

German Pronunciation III, on n and l

En WILLWEBER

For many years the author has been connected with the education of the German language. She feels deeply how different the pronunciation of Japanese language is from the western languages like German, as well as Chinese, Korean and Russian languages. In Japan, the tip of the tongue is used for the lingual as in the expression, "shitasaki sanzun" meaning "explain a matter away with the tip of the tongue." While in German or in other languages, the surface of the tongue is used instead of the tip of the tongue. The author has noticed on this for a long time. However, the difference is not often noticeable in Japan if one is not specially concerned and it ends up with the pressure from the conclusion, "In short, it is all right if the German is understandable." However, to make German sound like German, to use good German and moreover, to feel the literary things more deeply, one has to be careful as well as the vowels, the consonants which at times need more attention. One has to use the surface of the tongue and not the tip in the case of the consonants as the lingual. This is for the reason that pronunciation of the vowels which come in before and after that are going to have an influence. In other words, if the tip of the tongue is used, it will sound like the Japanese vowels. A few pages on pronunciation definitely appear in the beginning part, if one opens the elementary textbooks and grammar books of foreign languages. For the past forty years, the author has been expecting a publication which states that the consonants as well as the vowels are important and to prove that, that which shows the right usage of the tongue. However, as far as the author knows there is no such publication to be found.

A year ago, the author accidentally noticed a certain fact. It was when comparing the Japanese language which anybody understood from the old days and with no varieties in dialects elsewhere in all the islands of Japan as in cries of dogs "wan wan" and cats "nyā nyā" to the western languages like English, German and French. It was about the "n" in "wan" of dogs and "ny" in "nyā" of cats. Both of them are believed firmly by the Japanese people to sound "n" and as the

“na” groups. On the contrary, these sounds of crying are not considered as the sound from “na” group [n] in German as well as in other western languages. One will notice the special Japanese ear for this “na” group, as English language spreads more and more from now on and the number of people who can pronounce it correctly increase. Those who are learning German may do so with no hesitation according to what they hear and what they can pronounce. However, the person who teaches it should take care to learn the pronunciation and the accent of what is thought as standard. To think of pronunciation to be in the field of phonetics and not to regard it as important cannot be allowed unless in the case of Latin which is now a dead language. The author would like to say that to make an effort to correct his or her pronunciation as much as possible is the right way for the teachers. In the Taisho (1911-1925) and the beginning of Showa (1925-) Periods there was an English teacher among teachers whom the author have learned who pronounced the sounds of “t” and “d” as in “it” as “itto”, “team” as “chiim”, “hand” as “hando” and “ABCD” as “E, Bi, Shi, De” when teaching English. Today even children can pronounce “t” and “d”. People will approach the right pronunciation still more from this time on.

At this point, the author would like to state giving examples that taking only the lingual in German, as well as other western languages, one has to use the surface of the tongue and that among the consonants mainly n and l specifically in which the sound is made by touching the upper jaw (the gum and front part of upper jaw) with the surface of the tongue. If one gets the point of how to pronounce n and l, other linguals come naturally. The author has used the radio broadcast along with the years of experience in giving examples. The foreign language programs which are broadcasted can be recorded and are useful as examples and today’s tendency can be accepted also as examples.

1. Tho sound of Japanese “n” and “na” group

Speaking from the composition of the letters, Japanese “n” is the only consonant (half consonant) and is sounded [un]. At that moment, the tip of the tongue does not necessarily have to touch the other side of the gam of the front teeth to pronounce, so that the sound is similar to [ŋ]. However, [n] is used for the expression in general. It is printed as [n] in textbooks too. It sometimes happens to see and hear [N] used for the typical Japanese “n”.

Generally speaking, when the baby starts to make a sound or say a few words, one hears the sound of the lips like "ma ma ma" "uma uma" or the sound of tongue as "da da da" and sometimes "ja ja ja". At this minute, the baby's tongue is stuck fast to the upper jaw. There is no difference between Japan and foreign countries at this point. In Japan, the baby gradually is able to pronounce the sound of tongue like the "na" group and "ra" group of which the sound is made between the tip of the tongue and the gum. In other words it can be thought that Japanese "na ni nu ne no" and "ra ri ru re ro" which are pronounced with the tip of the tongue have developed afterwards. If one tries to make the baby in a mother's arms say "hello", he will let you hear the sound of "l" so beautifully and purely on the surface of the tongue in the right way. A child of this age seems to be unable to use the tip of the tongue fully. Gradually as he imitates the way his parents talk, the baby masters "ra ri ru re ro" and "na ni nu ne no". Once the sound using the tip of the tongue is achieved, using the surface of the tongue is being forgotten until later English is learned for the first time in junior high school. Moreover, when learning English, the students are not being taught to use the surface of the tongue, so that foreign language learning goes on with the pronunciation of the tip of the tongue.

