

Effects of English Spoken Hints on the Listening Comprehension of the Japanese Learner of English

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英文音声ヒントが及ぼすリスニング内容理解への影響

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本研究の目的は、ヒント（ナレーションの英語要約文を口頭提示）がその後のナレーション理解に及ぼす影響の調査である。二種類のリスニングテスト（要約文ヒントあり・なし）を実施し要約文ヒントの効果を分析した。結果、要約文のあるリスニング問題の方が要約文のないリスニング問題よりも聞きやすいことが示されたが、これら二つのテストスコアに統計的有意差は見られなかった($p < .05$)。従って、要約文ヒントだけでその後のリスニング内容理解を促すことはあまり期待できないと言える。

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Findings of several studies suggest that providing the second language (L2) learner with some hints prior to the listening exercise normally will result in the better understanding of listening contents (e.g., Asai, 1988; Kamei & Hirose, 1994; Koike et al., 1980; Ogasawara, 1995; Iwamoto, 1996; Ishikawa & Takefuta, 1988; Takefuta et al., 1988; Long, 1990). Numerous studies have been done on the effect of hints on the listening comprehension but most of them focused on types of hints such as key words, visuals (pictures or written sentences), or hints in first language (L1) and not on hints that are made with spoken L2 sentences. From 2013, foreign language classes of the Japanese high school are going to be instructed in the target language, namely English¹. Accordingly, if instructors want to provide hints orally, they will need to do so in L2 yet at present little is known about the effect of such hints. It is

still an open question whether hints that are spoken in English sentences improve learners' listening comprehension. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of providing the Japanese learner with English spoken hints on the listening exercise; if English spoken hints positively affect the listening comprehension, what characters are composed of the hint. The findings of this study will give us better understanding of the effect of advanced hints on the listening comprehension and will especially be beneficial to language instructors who want to provide advanced hints in oral English in the listening class.

1.2 Hypothesis

Hypothesis: Providing hints in English spoken sentences helps Japanese learners of English comprehend the following narration better; as a result, their listening test scores will improve.

2. Methods

To investigate the hypothesis, four types of tests materials were prepared: (1) vocabulary test, (2)

¹ The MEXT website:
http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/news/081223/007.pdf. September 15, 2009.

listening test with hints, (3) listening test with no hints and (4) a written questionnaire. The whole test took approximately seventy minutes to complete.

2.1 Participants

The participants were recruited through three universities in Kyoto and Osaka and included some additional individuals from other communities. All participants were native speakers of Japanese whose educational background was the minimum of a senior high school diploma in Japan.

2.2 Listening test materials

The narration scripts, questions, and four multiple choice answers were excerpted from the 2nd grade listening test scripts of the Practical English Proficiency Test² provided by the Society for Testing English Proficiency. Some of them were slightly modified by the researcher for the use of study. The 2nd grade was chosen because achieving its level is the goal of high school English language education stipulated by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan³. There were four topics of questions used in this study: natural science, radio news, announcements on public transportation, and social settings. Two types of listening tests, one with hints and the other without hints were prepared to investigate the effect of hints.

Two native speakers of English were recruited as volunteer voice actors for the listening script recording. One was an American male and the other one was a Canadian male, both of them with careers in teaching English as a foreign language in Japan. Neither of them showed any distinctive accent in his speech. Each of the two native speakers read his part of the scripts separately under supervision of the researcher.

² The Society for Testing English Proficiency website: http://www.eiken.or.jp/listening/grade_2.html, March 23, 2009.

³ The MEXT website: http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/020/se_saku/020702.html, September 15, 2009.

Careful consideration was given to the choice of the test speech rate since several studies have shown that the importance of speech rates (e.g., Blau, 1990; Griffiths, 1992; Kohno, 1981; Tauroza & Allison, 1990). The speech rate in this study was set about 120-130 wpm by considering: 1) The speech rate of the 2nd grade listening test of the Practical English Proficiency Test is about 150 words per minutes (wpm)⁴, 2) The norm of speech rates proposed by Pimsleur et al. is that the speech rate of 130-160 is moderately slow and below 130 wpm is slow⁵, and 3) The speech rate of BBC news is about 125 wpm⁶.

