More Discoveries: The English Listening and Reading Ability of Freshmen

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質の高い大学の英語プログラムを提供するために，教官は学生の能力について知っておかなければならない。本研究の目的は広島大学の一年生の英語リスニング能力とリーディング能力を分析し検討することである。習熱度別クラス編成を実施するために，ほとんどの一年生はリスニング・テストとリーディング・テストを受けた。その中の10学部の415人の解答用紙を無作為に選び分析対象とした。重要なのは，この論文が前年に実施した同様のテストと被験者に関する研究を継続拡大したことである。(Lauer, 1999)

今回の主な調査結果は次のようなものである。1）リスニング・テストの中で学生にとって難しかったのは使役表現 *get (someone) to do (something)* と特定の単熟語： *drop it off at, notified, accepted, must be, a load off his mind, thick*（スープに関する）, *consistency,* と *math* であった。また，リスニングの推論質問の正解率は低かった。2）リーディング・テストでは，前年に引き続き，学生は文章の大意を把握し，文章中の個別の情報見つけ出すことに成功していた。しかし，それに比べると，リーディングの推論質問の正解率はかなり低かった（p<.01）。3）リスニング・テストにおいても（p<.01）リーディング・テストにおいても（p<.01）男性より女性のスコアのほうが高かった。4）リスニングとリーディングに強い学生と弱い学生との間で明らかな違いが見られる質問を確認することができた。以上の結果は英語を学習する側と教育する側の双方にとって重要な意味を示唆するものであり，たとえば，「理想的な試験」の作成などに寄与する。

In order to provide a high-quality English program, it is crucial for administrators to know about the abilities of students. This study attempts to describe the English listening and reading abilities of freshmen at Hiroshima University. Nine weeks after the start of the first semester in 1999, almost all of the freshmen students-- about 2,000-- were given a 15-minute listening test and a 20-minute reading test so that highly proficient students could be placed in higher-level courses in the second semester. A total of 415 students' test answer sheets were randomly selected and analyzed. The students represented 10 different faculties. Importantly, this paper expands on the results of a study which was carried out the previous year on the same type of population using a similar test (Lauer, 1999).

The four most noteworthy findings in this most-recent study were: 1) On the listening test, the causative form *get (someone) to do (something)* was troubling for students, as were certain vocabulary terms such as *drop it off at, notified, accepted, must be, a load off his mind, thick* (in relation to soup), *consistency,* and *math.* Also, inference listening questions were hard; 2) On the reading test, for the second year in a row students had a lot of success identifying the main ideas of passages, and finding specific facts in passages. They had significantly more difficulty with inference questions (p<.01); 3) Female students scored

significantly higher than male students on both the listening test (p < .01) and the reading test (p < .01); 4) Question types which differentiate high-scoring students from low-scoring students were identified. The results suggest important implications for teaching freshmen students, and for the learning of English. For example, "an ideal test" could be made.

Background

Current second language listening theory, as summarized by Ramirez (1995), indicates that good listeners use both top-down and bottom-up strategies. Top-down strategies entail first understanding text, main ideas, and sentences, and then processing down to words, syllables, and sounds. Bottom-up strategies are the reverse. Unsuccessful learners only seem to rely on bottom-up strategies. Ishihara (1999) found that Japanese junior and senior high school students are aware that they need to process top-down, but they feel a lot of frustration because they often simply cannot do it.

Reading English, too, is no easy task. Often texts written in English deal with unfamiliar topics. In addition, discourse-level organization and rhetoric differs between English and Japanese texts. For example, Japanese newspaper articles, personal notes, and novels are written differently from such genre in other countries. Last, but far from least, students must have linguistic knowledge to decode an English text. (See Aebersold & Field (1997) for a review of the literature on these schemata.)

With respect to linguistic decoding, it is very interesting to note that mental processing seems to differ whether one is reading kanji or alphabetic strings. Because kanji have no analyzable phonological segments, the meaning of a certain kanji is thought to be accessed directly from print. On the other hand, access to the meaning of a word in English seems to require a preparatory phonological processing. Some evidence suggests that Japanese may have reading difficulties partly because of English phonology. (See Wade-Wooley (1999) for a discussion of this.)

However, the prospects are far from bleak for Japanese readers of English. For example, Wade-Wooley (1999) found that the Japanese ability to read kanji seems to give them an advantage over Russians (who have an alphabetic native language) when it comes to recognizing English spelling patterns. Many studies show that successful reading strategies can be taught, and when taught, strategies help improve student performance on comprehension tests (see Janzen (1996) for a review of the literature on reading strategies.) Also, Japanese and non-Japanese approach many texts in scientific and other fields with virtually the same background knowledge. Finally, the most compelling reason for optimism is that many Japanese do become fluent English readers.

What exactly are good readers of English capable of doing? In a major study, Buck et al. (1997) analyzed the test results of 5,000 Japanese who had taken the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication). They identified attributes of successful readers, including the abilities to understand vocabulary, to synthesize scattered information, to make inferences, to pinpoint main ideas, and to use general knowledge of the world in order to

understand text.

