A Suprasegmental Threshold for L2 Pronunciation

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Abstract
This study has attempted to identify a threshold of intelligible pronunciation amongst L2 speakers, focusing on such suprasegmental features as rhythm, stress and intonation. In particular, it has analyzed examples of the best pronunciation and the poorest pronunciation in the utterances of sixteen Japanese learners of English, as evaluated by four native English instructors. The instructors evaluated pronunciation through such perspectives as the segment, intonation and rhythm, using a five-point scale with midpoints from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent). After labeling each segment of the utterances, I examined the spectrograms, fundamental frequencies, and segmental duration with a speech analyzer, *praat*. The results show that L2 speakers with the highest
evaluations indicated stress by heightening the pitch, and producing several words as a unit within a phonological phrase, while emphasizing the stress of a nuclear word. On the other hand, L2 speakers with the poorest evaluations indicated word accents by lowering the pitch, and produced every word separately.