2.3 Descriptions of the hints

To test the hypothesis, a hint preceded each narration. Careful consideration was given to make sure that hints should help learners' listening comprehension. First, the hints were designed to contain several content words (e.g., said, sorry, friends, or change) because content words are easier to catch and to retain than function words (e.g., at, have, them or could)⁷. They were retrieved from the narration that would follow to help the listeners. Second, the hints were designed to begin with a phrase: "You will hear about/of...." This was done because it is known that the speech that begins with a macro-phrase such as "to begin with", which can tell listeners the topic as a whole, can improve L2 listening comprehension⁸. Third, the hints were composed of an outline of the listening story that would follow. This was done because knowing the topic or background of the story in advance can help listeners' comprehension⁹.

⁴ The Society for Testing English Proficiency website: <http://www.eiken.or.jp/eikentimes/listening/20070801.html>, March 23, 2009.

⁵ Pimsleur et al (1977), In Kakita et al (1993), *Eigo no listening*, Tokyo, Taishukan, pp. 87-88.

⁶ Koike (1993), *Eigo no hearing to sono shido*, Tokyo, Taishukan, p.46.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p.164.

⁸ Chaudron & Richards (1986), *The effect of discourse markers on the comprehension of lectures*. *Applied Linguistics*, 7, 2, pp.113-127.

⁹ Long (1990), *What you don't know cannot help you: An exploratory study of background knowledge and second*

Here is one example of the hints used in the current test: “You will hear about Ken. He wants to ask his neighbor to trim some of the trees in her garden. The trees prevent sunlight from getting into his rooms.” The hint starts with the macro-phrase “You will hear about/of...”, and describes an outline of the later narration. Underlined are some content words, which are repeated both in the hint and narration. After this hint, a narration about Ken would start: “Ken’s neighbor has a large tree in her yard. In the summer, the tree blocks sunlight coming into Ken’s windows. Ken wants his neighbor to cut some of the branches from the tree so that his house can get more light. Ken is planning to visit his neighbor to talk about the problem.” After this narration, a question “What is Ken’s problem?” would be heard.

Additionally, it is known that there are some grammar items that are easier than others for the Japanese L2 learners to recognize¹⁰. It happens because some paraphrasing sentences are more commonly used and practiced in schools than others¹¹. For example, “Betty is a good swimmer.” can be easily recognized as “Betty is good at swimming.” or “Betty swims well.” by Japanese learners while “Shall I wait for you?” as to mean “Do you want me to wait here?” is less recognizable¹². However, the hints were created without regard to whether the Japanese learner had been well exposed to common paraphrased sentences as they should be as natural as possible for the purpose of this study.

Eleven narrations were preceded by the hints and all of them were used to measure positive effects of the English spoken hints on the later listening comprehension. Appendix A shows some of the hints, narrations, questions, and multiple choice answers used in this study.

language listening comprehension, Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 12, pp.65-80.

¹⁰ Koike, pp. 205-208.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

2.4 Vocabulary test

Mochizuki’s vocabulary size test was employed to group the participants. This vocabulary size test measures the number of perceivable English words of the Japanese learner of English. Perceivable words are words that learners can recognize when they see them but cannot necessarily produce in speech or writing. The test consists of seven levels and can measure each participant’s vocabulary size up to 7000 words. Each level among the seven levels is composed of thirty Japanese words and the test takers are asked to match the Japanese words to English words from the provided multiple choices. If the size of the learners’ vocabulary can be assumed to be larger than 1000 words, then it is not necessary to start from the 1000 word level.¹³ Consequently, a measurement between level 2001 and 7000 was employed in this study with the consideration that all participants of this study were at least high school graduates who possess a basic level of English. A total of five levels were employed in this study, and six minutes and thirty seconds was allocated to each level measurement.