Unfortunately, most learners are not able to use many of these strategies. Nakamura (1999), Hirano (1996) and others have found that Japanese high school and university students usually use the following three reading strategies: 1) Processing Bottom-Up-- students try to understand the meaning of each word;   2) Concentrating on Grammar-- students look for key words such as *lastly, finally, because, for* and *but* in order to identify main points; and 3) Writing in Notes-- students underline expressions. Of special note is that skimming and scanning (i.e. reading the first sentence of each paragraph, looking for key facts) are utilized less frequently.

Mineishi (1997) asked Japanese university students to "think aloud" while reading, and she found that successful readers used a wider range of reading strategies than weak readers. The study was unique because the researcher controlled for students' vocabulary and grammar abilities; the two groups had roughly equivalent vocabulary and grammar abilities according to the results of independent tests, but they had vastly different reading abilities. She found that, in contrast to students with high reading scores, students with low reading scores mostly used the strategies of "read aloud" and "detour unknown words." Low-level readers could not guess the meanings of words even though the meanings were clear from context, and they could not break an unknown word into its morphological parts in an attempt to guess the meaning. Lower-level readers also had more troubles than good readers at pronouncing unknown words.

Ikeda (1999) found that Japanese university freshmen have a high understanding of additive connectors (eg. *also, in addition, furthermore, to begin with, likewise, similarly*), but have significantly more difficulty with sequential connectors (eg. *when, after that, before, prior to, thus*). Kadota et al. (1999) found that university students are better able to comprehend text when the text is presented in chunks or phrases rather than word-by-word.

Regarding gender, most studies in the field of second language acquisition report that there is no correlation between proficiency and sex. But some studies, incidental to their main focus, do find that women outperform men. For example, Farhady (1982) found that female university students scored significantly higher on a listening comprehension test than males did.

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As stated above, the present paper expands on the findings of a similar study which was conducted the previous year by this same author (Lauer, 1999). That research is hence referred to as the 1998 study because it was conducted in that year. It revealed three major findings: 1) Students did significantly better on the reading test than on the listening test (p<.01); 2) Individual listening scores correlated with reading scores (p<.01); and 3) On the listening test, when students perceived certain words or expressions on the tape, they were often attracted to distractors (incorrect choices) which featured those exact same words or expressions. Concerning gender, women scored better in listening and reading than men, but not significantly.

With the above findings in mind, the following research questions were posed:

1) Can we reconfirm the findings of the 1998 study?

2) With which types of test questions do students have difficulties, and why?

3) Which listening and reading questions are successful in differentiating high scorers from low scorers?

Tests, Students, and Analysis Techniques

The listening and reading tests were both adapted from various TOEFL study materials which are available on the market. For a tape transcript and a copy of the 1999 tests, see the appendix of this paper. Test instructions were given in both Japanese and in English.

On the listening test, a major deviation from TOEFL and from the 1998 study was that each question featured three possible answers, only one of which was correct. (A standard TOEFL question has four possible answers.) This was done in order to simplify the listening task, since Japanese university freshmen typically do poorly on standard TOEFL listening tests. The audio tape was of high quality, originally produced by Heinemann (Mahnke & Duffy, 1996). Students heard 20 short conversations between two people. After each conversation a question was heard, and students had 12 seconds in which to read the three possible answers on a sheet and to mark the best answer on a second sheet.

The 20-minute reading test immediately followed the listening test. Students answered 15 multiple-choice comprehension questions based on two short reading passages. Here, each question featured four possible answers, only one of which was correct.

Table 1 describes the types of students whose answer sheets were analyzed. "Souka" refers to the Faculty of Integrated Arts and Sciences; these students major in various fields. Most "School Education" majors want to become primary school teachers, while "Education" majors are often aiming to become secondary school teachers. "Science" students often major in physics or chemistry.

TABLE 1: Number of Students by Sex and Faculty

Males = 207	School Education = 50	Economics = 40
Females = 208	Engineering = 50	Law = 40
Total = 415	Education = 50	Medicine = 35
	Literature = 45	Science = 35
	Souka = 40	Dentistry = 30

For analysis purposes, on the listening and reading tests vocabulary and grammatical structures which might have caused problems for students were identified. On the listening test phonetic contrasts were investigated. On the reading test we looked at questions dealing with the main idea of the text, and also questions asking to identify information which was NOT stated in the text.

In addition, the reading comprehension questions in both the 1998 study and the current study were categorized into three types: replication, synthesis, and inference. This

categorization has been used by Yano et al. (1994) and others. *Replication* questions are derived from facts clearly stated in the passage, and require the reader to match an expression in the question/answer with a nearly-identical expression in the text. The two expressions may have only minor lexical changes. *Synthesis* questions require the reader to connect, or synthesize, a number of facts stated in the passage. The facts spread across different sentences or paragraphs. *Inference* questions ask the reader to make a deduction about words or ideas mentioned in the passage. These latter concepts are conveyed across sentences and/or require reader background knowledge.

