

L2 Working Memory Capacity and L2 Listening Test Scores of Japanese Junior College Students

Taiko Tsuchihira

Abstract

There are several studies on reading working memory capacity. However, it is rather difficult to find the studies listening working memory capacity. Therefore, first of all, the author assess the listening working memory capacity both in first language (L1) and in the second language (L2), and evaluate the participants' listening ability. There are two research questions to pursue: (a) Is there any relationship between L2 working memory and L2 listening ability? (b) Is there any relationship between L1 working memory capacity and L2 working memory capacity?

Introduction

In the field of testing listening, there is a great interest in the listening processes among researchers. Some researchers have presented the models for the listening processes (e.g., Takefuta, 1984). However, since listening processes are all invisible and something we can just infer, the proposed models of listening processes are still treated as hypotheses. On the other hand, this nature of invisibility and untestability of listening processes often brings us the doubt about the validity. Some researchers have tackled with this problem with the interest in examining construct validity in listening tests (e.g., Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

In sum, the main concerns in researching listening are:

- (a) Does a given test indeed measure what the test-writers intended to measure?
- (b) What sorts of processes are involved in taking a listening test?
- (c) What is the listening ability?
- (d) What other elements are involved in the processes of taking a listening test? Are they influencing the results of the test to any degree?

If we look at some models presented by researchers (e.g., Lynch, 1988), there seem to be factors in common. Tsuchihira (1992) found that questions with longer passages are more advantageous for the test-takers with test-wiseness. These results can be restated that the students with the test-wiseness can retain more information than those without test-wiseness. In other words, it might be possible to say that tests' results show not only the listening ability but

also the ability of retaining the information.

One of the interesting topics around the processes of taking listening tests is the memory-load for test-takers. While listening, test-takers need to remember a great amount of information, names, numbers, situations, and so on. It is fair to say that there is a certain amount of memory-load on test-takers. As for reading ability, Harrington and Sawyer (1990) conducted a study to see if L2 working capacity correlates with L2 reading ability, and showed the results suggesting a correlation between L2 working memory capacity and reading ability.

In listening tests, however, the memory load might be greater than reading tests. Test-takers are required to retain what they have heard while listening. Moreover, in listening tests, information and tasks are both ongoing, and as a result the test-takers need to deal with understanding and withholding the content of the passages and answering questions. Sometimes, furthermore, they have to listen to the options withholding the obtained information. For these reasons, there should be bigger loads for test-takers of listening tests compared to those of reading tests.

Previous Studies

Defining Working Memory

Working memory capacity has been studied by many researchers especially in its relationship with other skills or ability than listening. Daneman and Blennerhassett (1984) are one of the pioneering studies on working memory capacity and information processing. According to them, working memory is defined as follows:

In the current theory, working memory has storage and processing functions that compete for a shared limited capacity. More demanding processes consume more of the available capacity, decreasing the amount of additional information that can be stored and maintained in the working memory.

(Daneman & Blennerhassett, 1984, p. 1373)

In her study on the relationship between working memory capacity and L2 reading ability, Usaka (1992) defines working memory as follows:

ワーキングメモリ (作業記憶) とは、情報の処理と保存が同時に行われるような、記憶のプロセスを意味するものである。ワーキングメモリでは、新たに入力される情報を処理しながら、その処理の結果を一時的に保存する点が強調されている。また、ワーキングメモリの容量は、情報処理の効率のよさと関連すると考えられている。(Working memory is the memory process which deals with information processing and retaining at the same time. Working memory processes the information with storing the result of processing on the other hand. Working memory capacity is

considered to be related to the efficiency of information processing.)

(Usaka, 1992, p. 42)

Unfortunately, the author could not find the studies describing the relationship between working memory and the model of short-term memory and long-term memory clearly. However, judging from the fact that Usaka (1992) found the relationship between working memory capacity and L2 reading ability and the fact that Ishio and Usaka (1994) found no significant relationship between L2 reading ability and short-term memory, there seems to be some evidence to treat working memory differently from the model of short-term memory and long-term memory.