2.5 Supplementary Questionnaire

A written questionnaire was employed to gather demographic information of the participants such as sex, age, scores of Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and Practical English Proficiency Test grades. It also gathered information such as, on which part – the hints or the narration – the participant had focused on during the listening, and on which part of the information – the hints or the narration – the participant had retained more. Because some participants took the test under no supervision, the questionnaire also asked the participants to declare whether they had followed the stipulated test procedures at the end of the test. Appendix C shows the English translation version of questionnaire.

¹³ Mochizuki et al (2003), *Eigo goi no shido manual*, Tokyo, Taishukan, pp.211-225.

2.6 Procedures

The purpose and procedures of the study were explained to the participants before they had participated in the study. Also, the test booklet was designed to make sure that the participants were well informed about the test procedures. Rules – such as what to do, when to start or stop, and when to flip a page – were provided both in the spoken and written form of Japanese. The sound material was controlled for the time allocation in every part of the test.

The first section of the test was the vocabulary size test. During the vocabulary size test, the time remaining was announced in Japanese five minutes, three minutes, and one minute prior to the end. To avoid the participants seeing further pages in advance, the caution “Wait for the next announcement.” was written in Japanese in the bottom of the page.

The listening comprehension section followed the vocabulary size test. The participants were informed in Japanese that a hint would be provided for each question in this listening section. First, the participants would hear a hint which was an outline of the accompanying narration. After the hint, two seconds of silence would be heard before the narration would start. After each narration, the question would follow and the participants were given eight seconds to choose the best answer from the four choices written in the test booklet. The eight seconds allocated for answering was about consistent with the original Practical English Proficiency Test. The hints and questions were spoken by the American male and the narrations were spoken by the Canadian male. All speech was spoken only once and only four possible answers were written in the test booklet. None of the hints, narrations, or questions was written.

After the first section of listening test, the second listening test followed. In this section, ten listening questions were given without any hint preceded the narrations. To avoid confusion, the participants were well informed in both spoken and written Japanese that there would be no hint in this section. The narrations were spoken by the Canadian male while the questions

were spoken by the American male. All speech was spoken only once. For each question only four alternatives of the multiple choice answers were written in the test booklet. The scores from this section were used to measure the participants’ basic listening proficiency. Appendix B shows some of the narrations, questions and multiple choice answers used in this study.

After the vocabulary size test and the two listening test sections, the participants were asked to fill out the questionnaire designed to gather the supplementary information. The whole test took approximately seventy minutes to complete.

3. Results

A total of eighty-one volunteers, approximately evenly divided between men and women participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 67, with an average age of 24. About half of the participants took the test under the researcher’s supervision and the other half took the test at their homes. Among the eighty-one, the results of seventy-six were used to analyze the data. Five were excluded because of their failure to properly follow the test procedures. The data were examined in several ways to see if any statistically significant improvement was present due to the existence of English spoken hints. The data were also performed to determine the sensitivity of the study.

3.1 Analyses of the results

First, the average listening score with both test types were calculated for the whole population of participants ($n=76$). The average test score with no hints was 59.3% while the average test score with the hints was 60.2%. A *t*-test was conducted, but the slight difference observed between the two test types was not statistically significant at the 95% level ($p<.05$). To explore any outliers whose results were extreme and potentially disturbing the analysis, the Statistical Program for Social Science (SPSS) software was used but no such outliers were found. Figure 1 shows the changes in the scores (i.e., scores with hints minus scores with no hints) for the

individual participants. The population was evenly distributed around the “no effect line” (0%), in agreement with the results. The difference observed between the two types of tests can be explained as due to random chance.

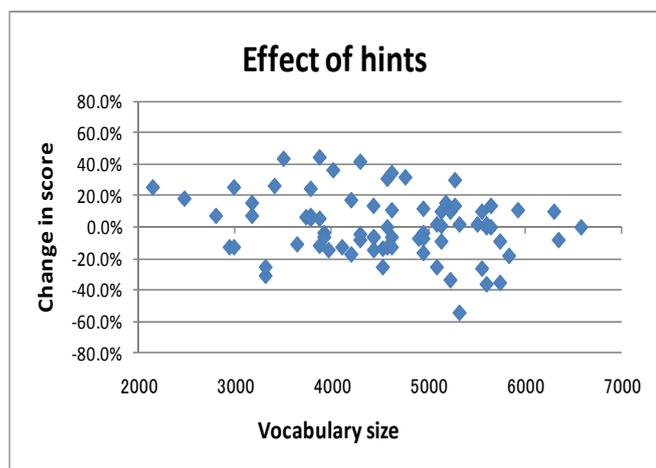


Figure 1. Effects of hints in individual participants as function of vocabulary size