The pronunciation of vowels which come after or before (to be mentioned later) are influenced and are changed whether to use the tip of the tongue or the surface of the tongue. For example, let us compare Japanese "ra" with la. When one sings "ra ra ra" in vocal music, if the tip of the tongue is used, the vowel of "ra" sounds [a] but in the case of using the surface of the tongue, it becomes near to [ɑ]. When the tip of the tongue touches the gum of the front teeth, the oral cavity is wide so that "a" sound is made in the front becoming [a]. If the surface is used, the vowel "a" is put naturally in the back of the oral cavity and becomes the sound [ɑ]. When listening to a chorus, where "ra ra ra" is sung, if the chorus is by Japanese people the sound becomes [a] and sounds shallow and flat, while if it is by the foreigners, it becomes [ɑ] which sounds deeper and soft to our ears. Looking at the mouth at this moment, the tongue is stuck horizontally and seen or hidden easily. When learning the vocal music in German as well in other western languages, if we do not practice using the surface of the tongue, no matter how good the voice is, deep and stereophonic voice cannot be heard.

When pronouncing "n", if the tip of the tongue is not touching the upper

gum, the sound will be like [ŋ]. This means that when Japanese is spoken to a foreigner, it is very hard to be heard. For example, if we ask a foreigner to write down Japanese names and addresses, we almost always must repeat them again. They seem to hear “nihongo” as “nihogo”, “Sannomiya” as “Sānomiya” “Hongō” as “Hōgō”, “Hōngānji” as “Hōgāji”, “Gion” as “Giō”. As we repeat again and again, they make an impatient look.

There is a case in Japanese too when the sound “n” becomes [n] as the tip of the tongue touches the gum and is pronounced by liaison. There are for example, “kannon”, “Annon”, “unnun” and so forth. The baseball word “one out” is pronounced “wannauto” even by an aged person. It has become a Japanese word through imitating an American.

Just the opposite of the above, as far as the author knows the sound of [n] is hard to be heard in German, English or other foreign languages spoken by a Japanese. The words “ins Meer” sound “Is Mea”, “eins” as “aīs”, “in einem Studentenheim” as “ī ainem shutudētēhaim” and “meanwhile” as “mīwail”.

2. Pronunciation of Japanese by a German

What then happens when Germans and other western people speak Japanese. There is no pronunciation of l or r in Japanese language, but only “ra ri ru re ro” and “ŋ” for “n”. When the western people see the letter n, their surface of tongue seems to jump up to the upper jaw reflectively. In order not to make them jump up, a notice should be written [ŋ] instead of [n]. Furthermore, the Japanese pronunciation of [ŋ] cannot be heard as [n]. When we make the Germans say “densha” meaning train, they say “dencha”. At the moment they say den-[n] the surface of the tongue touches the upper jaw so that the next -sha cannot help becoming “-cha”. When they are forced to say “sha”, they have to let their tongue go once from the upper jaw at the sound of den-[n] or they cannot pronounce “sha”. Naturally, the detaching sound of the tongue seems to sound the silent “nu”. In other words, they say “denusha”. When they are made to say “konbanwa”, they say “konubanuwa”. The sounds “ba” or “wa” are not the sounds of tongue so that after pronouncing [n] they have to detach the tongue once in order to say “ba” or “wa”. “Anshin” becomes “anchin”, “man-in” “manin”, “denwa” “denuwa”, “renshū” “renchū”, “zen-in-sanka” “zenintzuanuka”, “fun-iki” “funiki”, “enjin-o-kakeru” “enjinokakeru”, “futon-o-dasu” “fu-

tonodasu", "shinbun" "shinubunu". (NHK-radio, One-word English conversation, Mike Maksimak, 1986 April to July)