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for the reading passages on both the 1998 and 1999 tests. The Flesch Formula is a statistic which uses numbers of syllables and sentence length in its calculation. As can be seen, the 1999 reading passages were considerably more difficult than the 1998 tests.

TABLE 2: Characteristics of the 1998 and 1999 Reading Passages

	Readability (Flesch Formula for Grade Level)	Complexity (Words per Sentence)	Length (Total Words)
• 1998 Passage 1 (Items 1–9) Topic: California Geography	6.0	18.25	73
• 1998 Passage 2 (Items 10-18) Topic: Hopi Indians	10.5	19.00	133
• 1999 Passage 1 (Items 1-7) Topic: Health Service	College: Graduate	14.4	144
• 1999 Passage 2 (Items 8-15) Topic: Andy Warhol	College: 2nd Year	19.6	196

Finally, in order to answer research question number three, each test item was subjected to item discrimination (ID) analysis. According to Brown (1996, p. 66), ID analysis "indicates the degree to which an item separates the students who did well from those who performed poorly." An ID value is calculated based on item facility (IF), which is the proportion of students who answered a particular item correctly. The item facility (IF_{lower}) of the students scoring in the lowest third of the test overall is subtracted from the item facility (IF_{upper}) of the students scoring in the highest third of the test overall.

Generally, students who score highly on the test overall score highly on individual test items, and the reverse is true for low-scoring students. However, the opposite can happen when items are poorly constructed, ambiguously worded, or too difficult for the students. According to Ebel (as cited in Brown, 1996, p. 70), test items with ID values of .40 and above are considered "very good" items, those with ID values of .30 to .39 are thought to be "reasonably good," and those with ID values of .20 to .29 are "marginal" items, usually "needing improvement."

General Results

Students on average answered 48% of the listening questions correctly, and 60% of the reading questions correctly. (This compares with 42% and 68% respectively on the 1998 tests.) The 1999 listening test had an internal-consistency reliability of .54, and the reading test had a reliability of .52, as measured by Kuder-Richardson Formula 20.

Table 3 shows that females scored significantly better than males on both the listening test [$t(413) = 4.92$, $p<.01$] and the reading test [$t(413) = 4.97$, $p<.01$]. The same table shows that Literature and Souka freshmen had the highest overall English abilities, while Engineering and Economics freshmen scored the lowest. The faculty rankings are quite similar to the rankings of the 1998 study.

TABLE 3: Mean Test Scores by Sex and Faculty

(Maximum listening score = 20. Maximum reading score = 15.)

Listening Scores	M	SD	Reading Scores	M	SD	Overall Scores	M	SD
Females	10.41	3.07	Females	9.51	2.12	Females	19.88	4.23
Males	8.91	3.14	Males	8.38	2.46	Males	17.27	2.46
1) Literature	11.02	3.33	1) Souka	10.02	2.20	1) Literature	20.71	4.14
2) Souka	10.50	3.17	2) Medicine	9.86	2.25	2) Souka	20.50	4.19
3) Medicine	10.17	3.47	3) Literature	9.69	2.01	3) Medicine	20.03	4.71
4) Education	10.10	3.88	4) Education	9.26	2.37	4) Education	19.34	5.51
5) Science	10.00	2.73	5) Law	8.90	2.50	5) School Ed.	18.44	4.33
6) School Ed.	9.76	2.85	6) School Ed.	8.70	2.31	6) Law	18.18	4.75
7) Law	9.52	3.26	7) Economics	8.62	2.46	7) Science	18.00	3.96
8) Dentistry	8.57	2.37	8) Dentistry	8.50	2.72	8) Dentistry	17.07	3.96
9) Engineering	8.44	2.59	9) Science	8.00	2.72	9) Economics	16.98	4.51
10) Economics	8.35	2.85	10) Engineering	7.94	2.24	10) Engineering	16.38	3.69

Just as in 1998, it was found that an individual's listening score positively correlated with his/her reading score [$r(413)= .37$, $p<.01$]. So, students who scored high on the listening test also tended to score high on the reading test.

Listening Findings in Detail

An item analysis was performed. The results are shown in Table 4.

Question 9 was by far the most difficult, answered correctly by only 18% of all students. It required that students understand the causative construction *get (someone) to do (something)*. Specifically, it said:

9. (man)   Have you called the travel agent about getting us our tickets?

(woman)   I got Frank to do that. He has more free time than I do.

(narrator)   WHAT DOES THE WOMAN MEAN?

The correct answer was : C) *Frank contacted the travel agent*. But a remarkable 66% of students -- the most of any distractor on the test-- answered B) *She bought a ticket for Frank*. The fact that the woman does not clearly use a word such as *no* to negate what the man said might have made her utterance even more difficult to understand.

TABLE 4: LISTENING TEST

Numbers of Students Who Chose Each Answer/Distractor
(Asterisks (*) indicate correct answers.)