Second, the data were divided into three groups based on the listening scores with no hints: the Low listening proficiency group (listening scores < 49%, n=28), the Middle listening proficiency group (50% –79%, n=17), and High listening proficiency group (>80%, n=31). Table 1 shows the average scores of the two tests in each listening proficiency group. *T*-tests were conducted to explore the effect of the hints in each listening proficiency group but the differences seen in Table 1 were not statistically significant at the 95% level. SPSS was used to search for outliers but it did not find any. Thus, the differences among the scores of each listening proficiency level seen in the Table 1 are also statistically not significant.

Then, the relation between basic listening scores (scores with no hint) against the vocabulary sizes was analyzed. The correlation between the two elements was $r = 0.746$ ($p < .01$). It implies that listening proficiency depends on vocabulary size and suggesting that a more

detailed analysis can be performed when the full sample is divided based on their vocabulary size. The data were divided based on the vocabulary size as a proxy for language ability: Low vocabulary size group (<4000 words, n=23), Middle vocabulary size group (4001 words - 5000 words, n=26), and High vocabulary size group (>5001 words, n=27). Table 2 shows the average scores of the two test types in each vocabulary group. *T*-tests were conducted to explore the effect of the hints in each vocabulary size group and SPSS was used to search for outliers; however, the differences seen in Table 2 were not statistically significant at the 95% level ($p < .05$) nor any outliers were found.

| | Hints | No hints |
|--------|-------|----------|
| Low | 36.7% | 26.9% |
| Middle | 62.9% | 58.8% |
| High | 77.4% | 89.0% |

Table 1. Average scores of the hint types in each listening proficiency group

| | Hints | No hints |
|--------|-------|----------|
| Low | 37.5% | 31.7% |
| Middle | 60.1% | 58.1% |
| High | 79.5% | 84.1% |

Table 2. Average scores of the hint types in each vocabulary size group

3.2 Sensitivity of the study

To explore the sensitivity of current study, how much improvement would have been needed to see the effect of the hints, a simple experiment was conducted. Only the Middle vocabulary size group was used for this experiment because this group was most appropriate to the current test materials. First, every participant’s score with the hints was artificially increased by one point (i.e., one extra correct answer) with the assumption that there

was zero effect of the hints. A *t*-test was then carried out to see if any effect of the hints would have been detectable. It showed that the effect of one extra correct answer per participant was detectable at better than 95% level ($p < .05$). Thus, the sensitivity of the current study was roughly one question out of eleven. The interpretation of this experiment is that the listening tests in the current study could detect the effects of hints if the average improvement per participant was about 10% (one extra correct answer). Thus, if the scores increased by about 10% due to the positive effect of the hints, this study would have detected the effects of the hints. Alternatively, it can conclude that the hints had at most a small effect, less than 10%, on improving the participants' scores in this current test.

3.3 Reliability of the data

It is important to recall the surrounding differences among the participants in this study. Some participants took the test at home without supervision and others took it at school under supervision. Some took it after class and others took in their free time. Their level of test anxiety or physical fatigue most likely varied individually and it may be argued that these psychological and physical differences may have affected their test results. Additionally, since the participants were volunteers and there was neither incentive nor punishment based on their listening score results, one could argue that their motivations for taking the test were low. To check these questions, the vocabulary size was used as a proxy for the participants' motivation level in the current study and it was compared against their TOEIC scores, which were obtained at the time of high motivation. Figure 2 shows that the two factors are in agreement. Thus, it can say that the participants' motivation level in this study was reasonably high.

