

Rhythm and Phonetics on My Fair Lady

Yoshikazu Shimizu

(Aichi Gakuin Univ., Japan)

Preface

Next May (May 1~21, 2002), at Chyunichi-Gekijyo Hall in Nagoya, My Fair Lady will have opening first night. By the way, in the musical of Japanese version of My Fair Lady, a friend of Eliza's Father tells her father it is funny his speaking without h sound. (1) But in Japanese version, we cannot find the Japanese word's sound equal to English ones: Hertford, Hereford and Hanpshire and so on. (2) There are some problems on translation of My Fair Lady.

Eliza, a flower girl, in My Fair Lady to decided to study English very hard, when she met Prof. Higgins, Phonetician, and finally she can speak English like a princess, while her father, Alfred Dollittle didn't study English at all. He is a fool in the musical comedy. But Dollittle is an interesting character. Dolittle, however, started to study English in the end of a drama. He gets big money, if only he could make a speech. Then, he studies English very hard. It is fun, but it has also a very interesting element of English phonetics.

Chinese student's Japanese Education

I taught Japanese to Mr. Chinese, during a few months. I found some point on rhythm and phonetics of Japanese that he mistook, when he spoke Japanese. First, he said Suzuki san. That is, he mistook Tsuzuki san for Suzuki san. By the way, one day, when I watched a drama in TV, The End of Asia, an actor said that a native called him Saito-san, Saito-san, Saito-san, his name was not Saito san. So the native mistook Shatyou san (a president) for

Saito san. I myself experienced the same kind of mistake when I went to shopping in Seoul City, but he told me Shatyou san (a president) instead of Saito san.

Mr. A cannot speak Japanese very well. By the way, I myself had a chance to teach Japanese to Mr. A, the Chinese student, for the first time. He does not have an ability to hear Japanese either. Anyway, he has been in Nagoya for one year. His teacher is Professor Izuhara who works for Aichi-gakuin University, and he attended her Japanese class one-year. She gave up teaching him Japanese. After that, he came to my study room, and we studied Japanese together.

Second, I found he couldn't say (tyouboin) (long vowel) O-O-KI-I, instead, he said O-KI. Also he couldn't say (nijyuboin) (Diphthong) OU-KI-I, instead, he said O-KI.

Third, I found he couldn't say SOU-DA-TTA, instead, he said SO-DA-TA.

Fourth, I found he couldn't say (haretuon) (Plosive) PA-PI-PU-PE-PO or (dakuon) (a voiced sound) (a sonant) DA-DI-DU-DE-DO.

Fifth, I found he couldn't say TE-NI-WO-HA (particles, postpositions).

According to explanation Ms Izuhara, Chinese students usually mistake HAKU (拍) . Next, I will show some examples.

HAKU (拍)

TYOU-ON(long sound) (長音) , HATU-ON (撥音) , SOKU-ON (促音) tu (ツ) ,

YOU-ON (拗音) BYO(ビョ) BO-O-ZU (ボ?ズ) & BYO-O-BU(ビョ?ブ)

SEI-ON (?音) KA (か) , SA (さ) , TA (た) , HA (は)

DAKU-ON (濁音) GA (が) , ZA (ざ) , DA (だ) , BA (ば)

TANA (棚) → TODANA (?棚)

TUKI (月) → MIKAZUKI (三日月)

KI (木) → TKIGI (薪)

HATU-ON (撥音) N sound, special pause (TOKUSYU-HAKU) (ん音)

KANMAN (緩慢)

KANBAN (看板)

SOKU-ON (促音) tu (ツ)

(MO-PPA-RA) (もっぱら) , (SA-KKI) (さっき) , (A-TTU) (あっ)

TYOU-ON (long sound) (長音)

O-BAA-SAN (grandmother) (お?ば?あ?さん)

O-BA-SAN (aunt) (お?ば?さ?ん)

BO-IN (母音) (vowel)

GEN-DAI (現代) (modern)

KIN-DAI (近代) (modern)

A (あ) & E (え) sound

NA-YA-MI (?み) (worry)

NE-YE-MI (ね?え?み) (no meaning, strange sound, or diarect) (3)

Of course, he could speak Chinese very well. One day, one Japanese student, who was to travel to China a few days later, asked me how to speak Chinese, so I asked Mr. A how to learn Chinese. All of a sudden, he changed from a stupid student to a brilliant scholar of Chinese and he taught the Japanese student.