Item	A	B	C	Correct	Item	A	B	C	Correct
L 1	68	72	274*	66%	L 11	132	180*	101	43%
L 2	270*	87	55	65%	L 12	139	79	196*	47%
L 3	115	207*	89	50%	L 13	151	94	168*	40%
L 4	74	182*	157	44%	L 14	192*	57	166	46%
L 5	81	157	175*	42%	L 15	64	94	254	61%
L 6	178*	148	88	43%	L 16	167	190*	56	46%
L 7	161*	140	112	39%	L 17	172*	113	128	41%
L 8	251*	88	73	60%	L 18	125	190*	99	46%
L 9	65	273	76*	18%	L 19	115	105	194*	47%
L 10	32	296*	86	71%	L 20	211*	98	105	51%

Listening Average Correct = 48% (SD = 11.87)

Questions 4-7, 11, 13, and 17 also caused problems, each answered correctly by approximately 40% of students. All of these involved restatements, and some of them contained difficult vocabulary expressions, or required students to make inferences. In particular, items 5, 7, 13, and 17 seemed to involve difficult vocabulary expressions: *drop it off at, notified, accepted* (students may confuse it with the word *except*), *must be, a load off his mind, thick* (in relation to soup), *consistency*, and *math* (students seem to understand the word *mathematics* better). Items 5, 11, and 17 require students to make inferences.   Take item 17 for example:

17.(woman)   Do you think I'll be able to find the book I need for math class?

(man)   If they're not all sold out.

(narrator)   WHAT DOES THE MAN MEAN?

In order to choose the correct answer, A) *He's not sure there are any more math books available*, students must notice that the man is inferring doubt.

Like on the 1998 test, on the 1999 listening test students were drawn toward distractors (incorrect choices) when those distractors contained vocabulary identical to utterances on the tape. For example, 38% of students chose the incorrect *5B) He'll get the cleaning on the way home* after the person on the tape had said *We can drop it off at the dry cleaners on our way home*. To cite another example, 36% of students chose the incorrect *6B) The exam was not exactly what she expected* after the people on the tape had said *...proficiency exam?... Not exactly. Most...*

With respect to phonetic contrasts, students experienced one failure (/th/ick--/s/ick) but also enjoyed one success (/l/ights-- /r/ight) on the two distractors which most-obviously involved this. Thirty-six percent of students incorrectly answered *13A) It's making him sick* after a person on the tape had said the word *thick*. But only 13% of students incorrectly answered *16C) She shouldn't turn right* after a person on the tape had talked about *turn(ing) on the lights*.

As for the third research question, Table 5 shows which listening items discriminated between high-scoring students and low-scoring students. Analyzing the items in the "very good" column, one major trend and several minor phenomena can be noticed.

TABLE 5: Listening Item/Questions Which Discriminated
High-Scoring Students from Low-Scoring Students

	Very Good	Reasonably Good	Marginal	Bad
1998 Test Item Number	1, 2, 5, 12, 14, 17	3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 11, 15, 16, 18,	6, 24	13, 19, 20 21, 22, 23
1999 Test Item Number	2, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18	1, 5, 6, 13, 13, 17, 20	3, 4, 7, 8, 16, 19	9

TABLE 6: Five Listening Expressions Which Baffle Students

Not only students with low listening scores, but also students with high listening scores, had troubles with the following expressions on the 1998 and 1999 tests. In order to answer them correctly, students had to understand that the expression on the tape was very similar to the expression written in one of the choices on the paper.

Item Number	EXPRESSION ON TAPE	SIMILAR EXPRESSION ON PAPER
1998 L19	*He asked why I dropped out of school.*	*He questioned her reasons.*
1998 L20	*I scarcely got to the post office before it closed.*	*She was able to send the package.*
1998 L22	*Your guess is as good as mine.*	*She's not really sure.*
1998 L23	*It's not unheard of.*	*It's been done before.*
1999 L9	*I got Frank to do that.*	*Frank contacted the travel agent.*

The most striking finding is that good English listeners are able to recognize basic synonymous or very similar phrases while weak English listeners cannot. On the 1998 test, high scorers seemed to understand that *easy = simple* (L1), *not interesting = boring* (L2), *remained on campus = stayed at school* (L5), *vacation = holiday* (L5), *it's not raining = the weather is dry* (L12), *looks impressive = is pretty great* (L14), and *take a computer class = attend a*

course (L17). On the 1999 test, high scorers seemed to know that fixed = repaired (L15) and *a hundred times = a lot* (L18), while most low scorers did not.

Also, most high-scoring listeners did well with the following grammatical structures and vocabulary items (all from the 1999 test), while weak English listeners did not: a) Modals *might have, shouldn't have*, and *can't* (L2); b) Different meanings of *afraid* (L11); and c) Expressing negative agreement with *Neither did I* (L12). Finally, one idiom which good listeners seemed to recognize from the 1999 test was *take it easy = not try to do too many things* (L14).