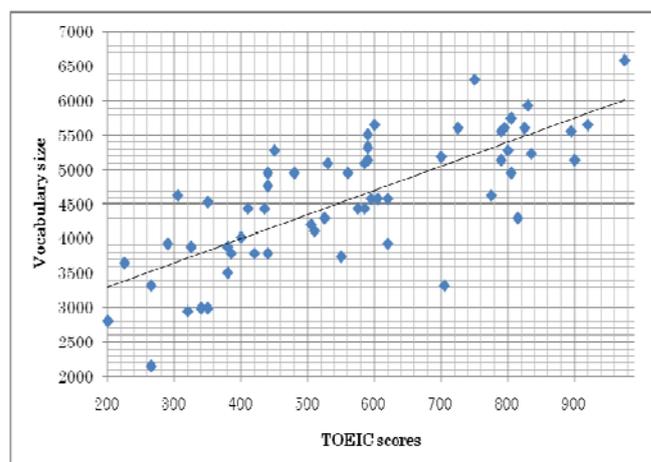


Figure 2. TOEIC scores compared with vocabulary sizes

3.4 Summary of the results

The data were analyzed based on the average scores of the two types of listening tests, of the three listening proficiency levels, and of the three vocabulary size groups. The data were also analyzed to explore the sensitivity of the current test and found that it was sensitive enough to detect a 10% change in the test scores. However, contrary to what was expected, the current study did not find any statistically significant effect of English spoken hints on the listening comprehension. Contrary to other types of hints such as visual forms or key words, English spoken hints have little positive effect on the listening comprehension of the Japanese learner of English. The hypothesis was rejected.

4. Discussions

4.1 Potential explanations for the results

The simplest interpretation of the current test result is that the level of the listening material was not appropriate for the participants. To understand the appropriateness of the test level, further analyses were conducted.

About half the participants in the Low vocabulary size group scored less than 25%. A person even if s/he simply had a random guess should still score about 25% because each question on the listening test had four

possible answers. The median score for this group was 30%, which is consistent with the 25% random-chance guessing (see Figure 3). It suggests that there was a high chance that the listening tests used in the study were too advanced for the Low vocabulary size group. Most of them did not understand most of the questions in the current test.

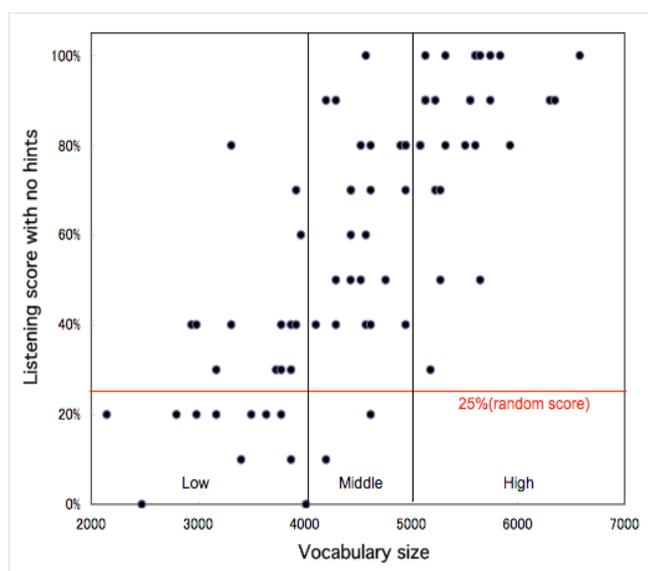


Figure 3. Listening scores in three vocabulary size groups

To understand what made the test too difficult, the reports from the questionnaire were studied. The length of the hints was considered as a possible factor since some members of this group commented on it as follows: “The hints were too long and I lost my concentration.”; “It was too hard for me to listen to both hint and narration.” It is known that Japanese high school students do not struggle to catch English sentences if a sentence is not longer than twelve words.¹⁴ It is also known that a sentence composed of about fifteen words is the maximum length for retention for Japanese

¹⁴ Horiuchi (1974), *Kikukoto no gengo katsudo ni kansuru kisoteki kenkyu chosa no hokoku to kousatsu*, Eigo kyoiku, Tokyo, Taishukan, 22, 3, pp. 38-40.

university students.¹⁵ The average length of the hints in the current study was twelve point seven words per sentence. While average learners could potentially handle the hints, many members of the Low vocabulary size group consisted of poorer learners very likely could not do so since the length of sentences was close to the limits of retention mentioned above.