Anyway, then he wrote Chinese letters when he couldn't pronounce Japanese during our conversation.

For the first time, when we traveled to England, we often show someone a written paper in English. But after a while, we found that Japanese letters and Chinese letters are different. After all, we used body language.

By the way, actors use eye contact, imagination, body language and gesture in addition to speech. (4)

Nevertheless, Mr. A couldn't use his eye contact, imagination, body language, and gesture in addition to speech.

Next time, I asked Mr. A to introduce himself in Japanese. This method is one that Ms Lightbern, who is a foreign teacher in Aichi-gakuin University and an adviser in ESS club activity, tells us how to speak English, when a member of ESS asked her how to speak English well. Mr. A could make his own speech on, but he couldn't apply this by using ad-lib expressions.

By the way, actually, a drama includes monologue, conversation and narration, but playwrights usually write monologue, conversation and narration at once. Therefore, the drama connects monologue, conversation, and narration, with each other. Of course actors don't use only speech. They have to learn how to use eye contact, imagination, body language, gesture in addition to speech.

Also, foreigners have to learn written languages, pronunciation, sounds, rhythm, phonetics and so on.

Mr. A, Chinese student often says he would like to go back to China, as he couldn't master Japanese very well.

So I remember some scene in "My Fair Lady . Eliza learns how to say true

English instead of cockney. She makes an effort to say English during three months. She didn't know grammar and spelling, speaking, rhythm and phonetics, but she finally masters English.

Bernard Shaw, the author of the original of *My Fair Lady*, insisted one sound and one letter.

In the case of Japanese, we found many expressions when we say one meaning.

We remember one scene where Eliza looks like a mechanical doll when she can say certain phrases.

THE RAIN IN SPAIN STAYS MAINLY IN THE PLAIN!

ELIZA

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

HIGGINS

What was that?

ELIZA

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

HIGGINS

Again.

ELIZA

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

HIGGINS

I think she's got it! I think she's got it!

ELIZA

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

HIGGINS (triumphantly)

By George, she's got it!

By George, she's got it!

Now once again, where does it rain?

ELIZA

On the plain! On the plain!

HIGGINS

And where's that soggy plain?

ELIZA

In Spain! In Spain!

ALL

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

HIGGINS

In Hertford, Hereford and Hampshire ?

ELIZA

Hurricanes hardly happen.

(Higgins taps out. How kind of you to let me come.)

ELIZA

How kind of you to let me come.

HIGGINS

Now once again, where does it rain?

ELIZA

On the plain! On the plain!

HIGGINS

And where's the blasted plain?

ELIZA

In Spain! In Spain!

ALL

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain!

I COULD HAVE DANCE ALL NIGHT!

I could have danced all night!

I could have danced all night!

And still have begged for more.

I could spread my wings

And done a thousand things

I've never done before,

I'll never know

What make it so exciting;

Why all at once

My heart took flight

I only know when he

Began to dance with me,

I could have danced, danced, danced all night! (5)

When Eliza could say, The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain! she

certainly felt she reached her goal of English lesson. It is like an epiphany experience in Bible. Anyway, Eliza learns much kind of expressions.

I have a chance to learn Eliza' s method through practice of Japanese with Mr. A.

Bernard Shaw insisted a New Alphabet. When a New Alphabet are invented, we have to study English grammar, rhythm, phonetics once again.

By the way, I found Japanese difficult when we teach the foreigner Japanese like Eliza, too.

Eliza is a pliant student. Meanwhile her father Dolittle cannot speak English very well. He gets a chance to gain big money. But he has to make a good speech, if he wants to get money. So he studies English very hard. Mr. A, the Chinese student has to study Japanese, if he wants to live in Japan. Both Dolittle and Mr. Chin resemble each other, when they want to their necessities, although they don't like study very hard. Shaw showed a good example through Eliza and at the same time, he showed a bad example, a lazy man, too.

That is to say, there are many kinds of people. Anyway, lots of people cannot study English very hard, if they are not driven into a corner.

Anyway, I found another Dollittle thanks to Mr. A, Chinese student.

Prof. Tsuzuki and Prof. Lee insist that it is important when teachers should use materials; pictures, videotape of My Fair Lady in English education. I taught My Fair Lady at a class in Aich Prefecture University in 2001. Students had their presentations in English in my class. In that case, some students used pictures when they explained their concept of the musical, while the other didn't use anything at all. The formers could expressed the important meaning of phonetics in My Fair Lady", but the latter's couldn't well.