On the other hand, several idioms and difficult grammatical structures troubled almost all of the students. These items are listed under "bad" in Table 5, and the most difficult ones are detailed in Table 6. They include the difficult word *scarcely*, and the double negative *not unheard of*.

Reading Findings in Detail

Table 7 gives an item analysis for the two reading passages on the 1999 test. Table 8 classifies the reading questions as replication, synthesis, and inferencing á la Yano et al. (1999).

TABLE 7: READING TEST

Numbers of Students Who Chose Each Answer/Distractor
(Asterisks (*) indicate correct answers.)

Item	A	B	C	D	Correct	Item	A	B	C	D	Correct
R1	40	91	138	145*	35%	R 9	60	50	17	285*	69%
R2	309*	48	39	17	74%	R10	300*	34	34	44	72%
R3	101	11	65*	237	16%	R11	35	63	302*	14	73%
R4	30	154	137	92	37%	R12	164*	81	38	126	40%
R5	10	333*	51	20	80%	R13	45	354	12	3	85%
R6	152	27	78	155*	37%	R14	244	102	43	20	59%
R7	61	305*	36	11	73%	R15	60	31	220*	96	53%
R8	31	13	365	4	88%						

Reading Average Correct = 60% (SD = 21.76)

Students found replication questions the easiest, meaning that they could match an expression in the question/alternatives with a nearly-identical expression in the text. Inferencing questions were the most difficult. The difference is significant [t(413)=2.86, p<.01].

TABLE 8: Classification of Reading Question Types

	1998 Question Numbers	1999 Question Numbers	Answered Correctly (Combines '98–'99 Tests)
Replication	3, 7, 11, 14, 15, 18	5, 7, 11, 13	73.7% (SD = 9.1)
Synthesis	1, 9, 10, 12, 16	2, 4, 8, 9, 10, 15	65.2% (SD = 17.4)
Inferencing	2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 17	1, 3, 6, 12, 14	54.3% (SD = 21.5)

Like on the 1998 test, students in 1999 had a great deal of success identifying the main ideas of passages. They averaged 81% on the two relevant test questions, numbers 2 and 8. This compares to 56% on the remaining questions, the difference being significant $[t(413)=2.77, p<.01]$.

On the other hand, the two questions which specifically require knowledge of vocabulary, numbers 6 and 12, were difficult, answered correctly by just 37% and 40% of the freshmen respectively. Number 6 required that students equate *blood is drawn* with *blood is taken from the body*. Number 12 required students to equate *catalyst* with *activating force*. In addition, question 1 required students to equate the tone of the passage with one of four difficult adjectives, the correct answer being *objective*, and just 35% of students could do this. The results with respect to vocabulary questions were more mixed in 1998.

Three questions-- numbers 4, 10, and 15-- investigated whether students could identify something which was NOT stated in the passage. The first was difficult (37% accuracy), the second was easy (72% accuracy), and the third was average in difficulty (53% accuracy). The 1998 questions of this type also produced mixed results.

The most difficult reading questions were, in order of difficulty from highest to lowest, numbers 3, 1, 4, 6, and 12, each answered correctly by 40% or fewer of students. Number 3, by far the most difficult reading question with just 16% accuracy, asked students to infer the topic of the paragraph immediately following the passage-- a difficult skill indeed. Students need to choose (c) because it is similar to the passage; instead, most students chose (d) which is identical to the passage. The difficulties with numbers 1, 4, 6, and 12 have already been discussed above.

The easiest reading questions were numbers 5, 8, and 13, each answered correctly by 80% or more of freshmen. Numbers 5 and 13 asked about facts clearly stated in the passage, and number 8 asked about the main topic.

With respect to research question number 3, Table 9 shows which questions were most successful in differentiating good English readers from weak ones. The most noteworthy finding was that, compared with the more-difficult 1999 passages, the easier 1998 passages had over twice as many items which were "very good" in discriminating high scorers from low scorers.

TABLE 9: Reading Item/Questions Which Discriminated

High-Scoring Students from Low-Scoring Students

	Very Good	Reasonably Good	Marginal	Bad
1998 Test Item Number	1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 11 12, 15, 16, 18	4, 8, 9, 13, 14, 17	7	2
1999 Test Item Number	9, 10, 14, 15	2, 5, 7, 11, 12, 23	4, 6, 8,	1, 3

Looking at the questions in the "very good" column of Table 9, we also note that

questions which asked about the main topic, concerned identifying specific facts, and asked for information which was NOT in the passage, were particularly good at identifying high-level readers. Questions which were "bad" were the vocabulary item *breathtaking*, which was too easy for almost all of the students, and a question about the tone of the passage and a question about the topic of the paragraph following the passage, these latter two questions being too hard.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study reconfirmed most of the 1998 findings. First, students did considerably better on reading than on listening, even though the 1999 listening test featured only three possible answers, and reading passages were appreciably more difficult than in 1998. Second, individual listening scores correlated with reading scores. Third, on the listening test, when students perceived certain words or expressions on the tape, they were often attracted to incorrect choices which featured those exact same words or expressions. Finally, faculty rankings with respect to the English abilities of students were amazingly similar to the rankings of 1998.

