Phonetic Signs in the textbook)

Vowels<sup>2)</sup>

/ i: /

|

**east** / i:st /

Consonants<sup>3)</sup>

/ p /

|

**pipe** / páip /

/ ʊə, l ʊə /      **tour** / túə, l túə /      / w /      **week** / wí:k /

**UNIT 1<sup>4)</sup> k & g**

1. cold                      a. gold

|

5. card                      e. guard

It was cold, so I put on my coat.

|

▪ **Repeat the Words**

▪ **Circle the Word You Hear**

column	a	b	c	d
1.	coal	goal	grew	crew
6.	rack	rag	pig	pick

▪ **Listen and Circle the word you hear:**

1. This is (**a.** cold) (**b.** gold).

|

7. There is a (**m.** locker) (**n.** logger) in the forest.

▪ **Read the sentences to your partner:**

▪ **Circle the picture you hear:**

**UNIT 31 Stress & Rhythm**

▪ **Model Sentences**

A. (1) Kids eat ápples.

|

(5) The kids will have eaten the ápples.

**UNIT 32 Liaison**

▪ **Model Sentences**

A. (1) Matt and Kim.

- |
- (4) Matt and Kim went out for a walk with their dog, and their children, Rose and Richie, ran after them.

### UNIT 33 Reduction

#### ▪ Model Sentences

- (1) It's too late. I hafta go. (I have to go.)  
(2) You are so noisy. Get outta here. (Get out of here.)

### UNIT 34 Phrasing

#### ▪ Model Story

#### Red Riding Hood

Once upon a time / there was a sweet little maiden who was loved by all who knew her, / but she was especially dear to her grandmother. – (omit until the end of the story)

### UNIT 35 Intonation

#### ▪ Model Sentences

- (1) I have two dogs. ↘  
He doesn't have pets. ↘  
(平叙文 — declarative sentence)

- |
- (3) There're apples, → oranges, → bananas, → and peaches. ↘  
(文の途中 — in the middle of a sentence)

### Exposure to News Level Speed of English

Being exposed to news level speed of English from the very beginning seems to be **A Drastic Approach**. However, everyone should agree that the main aim of acquiring English listening comprehension is to be able to listen to current English news like a native speaker of English. I believe our being exposed to natural speed and above all to professional newscasters' level of English is very practical and useful.

The process I have chosen, using BBC&CNN news as listening comprehension-teaching materials for my students of English III LL and also for English Media Lab classes of the Faculty of Literature at Kansai University harks back to one international radio station in the Kansai area, that is, FM COCOLO 76.5, which broadcasts in approximately 14 languages. I have been a big fan

of this radio station since 1997. I also use the various English programs from this radio station for my listening classes, which I will mention later.

I do not recommend the teaching materials whose English speed is adjusted to an unnatural one considered easier for Japanese ears, which in the end are impractical and useless. You are able to listen to real professional newscasters' English if you have an aggressive will to do it and follow this proverb, 'Practice makes perfect.' In fact, my students, who are young, 18 to 22 years old, are performing well as interpreters and newscasters, trying to imitate BBC&CNN newscasters, and moreover they do these practices happily and excitedly!

## **A Teaching Method for English III LL Classes**

### **A Speedy Way to Listening Comprehension**

In this class report I should firstly inform of the following conditions:

1. The average number of lessons in English III LL classes is supposed to be 24, i.e. for not half a year classes, but for all the year around classes.
2. The number of students in each English III LL class is approximately 45.<sup>5)</sup>
3. The teaching materials are a textbook on English pronunciation and handouts<sup>6)</sup> for listening comprehension from BBC, CNN, and FM COCOLO 76.5.
4. The tests on English pronunciation and listening comprehension will be given to every student<sup>7)</sup> every class time in both spoken and written forms.

Let me show you my class-teaching plan on ***A Speedy Way to Listening Comprehension – by listening to BBC&CNN –***, which is the title of this class report.

Notes: The first or sometimes the last at least 15 and at most 30 minutes are for English Pronunciation, which I'll herein abbreviate as EP, and the main hour, 60 or 70 minutes are for Listening Comprehension on English News or other English broadcast programs, which I'll abbreviate as LC, when I mention them in the following day plan schedules.

#### **The 1<sup>st</sup> day**

##### **EP:**

Note: I teach students English pronunciation, especially, the real sounds of each English phonetic sign and phenomenon such as stress, linking, etc., by self-demonstration, using my organs of speech, through each student's booth TV installed in the LL classroom as well as explaining its technical term in English.