Rhythm and Phonetics on Shakespeare & Shaw's dramas

Eliza and Higgins have different rhythm. In short, Higgins is a gentleman who had Victorian idea; that is, he thinks that a woman should marry with a suitable man and become a good wife.

While Eliza thinks she is about to be independent after she changed from flower girl to a lady.

So they couldn't pass the conversation each other, when they discussed her thing from her past to her future.

Therefore, they cannot also build up their partnership each other.

Nevertheless, Eliza catches Higgins's heart by attacking him, even though Higgins never lost his battle against Eliza

HIGGINS: [*in a fury*] What! That imposter! That humbug! That toadying ignoramus! Teach him my methods! My discoveries? [*He strides towards her*] You take one step in that direction and I'll wring your neck. Do you hear?

ELIZA:[*defiantly non-resistant*] Wring away! What do I care? I knew you'd strike me one day. [*Higgins, about to lay hands on her, recoils*] Aha! That's done you, enry iggins, it as. Now I don't care that [*She snaps her fingers in his face*] for your bullying and your big talk.

HIGGINS Eliza, you're magnificent! Five minutes ago you were a millstone around my neck. Now you're a tower of strength, a consort battleship! I like you like that!

[*ELIZA stares at him stonily, then turns on her heels and walks to the door*]

ELIZA: [*quietly at the door*] Good-bye, professor Higgins. I shall not be seeing you again. [*She goes*] (6)

Eliza's rhythm had become the strongest when she said enry iggins, it as. Especially, she emphasized double s sound, falling h sound on purpose. The effect of its double s sound showed that she won Higgins. Because she could say, I shall not be seeing you again when they left each other. The double s sound may have caused the effect as couplet. By repeating of s sound, Eliza certainly gave the strongest damage to Higgins. At the same time, the effect of cut of h sound such as enry iggins, it as gives us the strong upside down of feeling, as if Higgins fell from the gentleman to a lower class. It seems that Eliza pulled Higgins down from an upper class to a lower class.

In My Fair Lady , Higgins' position changed Eliza's one. He says he can do without Eliza after she left. Eliza said she could do without Higgins a little before. In short, the effect of cutting h sound adds this drama to dramatic effect. But Higgins hadn't gotten married to Eliza after he lost his game with Eliza. Anyway, whether they get married or not, they certainly approached each other. At least the situation is the same as a case of *Romeo and Juliet*.

Conclusion

Doolittle will try to learn a good speech to get money, while Eliza & Viola try to make their good speeches to get their sweethearts' hearts. Anyway, either way has interesting elements about Phonetics.

Notes

Cf. I ain't her lawful husband. (p.28) (ain't=haven't) (*My Fair Lady*; ACT 1: SCENE 2), (*My Fair Lady*, Eiko-Sha, 2000)

Prof. Hatanaka Takami pointed out that he thought that, in the case of Japanese version of *My Fair Lady*, we Japanese couldn't find a sound equal to English ones, when he saw its musical at a theatre in Sendai city 5 years ago.

Cf. Koizumi Tamotu, *A Sound & A Phoneme* (Meiji Shyoin, 1993), pp.1-20.

Cf. Shimizu Yoshikazu, *The Decipherment (Rhythm & Voice) on Shakespeare's Twelfth Night Professor Leon Rubin's Drama Method-* (The Journal of Aichi Gakuin University, vol. 47 No. 4), pp. 71-119.

Alan Jay Lerner, *The Street Where I Live* (Da Capo Press, 1994), pp.266-8.

Alan Jay Lerner, *My Fair Lady* (Eiko-Sha, 2000), pp.141-3.

Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night* (NHB, 2001), p.18.

Reference books

Raymer Jessica Lynn, *Pygmalion vs My Fair Lady': A Comparison of the vision of two authors and what each play says to women* (George Bernard Shaw, Alan J. Lerner, Frederick Loewe) (University of Nevada, 1999)

Bradshaw, Kevin Thomas Clifford, *An Analysis of the Function of Lead Types as Round in the Musicals: My Fair Lady and Sweeney Todd* (Sa Jose State University, 1989)

The Bodley Head Bernard Shaw Collected Plays with their Prefaces, (Max Reinhadt, 1972)

Daniel Jones, *An Outline of English Phonetics* (W.Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1960)

Michael Chekhov, *To the Actor* (Harper & Row, 1953)