In relation to listening, some important new observations were made in this year's research. The causative form *get (someone) to do (something)* was troubling for students, as were certain vocabulary terms such as *drop it off at, notified, accepted, must be, a load off his mind, thick* (in relation to soup), *consistency, and math*. Also, inference listening questions were hard.

To overcome these problems, students should try to learn successful listening strategies, as was discussed at the beginning of this paper.

Listening teachers should use materials from the real world, should teach listening subskills (eg. identifying unstressed words, finding main points, recognizing word as-similation), and they should use pre-listening activities to motivate students (Field, 1998). Ikeda (1997) encourages Japanese learners of English to go beyond dissecting individual words and sentences, and offers tips for discovering main ideas. Other suggestions with respect to listening strategies for learners in Japan are offered by Jiromaru (1999). Yamaguchi (1999) showed that even low-level learners can be trained to recognize words very quickly with only auditory input; in other words, students do not need to see the words on paper.

With respect to reading, students should learn how to skim and scan. *Skimming* means looking for the important points (eg. main ideas, pattern of organization) and *scanning* means looking for specific information (eg. finding statistical information in the passage). Reading comprehension does not mean explaining the grammar on a page of text. Rather, it is more important to summarize in two or three sentences the main points of a text. It is important to skip unimportant words. These are skills which Japanese may not have been exposed to when they were young, because first-language classes often place importance on the oral recitation of passages.

Teachers should give students pre-reading activities which prepare students for the topic of the passage, and they should assign students only reading assignments dealing with issues

that students are interested in. Carrell & Wise (1998) show that prior knowledge and topic interest are important variables influencing text comprehension.

Teachers can also help students learn new words by putting synonyms of difficult words in the margins of texts. In an important study, Watanabe (1997) found that Japanese university students improved their long-term retention of key vocabulary items better when the items were glossed in the margins with synonyms. Interestingly, having the students write the meanings of the key terms in Japanese seemed to be less beneficial with respect to vocabulary acquisition. Mitarai & Aizawa (1999) also found that marginal glossing significantly aided vocabulary learning.

Good reading textbooks, meanwhile, are based on the "interactive model" of reading (Mera Rivas, 1999). They help students develop not only decoding skills but also interpretation skills.

The present study found that women scored significantly higher than men in both listening and reading. This finding deserves confirmation in future research. However, there does seem to be a strong tendency.

Finally, the present study identified listening and reading questions which successfully differentiated good listeners and readers from poor ones (Tables 5 and 9). Low-proficiency students could use this knowledge in order to become stronger. Administrators should use these "ideal questions" to construct ideal tests. It is apparent that easier reading passages are more successful in differentiating good readers from weaker ones.

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Appendix: 1999 基礎能力テスト （前期）

Listening Transcript:

1.   (man)   Would you like to take a break now?
      (woman)   Oh, let's keep working. We're almost finished.
      (narrator)   WHAT DOES THE WOMAN WANT TO DO?

2.   (man)   Pete can't seem to find his keys.
      (woman)   Has he looked in the car?
      (narrator)   WHAT DOES THE WOMAN IMPLY?

3.   (woman)   I'll have to study all weekend this weekend.
      (man)   Not again!
      (narrator)   WHAT DOES THE MAN IMPLY?

4. (woman)   This is the most fun I've had in a long time!
    (man)   Oh, really? I didn't think you liked rock concerts.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE MAN MEAN?

5. (woman)   Look at this jacket! I spilled tea all over it.
    (man)   Relax. We can drop it off at the dry cleaners on our way home.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE MAN MEAN?

6. (man)   Weren't you the only French major to pass the proficiency exam?
    (woman)   Not exactly. Most everyone did.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE WOMAN MEAN?

7. (man)   They've just notified Randy that he's been accepted to State University.
    (woman)   That must really be a load off of his mind.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE WOMAN SAY ABOUT RANDY?

8. (woman)   When do you want to start moving into your new office.
    (man)   Well, this week's out for me.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE MAN MEAN?

9. (man)   Have you called the travel agent about getting us our tickets?
    (woman)   I got Frank to do that. He has more free time than I do.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE WOMAN MEAN?

10. (man)   I'm on my way to pick up some coffee. Can I get you some, too?
    (woman)   Hmm. I think I've already had enough for today. I guess I'll pass.
    (narrator) WHAT WILL THE WOMAN PROBABLY DO?

11. (man)   Pat decided not to work this summer after all.
    (woman)   I was afraid of that.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE WOMAN MEAN?

12. (man)   I didn't understand today's chemistry lesson very well.
    (woman)   Neither did I.
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE WOMAN MEAN?

