

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide #2

Top 5 Japanese Pronunciation Mistakes to Avoid

#2

Hi everyone! I'm Michelle Yamamoto.

Welcome back to The Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide at JapanesePod101.com.

In this lesson, you'll learn the top 5 Japanese pronunciation mistakes to avoid.

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. For example...

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.

Hear the difference again.

おばあさん, grandmother、お・ば・あ・さ・ん、おばあさん

おばさん, aunt、お・ば・さ・ん、おばさん

This is an important but not critical topic for early learners. You'll learn more in Lesson 8.

Number 2: Pronouncing Loan Words with an English accent

Do you know this Japanese word in English? コンピューター

It means computer.

What about ハンバーガー？

It's hamburger.

These words were 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

"How do you say this sentence?

{pause}

"I like sushi."

Pay attention to the stresses."

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. Let's read the sentence again without stress.

わたしはすしが好きです。

Did you notice the difference?

In this series, you'll have many chances to repeat examples after me. Please listen carefully, and pronounce Japanese words without stress.

Number 4: Pronouncing the r-group sounds incorrectly

Try to read this Japanese word out loud.

[pause]

きれい beautiful

き・れ・い、きれい

Did you pronounce れ correctly?

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.

Listen carefully!

ら、り、る、れ、ろ

We'll tackle this in lesson 5.

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. How about these words.

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)

Let's hear another word.

かっこ, parentheses、か・っ・こ、かっこ

Again, the pause need to take one clap. きって (with 3 claps), かっこ (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".

You'll learn more about this sound in Lesson #9.

Here's a bonus one! It's: ignoring pitch accent.

Japanese has many words with the same spelling but different meanings. But there is a way to differentiate these words: pitch accent, the intonation used when pronouncing

the word.

For example...

If you say 箸, it means "chopsticks".

But, if you say 橋, it means "bridge."

Let's hear the difference again.

hashi, chopsticks

hashi, bridge

In Japanese, each syllable is basically pronounced with a high or low pitch.

And each Japanese word has its own pitch accent pattern.

This is important to understand. We'll teach you the secrets of Japanese pitch accent in Lesson 10.

You're on the path to perfect Japanese pronunciation! In the next lesson, you'll master the 5 Japanese vowels.

What's your biggest challenge with Japanese pronunciation? Is it one of these Top 5 mistakes? Tell us about it in the comments.

Stick with us and you'll overcome it, fast! See you in the next Ultimate Japanese Pronunciation Guide lesson!