In short, the hints likely functioned as an extra burden rather than as a help to the participants in the Low vocabulary size group because of their limited English ability. Importantly, since these participants understood very little of the listening materials in this study, the results from this group cannot provide reliable data for studying the effects of the hints. Thus, this group was excluded from the sensitivity analysis of this study.

The Middle vocabulary size group’s median score was 60%, which is much higher than the pure-luck 25% (see Figure 3). Thus, it can assume that the members of this group understood large parts of the listening materials and that the language ability of this group was well suited to the goals of this study. Furthermore, if there were some effects due to the hints, the study should have found them on the Middle vocabulary size group; however, it did not. For the reasons why the hints did not help, several participants in this group reported: “The hints would require additional listening effort, which would overload my retention memory.” It is possible that members of this group also found the hint sentences to be challenging with the members of the Low vocabulary size group.

Another reason for no positive hint effect on this group may be the speech rate of 120-130 wpm. Thirty-two point five percent of the participants in the Middle vocabulary size group reported that the speech rate was fast. When learners feel that speech fast, they normally feel that the pause between sentences is too short¹⁶. Since the current study aimed to keep the speech

¹⁵ Nakamura et al (1979), *Shin chokai kyoza no henzan ni atatte*, Doshisha University Eigo Eibungaku kenkyu, 21, pp. 131-157.

¹⁶ Koike, p. 46.

as natural as possible, no manipulated pauses between sentences in the hints or narrations were imposed. The lengths of the pauses between the sentences were at a natural length which was less than one second. This may be an explanation for why the participants felt the speech rate fast even though it was only 120-130 wpm. The same explanation can be applied to the pauses between the hints and the narrations. Several participants reported: “The narrations would start while I was still processing the hints.” This implies that the two-second silence between the hint and narration were too short to digest the hints and to retain them before the narration would start.

In short, while the language ability of this group was the best suited for the purpose of this study, the study found little effect of hint possibly because of the length of hints and the length of pauses employed in the current study. It may be worthwhile to try providing longer pauses between the hint and narrations in a further study.

Lastly, the study sought for the explanation for why the hints did not help the members of the High vocabulary size group. The simplest explanation is that the members of this group did not have enough room to improve. Most of them could score above 80% without any hint (see Figure 3). This means that less than 20% room was left for them to improve when the hints were added. In agreement with this fact, many participants in this group reported: “The hints were not necessary since understanding the narrations would suffice for answering questions.” It seems that the learners with a large vocabulary size did not benefit from the hints simply because their English ability was sufficient to do well even without hints. Importantly, the test results from the High vocabulary size group may not provide reliable data as well as the Low vocabulary size group. Thus, the members of High vocabulary size group were excluded from the sensitivity study.

4.2 Implications from the questionnaire

Interestingly, while the effect of hints on the test score was very little, many participants felt that those hints

were in fact helpful. They reported: “The hints were helpful because they encouraged me to guess what I was going to hear.”, “The hints were helpful because they helped me imagine the situation of the narration better.”, “The hints helped me to understand the narration better because they gave me an outline of the narration.”, “The hints functioned as introduction and they were helpful.”, and “The hints helped me because I could hear the same information twice.” The interpretation of these reports is that the benefit of providing English spoken hints is to give the listeners some emotional buffer before they tackle with a more difficult task. Even though outline hints do not directly improve listening test scores, they are good for encouraging the learners’ interest in listening.

4.3 Limitations of this study

One could argue that many easy questions may have been accompanied by hints while some more difficult questions may have been with no hint. If this were true, then the result of the study could be biased. However, the difficulty of the questions for each test type may be considered approximately equal to each other because each listening test was composed of about ten questions. The average difficulty of the questions in each group should be well balanced by random chance. Nevertheless, attention should be paid to ensure the questions are well balanced for further studies.

