

## LESSON NOTES

# Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide #2

## Top 5 Japanese Pronunciation Mistakes to Avoid

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# GRAMMAR

## The Focus of the Lesson is Learning the Top 5 Japanese Pronunciation Mistakes to Avoid

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### Number 1: Shortening long vowels

Saying Japanese long vowels correctly is an issue of timing. You can use claps to measure time from syllable to syllable.

The Japanese word for "grandmother" exemplifies the long vowel in Japanese. Listen closely for it.

おばあさん. The "a" in "ba" is held for two claps. おばあさん.

Japanese learners often shorten the long vowel in "baa" and say おばさん, meaning "aunt" not "grandmother." In this case, not only is the pronunciation incorrect, but by shortening the vowel, you change the meaning of the word.

### Number 2: Pronouncing Loan Words with an English accent

There are lots of foreign words that are imported into Japanese. So while their pronunciation is close to the original English word, you need to learn how to pronounce them correctly in Japanese, or you won't be understood! You don't say "hamburger ください". "Hamburger, please." Instead, you'll say ハンバーガーください。Again, ハンバーガーください

### Number 3: Overstressing syllables when speaking Japanese

If you read the Japanese sentence stressing syllables as you would in English, it would sound like this: waTAsHi wa, SUshi ga suKI DEsu. Meaning "I like sushi." Speaking in this way sounds very unnatural in Japanese. Remember, Japanese doesn't have stress.

### Number 4: Pronouncing the r-group sounds incorrectly

English native speakers often pronounce it like the r-sound in English, and say, きうれい. You should lightly tap the roof of your mouth with the tongue, but don't roll it! It's closer to an "l" in English.

### Number 5: Removing a necessary pause

Remember the issue with Japanese long vowels? It's a timing issue. So you should use claps to measure time! To achieve the necessary pause in Japanese, the speaker pauses for one clap in between the syllables. This is best illustrated with an example. For example, きって, stamp, き・っ・て、きって. Did you notice that there is a pause in the middle? The pause needs to take one clap. きって (with 3 claps).

But, Japanese learners often omit the pause. In both of these cases, not only is the

pronunciation incorrect, but the meaning of the words changes. きて, without the pause, means "please come" and かこ, without the pause, means "past".

### Number 6: Pitch Accent

Pitch accent refers to a characteristic of language where every syllable can be pronounced with a high or low pitch. Pitch accent is considered different from the concepts of stress and tone that appear in English and Chinese, respectively.

Pitch accent varies widely from region to region in Japan. As Japan started to have contact with other countries in the Meiji period, they decided that a "standard language" needed to be established. The Japanese spoken in Tokyo is now known as "standard Japanese," or hyōjun-go (標準語) in Japanese. The examples of pitch accent provided below are based on "standard Japanese."