13. (woman)   How do you like the soup?
    (man)   Kind of thick, isn't it?
    (narrator) WHAT DOES THE MAN SAY ABOUT THE SOUP?

14. (woman)   I only slept three hours last night.
    (man)   I'd say you should take it easy today.
    (narrator) WHAT IS THE MAN SUGGESTING TO THE WOMAN?

15.　(woman)　Where can I have this tire fixed?
　　　　(man)　Isn't there a service station nearby?
　(narrator)　WHAT DOES THE MAN IMPLY?

16.　(woman)　Would you like me to turn on the lights?
　　　　(man)　I can see just fine, thanks.
　(narrator)　WHAT DOES THE MAN IMPLY?

17.　(woman)　Do you think I'll be able to find the book I need for math class?
　　　　(man)　If they're not all sold out.
　(narrator)　WHAT DOES THE MAN MEAN?

18.　(woman)　Has Susan told you about her trip overseas?
　　　　(man)　Only a hundred times!
　(narrator)　WHAT DOES THE MAN MEAN?

19.　　　(man)　What should I do with this pile of books?
　　(woman)　Oh, just leave them on the circulation desk, and we'll shelve them in the morning.
　(narrator)　WHAT ARE THE SPEAKERS DOING?

20.　　　(man)　Do you think Mr. Grant will give Ben a raise?
　　(woman)　Not on your life!
　(narrator)　WHAT DOES THE WOMAN MEAN?

<div align="center">英語基礎能力テスト</div>

このテストはリスニング（20問）とリーディング（15問）で構成されています。

リスニング

テープの指示を聴き，テープの質問に対し一番適切な答えを選び，解答用紙にその答え（A，B，または C）を書きなさい。質問は<u>一度しか</u>聴くことが出来ません。

Directions: In Part A you will hear short conversations between two people. After each conversation, you will hear a question about the conversation. The conversations and questions will not be repeated. After you hear a question, read the four possible answers in your sheet and choose the best answer. Then, on your answer sheet, find the number of the question and fill in the space that corresponds to the letter of the answer you have chosen.

　　　　　　Listen to an example.　　　　　　　　　　　　　　Sample Answer
　　　　　　On the recording you hear:　　　　　　　　　　　　　<u>C</u>
　　　　　　———————————

　　　　　　On your sheet, you read:　(A) At last winter is almost over
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(B) She doesn't like winter weather very much.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(C) This winter's weather is similar to last winter's weather.

You learn from the conversation that the woman thinks the weather this winter is almost the same as the weather last winter. The best answer to the question. "What does the woman mean?" is (C), "This winter's weather is similar to last winter's weather." Therefore, the correct choice is (C).

　　(Note: Correct answers are italicized here.)

1. (A) Stop for awhile and get some rest.
   (B) Let the man finish the work.
   (C) Continue working for awhile.

2. *(A) Pete might have left his keys in the car.*
   (B) Pete shouldn't have left his keys in the car.
   (C) She can't help look for the keys.

3. (A) The woman doesn't have time to study again this weekend.
   (B) The woman spends too many weekends studying.
   (C) He will not spend the entire weekend studying again.

4. (A) The woman shouldn't go to concerts like this one.
   (B) He is surprised that the woman is enjoying herself.
   (C) He isn't having any fun at this concert.

5. (A) It's time to go home and relax.
   (B) He'll get the cleaning on the way home.
   (C) It will be easy to get the woman's jacket cleaned.

6. *(A) Almost everyone succeeded on the exam.*
   (B) The exam was not exactly what she expected.
   (C) No one has taken the proficiency exam yet.

7. *(A) He must be relieved at the good news.*
   (B) He will have a heavy load at the university.
   (C) He won't mind if he isn't accepted right away.

8. *(A) He doesn't have any time this week to move.*
   (B) He doesn't really need a new office.
   (C) He isn't strong enough to move by himself.

9. (A) She called the travel agent.
   (B) She bought a ticket for Frank.
   (C) Frank contacted the travel agent.

10. (A) Drink some more coffee.
    (B) Stop drinking coffee for the day.
    (C) Pass the man his coffee.

11. (A) She is afraid to ask Pat to work.
    (B) She suspected that Pat would not want to work.
    (C) She thinks that Pat is afraid of work.

12. (A) She understood the chemistry lesson very well.
    (B) She didn't understand what the man wanted.
    (C) She was having trouble with today's lesson.

13. (A) It's making him sick.
    (B) He doesn't know when to eat it.
    (C) It isn't the right consistency.

14. *(A) She should not try to do too many things today.*
    (B) She should try not to sleep today.
    (C) He can tell her an easy way to get to sleep.

15. (A) The woman should buy a new tire.
    (B) He can help the woman choose a new tire.
    (C) The woman can get her tire repaired at the service station.

16. (A) He would like the woman's help.
    (B) He doesn't need more light.
    (C) She shouldn't turn right.

17. *(A) He's not sure there are any more math books available.*
    (B) He wants to go to the book sale after class.
    (C) He'll help the woman find the book she needs.