5. Conclusions

This study was set out with the goal of understanding effects of English spoken hints on the listening comprehension of the Japanese learner of English: What outcomes will be expected when instructors give hints prior to the listening exercise only in L2 sentences? To investigate the question, the current study prepared two types of listening tests (with hints and without hints) and compared the scores of the two. The study also employed a vocabulary test to see if there are any hint effects on the listening comprehension in different vocabulary size groups. Main findings of the study are:

a) As discussed in Section 4.1, the members of Middle vocabulary size group were best suited to the current test material. If there were some effects due to the hints, the study should have found them on the Middle vocabulary size group; however, it did not. The hints had at most a small effect, less than 10%, on improving the participants' scores. On average, the participants' listening comprehension did not improve nor decrease due to the English spoken hints. It concludes that English spoken hints have little positive effect on improving the listening comprehension of the Japanese learner of English.

b) The study found that an outline of the narration can function as emotional buffer and make the L2 listeners feel easy. Outline hints spoken in English have a role of encouraging the learners' interest in listening to the later narration. It summarizes that while not affecting directly the listening test scores positively, English spoken hints that are made with an outline of the narration do encourage the learner's interest in listening and consequently they may help the learners feel motivated.

c) The current study showed a strong correlation between vocabulary size and listening proficiency. Although a correlation is not a cause and effect, it is possible to say that increasing a vocabulary size can improve listening proficiency. Improving the ability to catch words, especially recognizing content words by ears not eyes, is an imperative exercise for a better listening comprehension.

Contrary to the expectation, the study did not find any statistically significant effect of the English spoken hints on the listening comprehension of later narrations. As opposed to other types of hints such as visual forms or key words, English spoken hints affect only learners' emotion not comprehension. The listening scores cannot be expected to improve due to the addition of such hints. However, if instructors want to give hints only in L2 sentences, they should do so with knowing that giving

the learners an outline of the narration is good for encouraging their interest in the listening exercise.

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Appendix A

You will hear about a change in a bakery. It is a popular bakery among local people even though it is under new management. (2 seconds) Sam's Bakery in Victoria City is well known for its tasty cakes. Last year, the owner of the shop retired, and people in the town were worried that it would close. Fortunately, a woman bought the store and kept everything the same. She used the same staff members and kept the store's original recipe and name. The people of Victoria City were pleased that they had not lost their favorite bakery. (1 second) Question: What happened to the bakery last year? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. Sam's bakery changed its name.
2. Sam's bakery got a new owner.
3. Sam's bakery became well known.
4. Sam's bakery stopped selling cakes.

You will hear about the annual job skills fair where people can learn about skills for writing resumes and job interviews. (2 seconds) Good morning everyone. Thank you for attending the 2009 Job Skills Fair. Our featured speaker, Nancy Covington, will be giving her presentation at 3 o'clock. Don't miss this opportunity to learn how to write perfect resumes! Those of you who wish to attend the presentation should go to stage C. Thank you. (1 second) Question: What will the presentation be about? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. Giving presents.
2. Stage performance.
3. Creating job advertisements.
4. Getting a job you want.

You will hear about a type of fish which has acquired an interesting way of catching its prey. (2 seconds) The archerfish is an unusual fish. It has two ways of catching insects that it sees above the surface of the water. If the insect is nearby, the archerfish jumps up to catch it. If the insect is further away, the archerfish shoots a jet of water from its mouth. When the insect is hit by the water, it falls to the surface and is eaten by the archerfish. (1 second) Question: What is one way the archerfish preys on insects? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. It takes them from other fish.
2. It shoots them with a jet of water.
3. It swims to the bottom of the ocean.
4. It plays with insects.

You will hear about a couple who recently bought a house. Unfortunately, they had to spend a lot of money on repairs to the house. (2 seconds) Simon and his wife Pam bought a house two years ago. Unfortunately, they soon found that it had a problem. All of the electrical wires in the house had to be replaced because they were old and dangerous. This repair work cost a lot of money. Now they save a little money each month in case they find another problem. (1 second) Question: What was Simon and Pam's problem? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. They were not able to sell their house.
2. They could not find any electrical wires.
3. Their house needed costly repairs.
4. Their house was too expensive.