Vowels / i: // ɪ // i /

The terms of phonetic signs – vowels, monophthongs, strong vowels, weak vowels, length mark / : /, the primary stress / ' / the secondary stress / ` /

Consonants / p // b // t // d // k // g /

The terms of phonetic signs – consonants, plosives, voiceless sounds, voiced sounds, the vocal cords

### LC:

Introducing some of the teaching or learning materials of listening comprehension, e.g. BBC, CNN, which will be introduced visually and aurally, and FM COCOLO 76.5 aurally only.

Exposing students to real and natural, professional newscasters' English and encouraging them to try to listen to and get interested in their authentic and practical English with emphasis on awareness of the rules of English pronunciation.

### **The 2<sup>nd</sup> day**

#### EP

Review previous learnt vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.

New Vowels / e // æ // ɛ // ɑ: // ɔ: /

The terms of phonetic signs – American pronunciation, British pronunciation

Example: / æ | ɑ: /

New Consonants / m // n // ŋ /

The terms of phonetic signs – nasal sounds

### LC

First, students are to start with one common excerpt of CNN news<sup>8)</sup> as listening material:

1. Watch the news.
2. Listen to the news twice without watching it, dubbing it during the second listening time through the LL system, for their self-study at home.
3. Study the news using the notes of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar edited by the publisher.

### **The 3<sup>rd</sup> day**

#### EP

Review previous learnt vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.

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New Vowels / a | ɔ // ɔ: // ɔ: | ɔ /

New Consonants / f // v // θ // ð /

The terms of phonetic signs – fricatives

### LC

1. Review the common excerpt of CNN news visually and aurally with the notes, and sometimes give tests in the forms of filling in blanks or interpreting in Japanese.
2. Introduce and demonstrate the next listening materials, which are from BBC and FM COCOLO 76.5, and which will be, including CNN news, references for students' two presentations. The content of the demonstration or presentation is as follows:
  - a. Choosing a piece of news<sup>9)</sup> and dubbing it.
  - b. Making the transcription of the news with the notes of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, a copy of which is to be submitted to the instructor as a paper, which will be scored.

\*The next c. and d. will be the first presentation<sup>10)</sup>.

- c. The presenter will let the class listen to the news.
- d. The presenter will interpret it by sentence, or summarize by paragraph or all the news in Japanese, playing the news again from the beginning.

\*The next e. will be the second and final presentation.

- e. The presenter will make the final presentation as a newscaster imitating the tone and speed of the professional newscasters as much as possible, incorporating each student's own original gesture or performance.

### **The 4<sup>th</sup> day**

#### EP

Review previous learnt vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.

New Vowels / ʌ // ə // ʌ | ə // ʌ: | ə: /

The terms of the phonetic signs – schwa, retroflex vowel, r-colored sound

New Consonants / s // z // ʃ // ʒ // h /

#### LC

The first presentation – 1 –

\*From the 4<sup>th</sup> day, for the following 9 days, groups of 5 students will take turns to individually make their first presentations.

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> day**

#### EP

Review previous learnt vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.



New Vowels / eɪ / / aɪ / / aʊ / / ɔɪ /

The terms of phonetic signs – diphthongs

New Consonants / tʃ / / dʒ / / ʃ / / ʒ /

The terms of phonetic signs – affricates

LC

The first presentation – 2 –

**The 6<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Review previous learnt vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.

New Vowels / ʊʊ | əʊ / / ɪə | ɪə / / eə | eə / / ʊə | ʊə /

New Consonants / l / clear / l / dark / l /

The terms of phonetic signs – lateral, clear/l/, dark/l/

LC

The first presentation – 3 –

**The 7<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Review previous learnt vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.

New Vowels (the last ones) / ɑɑ | ɑ: / / ɔə | ɔ: /

New Consonants (the last ones) / r / / j / / w /

The terms of phonetic signs – semi-vowels (Am.) fricatives (Br.)

LC

The first presentation – 4 –

**The 8<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Review previous learnt last vowels, consonants, and phonetic technical terms.

Review all vowels and consonants (1)

LC

The first presentation – 5 –

**The 9<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Review all vowels and consonants (2)<sup>11)</sup>

\*Self-study assignments will be given to students with each 7 units of *BETTER ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION*<sup>12)</sup> with Listening and Dictation written tests including vocabulary tests to be given two weeks later. These self-study assignments and their tests will in all be given

A Speedy Way to Listening Comprehension (Takeda)

5 times.

Self- study assignment – 1 –

UNIT 1 Consonants / k / & /g/ to UNIT 3 Consonants / b / & / d /

UNIT 18 Vowels / i: / & / ɪ / to UNIT 20 Vowels / æ / & / ʌ /

UNIT 31 Stress & Rhythm \*the instructor will teach this unit in detail in class.