18. (A) He doesn't have time to see Susan.
    (B) Susan has told him a lot about her trip.
    (C) He's interested in hearing about Susan's trip.

19. (A) Building book shelves.
    (B) Moving into an apartment.
    (C) Working in a library.

20. *(A) Mr. Grant will never increase Ben's salary.*
    (B) Mr. Grant has raised Ben since he was a small child.
    (C) Ben should ask Mr. Grant for more money.

リーディング
英文を読み，質問に対し一番適切な答えを選び，解答用紙にその答え（A，B，C，または D）を書きなさい。

<u>Questions 1-7</u>

The University Health Service is an outpatient facility which provides primary health care to the university community. The Health Service personnel includes a family practice physician, two nurse practitioners and a medical secretary. The nurse practitioners have responsibility to provide the

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health care to the students, and to obtain physician consultation as needed. Services include chronic, acute, and routine medical care, laboratory tests, allergy injections, physical examinations, and counseling and health education. Referrals are made to nearby specialists when necessary. For examination purposes, blood is drawn on premises and sent to a local lab. Laboratory tests such as urinalysis and microscopic examinations may be done on premises at no charge. Referrals are made to a nearby facility for x-rays. Medicines are not dispensed at the University Health Service; however, samples are given as available. Prescriptions can be filled at one of the local pharmacies.

1. Which of the following best describes the tone of the passage?
   (A) Alarmed
   (B) Superior
   (C) Liberal
   (D) Objective

2. What is the main purpose of the passage?
   (A) To describe on-campus medical care.
   (B) To report the most common health complaints.
   (C) To describe the qualifications of the staff.
   (D) To outline routine insurance policies.

3. The paragraph immediately following the passage probably discusses
   (A) courses in health education.
   (B) how to call an ambulance
   (C) the business hours of the Health Service.
   (D) why the Health Service is useful.

4. Which of the following is not performed at the facilities of the University Health Service?
   (A) counseling
   (B) x-rays
   (C) allergy shots
   (D) urinalysis

5. Most of the primary health care is provided by
   (A) a doctor
   (B) nurses
   (C) a medical secretary
   (D) lab technicians

6. In line 8, "blood is drawn" means that
   (A) blood data is recorded.
   (B) blood is evaluated.
   (C) blood test results are confidential.
   (D) blood is taken from the body.

7. According to the passage, medicine samples are
   (A) not provided.
   (B) provided without charge.
   (C) sold.
   (D) thrown away.

Questions 8－15

Andy Warhol, known chiefly as a painter, was a leader of the Pop art movement of the 1960s. Working in a collective known as "the Factory," he used the process of silk screening to reproduce recognized American cultural images and icons, such as soap pad boxes and celebrity photographs. **This mechanical process** made the point that the painted image was mundane and the artist detached.

Warhol is also known for his films, such as "The Chelsea Girls" (1966) and "Blue Movie" (1969). Some of these movies are incredibly long--more than 24 hours. In 1966 in New York City, Warhol worked with the Factory and the rock band the Velvet Underground to produce a multimedia event called "Andy Warhol Uptight." He produced the Velvet Underground's first album in 1967 and took part in the Exploding Plastic Inevitable, a twelve-person team that produced multimedia events combining film, photographs, music, lights, and dance.

His main contributions to modern American art are his invention of the artist as an impersonal agent and his role as a **catalyst** for many other artists. After he was shot and nearly killed in 1968, Warhol was less active. He died in 1987.

8. What is the main topic of this passage?
   (A) the Pop art movement of the 1960s
   (B) the collective known as "the Factory"
   (C) the art and life of Andy Warhol
   (D) the Exploding Plastic Inevitable

9. In line 4, what does "this mechanical process" refer to?
   (A) image
   (B) icon
   (C) box
   (D) silk-screening

10. According to the passage, Warhol worked in all of the following media EXCEPT
    (A) collage
    (B) music
    (C) painting
    (D) film

11. Which recording group does the passage say Andy Warhol supported?
    (A) Uptight
    (B) Exploding Plastic Inevitable
    (C) The Velvet Underground
    (D) The Chelsea Girls

12. In line 14, the word catalyst means

    (A) activating force

    (B) destructive tendency

    (C) unwilling participant

    (D) prolific composer

13. When was Warhol nearly killed?

    (A) 1987

    (B) 1968

    (C) 1966

    (D) 1963

14. Which of the following statements would the author of this passage most probably agree with?

    (A) Warhol has had great impact with his ideas about the modern artist's role in society.

    (B) Andy Warhol's silkscreens are his greatest contribution to modern American art.

    (C) An attack on his life ended Warhol's career before he attained success.

    (D) Since Andy Warhol did his artwork in collaboration with others, his achievements do not mean very much.

15. All of the following are true about Andy Warhol EXCEPT

    (A) He was a pop artist.

    (B) He directed movies.

    (C) He died of a gunshot wound.

    (D) He was supportive of many artists.