You will hear an advertisement in a furniture shop on its last day of business. (2 seconds) Good afternoon, shoppers. Welcome to Furniture Land! Today is the last day of our going-out-of-business sale. You will find most items going for at least half price! That's right –all remaining items must be sold today. We hope you enjoy

your shopping and thank you for your support over the last 10 years. (1 second) Question: Why are the prices only 50%? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. The shop is closing down.
2. The shop is having an opening sale.
3. The shop is selling last year's products.
4. The shop is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Appendix B

Hello, Ladies and gentlemen. I hope you're enjoying your evening at Mickey's Bar and Grill. I'd like to announce that we'll be setting up a big-screen TV in our lounge tomorrow. It'll be ready for the soccer game at eight o'clock, which is Scotland against Germany. Everyone is invited to come watch the game and enjoy some great food and drink. (1 second) Question: What will the staff at Mickey's Bar and Grill do tomorrow? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. Play in a soccer game.
2. Put a TV in the lounge.
3. Sell tickets for a sporting event.
4. Leave for Germany on vacation

Michelle works at a manufacturing company. The company often does things to improve the lives of people in the local community. This year, it built a park on some land it owns. The new park is near a river, and it has a grass sports field. The park also has two tennis courts and a place for barbecues. (1 second) Question: What did Michelle's company do this year? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. It held a barbecue near a river.
2. It made a park for local people.
3. It moved to a different area.
4. It started a tennis club.

Vicky is doing a project on the environment for science class. She once saw a TV program about the large amount of food that is wasted every day by stores and families. For her project, Vicky will write about why this happens. She'll interview the manager at a supermarket

and talk to people in her neighborhood. She hopes that people will throw away less food in the future. (1 second) Question: What will Vicky write about for her science project? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. Why so much food is wasted.
2. What food is most popular with families.
3. How much food supermarkets sell.
4. Which families eat the most food.

Tony is a sales representative for a small import company. In his free time, he likes to paint pictures of famous people. He does his paintings by looking at photographs of the people. Next weekend, he will hold a small exhibition of his artwork at a community center near his home. He'll put prices on each of the paintings and try to sell them. (1 second) Question: What will Tony do next weekend? (8 seconds to choose answer)

1. Sell some photographs he took.
2. Import some expensive artwork.
3. Paint a picture of a famous person.
4. Put his paintings on display.

Appendix C (translated version)

Age: Sex: TOEIC score/year: PEPT grade:

The speech rate in the listening tests was: 1. Very fast. 2. Fast. 3. Relatively fast. 4. Neither fast nor slow. 5. Relatively slow. 6. Slow. 7. Very slow.

I focused more on: 1. The hints. 2. Probably the hints. 3. The narrations. 4. Probably the narrations. 5. Both hints and narrations.

I retained the information of: 1. The hints more. 2. The hints more, although depending on the question. 3. The narration more. 4. The narrations more, although depending on the question. 5. Both hints and narration about the same.

Relating to the question above, what is the reason you retained the aforementioned part? 1. Because I

concentrated on it. 2. Because I heard words I know. 3. Because I understood the contents. 4. Because I could imagine the situations. 5. Because the voice/speech had some outstanding characteristic. 6. Because I heard the same information twice. 7. Because the contents had some discrepancies. 8. Others (please describe)

The hints were helpful: 1. In almost every question. 2. In more than half the questions. 3. In about half the questions. 4. In less than half the questions. 5. Barely. 6. In none of the questions at all. 7. I did not recognize the hints.

What are the reasons the hints helped you?

What are the reasons the hints did not help you?

Did you feel any strangeness in the hints? 1. Very much 2. Often 3. Sometimes 4. I feel so now 5. Not sure 6. A little 7. None

If your answer is any of 1 to 4 in the question above, please describe the strangeness you felt in the hints.

Did you stop or rewind the CD after you started the test?
Yes/ No

Thank you very much for your participation in this study.

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