The terms of phonetic signs – stress, rhythm, the primary stress / ˈ / ,

the secondary stress / ˘ /

LC

The first presentation – 6 –

**The 10<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Review<sup>13)</sup> UNIT 31 Stress & Rhythm

Individual Oral Pronunciation Test – 1 –

\*15 students each day will individually take this oral test for the following 3 days, for example, in the 45 students' class.

LC

The first presentation – 7 –

**The 11<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Self-study assignment test – 1 –

Self-study assignment – 2 –

UNIT 4 Consonants / p / & / b / to UNIT 6 Consonants / f / & / v /

UNIT 21 Vowels / æ / & / ɑ / to UNIT 23 Vowels / ɔ: / & / ɔɪ /

UNIT 32 Liaison \*the instructor will teach this unit in detail in class.

The terms of phonetic signs – liaison, linking,

liaison (or linking) mark / ˌ / = slur

Individual Oral Pronunciation Test – 2 –

LC

The first presentation – 8 –

**The 12<sup>th</sup> day<sup>14)</sup>** (the last day of one semester)

EP

Review UNIT 32 Liaison

Individual Oral Pronunciation Test – 3 – (the last one)

LC

The first presentation – 9 – (the last one)

Note: It is usually expected to finish one semester by here around the 12th day or class.

According to my teaching plan, both individual English Pronunciation Test (vowels and consonants) and Listening Comprehension Test (the first presentation) are to be successfully finished before the summer vacation!

\_\_\_\_\_ Summer Vacation \_\_\_\_\_

### **The 13<sup>th</sup> day**

#### EP

Self-study assignment test – 2 –

Self-study assignment – 3 –

UNIT 7 Consonants / f / & / h / to UNIT 9 Consonants / θ / & / ð /

UNIT 24 Vowels / aɪ / & / aʊ / to UNIT 26 Vowels / eə / & / ɒə /

UNIT 34 Phrasing \*the instructor will teach this unit in detail in class and UNIT 33 Reduction which was skipped will be taught in the last stage.

The terms of phonetic sign – phrasing, slash mark //

#### LC

The instructor will demonstrate the second presentation.

5 students each day will make the second presentation in the following 9 days, for example, in the 45 students' class.

### **The 14<sup>th</sup> day**

#### EP

Review UNIT 34

Self-study assignment – 4 –

UNIT 10 Consonants / s / & / z / to UNIT 12 Consonants / ʃ / & / ʒ /

UNIT 27 Vowels / eə / & / ɪə / to UNIT 29 Vowels / ɔə / & / ə: /

UNIT 35 Intonation \*the instructor will teach this unit in detail in class.

The terms of phonetic signs – intonation, intonation marks, e.g. rising tone / ↗ /, falling tone / ↘ /, level tone / → /, slight rising tone / ↗ /

#### LC

The second presentation – 1 –

**The 15<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Self-study assignment test – 3 –

Self-study assignment – 5 –

UNIT 13 Consonants / ʃ / & / ʒ / to UNIT 17 Consonants / l / & / r /

UNIT 30 Vowels / ɔə / & / ʊə /

UNIT 33 Reduction<sup>15)</sup> \*the instructor will teach this unit in detail in class.

The terms of phonetic signs – reduction, assimilation, relaxed speech

LC

The second presentation – 2 –

**The 16<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Review UNIT 33 Reduction \*This unit has a fair number of pages for exercises on ‘Relaxed Speech’, so it will take a considerable time for students to review.

LC

The second presentation – 3 –

**The 17<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Self-study assignment test – 4 –

Applications<sup>16)</sup> (if time permitted)

LC

The second presentation – 4 –

**The 18<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

UNIT 33 Reduction Individual Oral Pronunciation Test<sup>17)</sup> – 1 –

\*15 students each day will individually take this oral test in the following 3 days, for example, in the 45 students’ class.

LC

The second presentation – 5 –

**The 19<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

Self-study assignment test – 5 –

UNIT 33 Individual Oral Pronunciation Test – 2 –

LC

The second presentation – 6 –

**The 20<sup>th</sup> day**

EP

UNIT 33 Individual Oral Pronunciation Test – 3 – (the last one)

LC

The second presentation – 7 –

**The 21<sup>st</sup> day**

EP

Reviews and Applications<sup>18)</sup>

LC

The second presentation – 8 –

**The 22<sup>nd</sup> day**

EP

Reviews and Applications

LC

The second presentation – 9 – (the last one)

**The 23<sup>rd</sup> day** Spare or Supplementary Day

**The 24<sup>th</sup> day** Spare or Supplementary Day

## **Conclusion**

### **Effective Results**

The happy impressions of the planner of *A Speedy Way to Listening Comprehension – by listening to BBC&CNN* – after or even during the listening comprehension classes are the following:

- 1. Students' listening comprehension has been improved in a short time and their great capacity for listening to the news in English has been proved.**
- 2. Students enjoy their first presentation as interpreters with much interest and excitement.**
- 3. Students' speed of speaking English has extremely improved in a short period at the same time.**
- 4. Students perform their second presentation as newscasters splendidly and**

coolly.