3. Pronunciation of German by a Japanese

Generally in Japan, students learn English in junior and senior high school and German or other western language later on. To use and speak the language which they have not come in contact from their birth just like a foreigner does is very difficult. However, everybody hopes and tries to speak that country's language as near as possible. As one way to make it sound like German, it is important to pay attention to the pronunciation in the Japanese language that the Germans cannot speak like the Japanese. Then using these points as contrary, one should not mix that kind of Japanese pronunciation into German. For example, taking some words which come to the author's ears and are bothering because the pronunciation of n and l is Japanese, are: "eins" as "aīś", "Menschen" as "Mēshē", "Röslein, Röslein rot" as "Rēsrai, Rēsrai rōt", "ins Meer" as "is mea", "als" as "ās", "els" as "ēs", "English" "Ēgish" or "Īgish", "in einem Studentenheim" as "Ī ainem Shutudētēhaim", "Anfang" as "Āfāg", "manchmal" as "māhimā", "Kan-ichirō" as "Kāichirō", "Dann bin ich" as "Dā bī ihi", "Sie haben schon einen Mann" as "Jī hābē schō ainē mā", "Geld" as "Gēt", "sein" and "haben" as "zai" and "hābē", "Konstanze" as "Kōstātse", "Klingemann" as "Kuīgēmā", "Brühs" as "Brūs", "once more" as "wās mōa", "Bonn summit" as "Bō samitto" (mistaken with "bō" meaning "a certain" summit), "John Henry" as "Jō Hēri", "flowers" as "fawāz", "challenge" as "chaenji", "it means" as "itto miz" and so forth with no limit. (NHK radio German course, April to July 1986, English Conversation April to July 1986, a second series of Fundamental English Course May to July 1986.)

Here, by using the above facts in the opposite way, it is recommended for the Japanese people when learning the western languages to comprehend and master the pronunciation of [n] and [l] at least by the use of the tip of tongue. For example, "ein Hahn" as "einu hānu", "Manhattan" as "manuhatan" (not [hattan]) as a double consonant. This is discussed in another occasion (En WILLWEBER No. 9 Double Consonant, Ōtemae College Thesis Collection 1975), "one hundred" as [wa:hāndred], "John Henry" as "jo:nu henuri", "eins" as [aints], "Konstanze" as "kontsutantse", "Einstein" as [aintʃutainu], "Puls" as [pultsu],

“Bruhns” as [bru:nts], “als” as [ʌlts], “Mendelssohn” as [mendeltsuzo:nu], “can you” as [kænu ü] (in this case, it was explained once that y in you is a consonant so it would not liaison. If so, it must be [kænnu ju] and not [kæn ju] sticking [nu] on [n] and the sound of tongue detaching from the upper jaw must be heard.) Beside this, though the rolling tongue r and uvula sounds not present in Japanese language may be difficult, the sounds of t, th, s, d, z which anybody can do by the use of the surface of the tongue should get more attention. Also the double consonant must not be put in like the Japanese way. (No. 9 Thesis Collection Otemae College, Double Consonant 1975, En WILLWEBER).

4. Ü in -ün- influenced by the sound of n.

One can see by looking at the mouth of a German that the [n] sound in German and other western languages is made by touching the upper jaw with the upper surface of tongue and not by touching the upper gum with the tip of tongue. The author has known for years that the tongue can be flat or vertically rounded and rolled seen in trickles. She has often wondered why. Later this puzzle was solved and the evidence was found. It was the pronunciation of fünf. In the case of most of the Japanese people, paying too much attention to pronouncing ü, their tongues are not touching the upper jaw firmly for the next coming n. Then ü [y] is near to [ju] and becomes [fjunf]. When pronouncing für, they can say ü as [y] but in fünf ü becomes [ju]. Here, unless the upper surface of tongue touches the upper jaw the pronunciation of n following ü the ü before will never be [y]. There is no other way to make ü which comes before n [y]. In other words, it proves that “n” is pronounced by the surface of tongue.

5. There are two ways to pronounce “l”.

It has been stated that “l” just as “n” is pronounced by touching the surface of tongue to the upper jaw and not by the tip of tongue and the gum. By the way, there is another way to pronounce “l”. That is the sound made when both sides of the tongue are detached from the left and right sides of teeth and the gum. This is not a double consonant. It is the sound made at the detaching of the tongue. At that moment, the front surface of the tongue touches the upper jaw and becomes a sound. This pronunciation is by all means necessary when “l” is doubled as in “ll” or in the cases of “-il” and “-el-” spellings. For

example, as in Norddeutscher Lloyd, it is re-written as "roido" or "ruroido". When pronounced quickly, sometimes it is heard as "ro", but much attention is given to the first "l" and the next "l" comes from both sides of the tongue and the latter "l" from the surface of tongue. In the case of "Bild", when pronouncing "i", both sides of the tongue stick to both sides of teeth and the gum. For this reason, the next "l" become the sound of "l" made at detaching of both sides of tongue and at that moment, the surface of tongue touches the upper jaw, so the next d [t] becomes [t] sound coming from the surface of tongue. It never becomes [ti:] of the tip of tongue. In other words, there are depth and soft echo in sound.