### **Students' Voices or Impressions**

The instructor has been conducting this method for two years. Most of the students who participate in this class say, first of all, that **Getting Used to English Pronunciation is very important and useful for listening and speaking** and **Exposure to News Level Speed of English is exciting, thrilling, and motivating for listening to and speaking English.**

In addition, as one of comparative listening comprehension materials, the instructor refers to TOEIC – LISTENING COMPREHENSION and compares the levels of speed between BBC&CNN news and TOEIC – LISTENING COMPREHENSION, getting students listen to them. We find that the speed of TOEIC's is apparently slower and easier to listen to, so most of the students say that **listening to authentic, natural English news such as BBC&CNN and FM COCOLO 76.5 World News and Weather is of great use in challenging TOEIC. Once we are exposed and get used to BBC&CNN news, we can have great confidence for challenging TOEIC.**

### **Prospective Suggestions**

Reviewing and considering my teaching plan for *A Speedy Way to Listening Comprehension – by listening to BBC&CNN –*, not only the author of this paper, who is a teacher, but also students themselves have realized and insist that **acquiring the knowledge of English pronunciation is essential and should come first of all.** **English pronunciation classes, with enough time to teach and study, and if possible only pronunciation classes, are desirable.**

And **next, a ceiling of less than 30 in one class should or must be set for students to have adequate practices, presentations, and chances to do their practical learning language activities**, which is true for every language class.

**Finally, continuously encouraging students to challenge high level, practical, and useful listening comprehension materials is necessary.**

The author concludes this class report with the hope that these **three prospective suggestions** will be well revised in cooperation with the Institute of Foreign Language Education and Research at KANSAI UNIVERSITY.

Notes

- 1) This textbook was first published mainly for college students in English only with a Japanese translated teachers' manual, and one year later the English-Japanese concise version for general readers was published; for English III LL, we use this concise version.
- 2) Taken collectively there are 31 vowels as monophthongs and diphthongs in American and British pronunciation.
- 3) American and British pronunciation has 26 consonants in common.
- 4) From UNIT 1 to UNIT 17, you will learn to listen to the difference between the pair similar sounds among consonants and UNIT 18 to 30 among vowels.
- 5) The students of the two classes I take are sophomores from the Department of Science and Technology at Kansai University.
- 6) The handouts used in my classes are mainly self-made ones transcribed by listening to BBC, CNN, and FM COCOLO 76.5, which have neither textbooks nor transcriptions. However, for our common exercises, we sometimes in part use other teaching materials such as, a journal, *CNN ENGLISH EXPRESS*, which is available in the tape library at Kansai University.
- 7) Every student especially in a class of a large number of students should be entitled to have at least one chance to speak out or express in English, so I try to create the time for them as often as possible.
- 8) *CNN ENGLISH EXPRESS*, ASAHI SHUPPAN-SHA
- 9) A piece of news with the maximum length of 2 minutes and not less than 1 minute is suitable. If over 2 minutes it is impossible for a large class of 40 to 50 students to have time to make their individual presentations.
- 10) Students' presentations will be made all the time in English, including their initial greetings to closing remarks.
- 11) After Review all vowels and consonants (2), students will individually take an oral pronunciation test (vowels and consonants) face to face with the instructor.
- 12) The content of *BETTER ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION*: UNIT 1 to UNIT 30 are for comparative practices using similar sounds with vowels and consonants, and UNIT 31 to UNIT 35 are for the chosen five basic English phenomena such as stress, linking, etc.
- 13) Students will be required to read aloud portions of text from UNIT 31 to 35 reviewing the pronunciation phenomena for their class participation scores.
- 14) The 12<sup>th</sup> day is generally equivalent to the last day of one semester.
- 15) Reduction here in this textbook deals with 'Relaxed Speech', which one of the co-authors who is an American teacher emphasizes on teaching to students.
- 16) Applications such as watching English movies, searching for interesting information on the Internet, performing as a DJ, singing songs in English, and so on.
- 17) There are a number of practical and useful examples on 'Relaxed Speech' edited by one of the co-authors who is a native speaker of American English and who wants students to learn it. I take this unit as an individual oral pronunciation test for students.
- 18) As mentioned before, the applications here are also those such as watching English movies, searching for interesting information on the Internet, performing as a DJ, singing songs in English, and so on.

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