6. The reason for using the surface of tongue in lingual

As a recent explanation which is familiar on the pronunciation of "n" and "l" in Japan, the author would like to take an example from "The pronunciation of German (NHK radio, German course April, 1986)". It is explained that "l" is pronounced by touching the tip of the tongue with the upper gum and "n" is the sound made by touching the tip of the tongue with the upper gum and with nasal reverberation. It is explained in the phonetic dictionary as the sound of "the gum and front part of upper jaw (or just the sound of the gum indicating only the inside of gum) which is the sound made by putting the tip of the tongue close to the gum or extending over the gum and the front part of the upper jaw and at the same time closing the front part of the tongue a bit to the front part of the upper jaw and to breeze out with a rubbing sound. Especially with "l" "t" and "d", these are people who pronounce rather as the sound of the gum and the front part of upper jaw. As for the explanation for the sound of the tongue, it says, "Generally, it indicates the sound of the tongue made by the tip of the tongue quite often. It is rare for the sound of the tongue to be treated especially as a separate item."

However, if one tries to speak western Language quickly and fluently, it is nearly impossible to use both the tip of the tongue and the surface of the tongue as a two-sword fencer. A baby's "da da da" "ja ja ja" etc. which can be seen as the beginning of the lingual in any country, and the surface of the tongue being used, a western language seems natural with no change in using the surface of the tongue as one grows up. It can be said that the Japanese method of using

the tip of the tongue is a developed (or degenerated) from.

It was the English "th" sound which actually made the author feel that using as a two-sword fencer is difficult. In English, "th" appears very often as a definite article and inside many other words. So each time it appears, try to say with the tongue sticking out between the upper and lower teeth and for other sounds, pulling in the tongue and say with the tip of the tongue. The tongue becomes tired immediately from busily pulling in and out. It is necessary to choose the tip of the tongue or the surface of the tongue one or the other. For other case as an example in German, one experiences that if he does not use the surface of the tongue to produce the sound of the tongue coming after ü, it becomes [ju] instead of [y]. (Schüler, süß, G#ter, Fünf etc.)

In Japan, the tip of the tongue is used and moreover "n" is pronounced near to [ŋ] so none doubts that cats cry "nyā" and dogs "wan". Still more, they are not suspicious when they learn a foreign language at school. From this, one realizes the fundamental difference between Japanese and western languages in the way of making the lingual. At the same time, it is important to consider the usage of tongue in order to be close to the right pronunciation of that country's language. As a proof to all these facts, the author would like to take scientific datas from experimental researches still more and to develop the research based on the result. For that premise, this work is written with collected examples and hoped to be used as a fundamental ground of experimental and practical research.

Conclusion

1. The lingual in Japanese language is pronounced between the tip of the tongue and the gum. The lingual in western languages is given by surface of the tongue and upper jaw. This difference gives an influence on the pronunciation of vowels which come before and after the sound. Accordingly, the pronunciation of consonants must be corrected as well as that of vowels in order to pronounce vowels in the right way.
2. The first sounds made by a baby like the lip sound of "ma ma ma" "uma uma" etc., as well as the lingual of "da da da" "ja ja ja" are the same in Japan and in the western countries. In other words, tongue sound is pronounced between the surface of tongue and the upper jaw. And it seems the western language is pronounced the same way after the baby grew to be an adult, but as for the Japanese language,

as he grew older changed to the pronunciation of the tip of the tongue.

4. To pronounce a western language in the right way, the surface of the tongue is necessary to be used. The author has experienced this for many years through observing especially the pronunciation of n and 1. The Japanese n is generally written as the sound of [n], but actually the sound is [ŋ]. For the reason that the tip of the tongue does not touch the gum, the conversation between the Japanese and the western people sometimes is hard to understand for each other and causes some misunderstanding.

4. It is very clear that Japanese [n] is actually pronounced [ŋ] from the Japanese language that cats say “nya” and dogs “wan”. Moreover, “wan” are the same in every part of Japan with no variation. In western languages, there is no [n] in the cries of dogs and cats, but they sound as “na”-groups or [n] to the Japanese ears.

5. There are two ways in the pronunciation of 1. In the case of -11-, the first 1 comes from between both sides of the tongue and both sides of the gum, while the latter comes from between the surface of the tongue and the upper jaw and differentiate the pronunciation.

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