Working Memory and Language Skills

There are several studies on the relationship between working memory capacity and language skills. Harrington and Sawyer (1990) conducted a study at a Japanese university to see the relationship between L2 working memory capacity and L2 reading ability in advanced ESL learners. They used three types of memory tests (simple digit, simple word, and complex span test) and measures of reading skills. The tests were given to 32 students, and the results suggested a positive correlation between L2 working memory capacity and reading ability. They also found that the L2 complex word span measure correlated with measures of L2 reading skills, particularly the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) reading scores, and concluded that it serves as a useful measure in L2 reading development.

Harrington and Sawyer (1992) examined the relationship between L2 working memory and L2 reading skill (TOEFL Grammar, Reading Sections and a C-test). The tests were given to 22 Japanese students in advanced level. The results suggested that the participants with larger L2 working memory capacity scored higher on measures of L2 reading skills. However, they found no correlation between reading scores and passive short-term memory capacity.

Daneman and Carpenter (1980) discussed the nature of individual differences in working memory and presented the span test that was used to assess working memory capacity. They attempted four types of memory span measures (traditional digit span, letter span, word span measure, and working span measure). Out of these four measures, they found that only the working span measure correlated with the measure of reading. Then, they went on discussing how working memory capacity influences the two specific components of reading comprehension, retrieving facts and computing pronominal references.

Daneman and Blennerhassett (1984) conducted a listening word span test for pre-readers. They asked the participants to recall each sentence verbatim of the set of sentences. They proposed a method to measure and understand pre-reader listening comprehension skills. The listening span test measures the storage and processing functions of working memory. They

used this test for 44 preschoolers in two experiments, and states that this test had a greater predictive and theoretical value than both the traditional word span measure and the age variable. Though their research is on listening, the measure presented by them might not be applicable for L2 learners since it is for L1 of the pre-readers.

Usaka (1992) conducted reading span tests both in Japanese and in English, and examined their relationship with L2 reading score, though Daneman and Blennerhassett (1984) is on L1 listening for pre-readers and reading ability. On the other hand, Usaka (1992), this study was conducted on Japanese students, and therefore it is meaningful for the present study to refer to the processes in her study.

Thus, there are several studies on the relationship between working memory capacity and language skills. However, most of them are either on L1 language skills, or on reading skills, and we can hardly find the study on the relationship between L2 working memory capacity and L2 listening. Therefore, even if we attempt to introduce the same measures, they might not be appropriate to measure L2 listening memory span. Furthermore, even though the L2 reading span measures created by Harrington and Sawyer (1990) were for L2, they need to be adjusted for measuring L2 listening. It is because reading texts include vocabulary or expressions of higher levels than listening texts.

There seem to be some complaints for the memory loads for listening tests. In order to answer many complaints about memory-load on taking TOEFL, Henning (1991) examined test item functioning under the conditions of (a) stimulus repetition versus operation, (b) variations of length of aural stimulus passages, (c) shorter versus longer reading response options, and (d) higher versus lower levels of processing skills required. He concluded that listening tests would benefit from shortening the response-option length, but that it would not be beneficial to repeat stimulus passages nor to increase the proportion of items that depend on greater amounts of text. His assertion in this study suggests that the memory retention should not be measured as the listening ability. According to him, they are independent of the listening ability, which completely contradicts our intuitions.

Purpose of the Study

In the present research, therefore, I would like to examine the relationship between the listening memory span and listening ability with the following purposes.

- (a) Is there any relationship between L2 working memory and L2 listening ability?
- (b) Is there any relationship between L1 working memory capacity and L2 working memory capacity?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are tested in order to answer the research questions raised in the previous section.

- (a) There are significant relationships between L2 working memory and L2 listening ability. In other words, L2 working memory capacity influences L2 listening.
- (b) There are significant relationships between L1 working memory capacity and L2 working memory capacity. For example, the bigger L1 working memory capacity is, possibly, the bigger L2 working memory capacity is.

Method

Participants

The participants are all junior college students in their freshman year in Japan. Though 24 students participated, only 22 of them could be used for the data. It is because there were some students who were absent from one of the tests. They are all at the age of 18-20, and their proficiency is at beginners' level. Though the sample size was limited, it might be acceptable since this was the first time to use the L2 listening memory span test originally created by the author. If it is found to have a good reliability and validity, it will be applied to a bigger sample. For this reason, the result of the present study should be interpreted as that of the pilot study, and this must be one of the limitations of the study.

Materials

Japanese listening memory span test. In order to get used to the formats, the participants first attempted the L1 (Japanese) listening memory span test, and proceeded to the L2 (English) listening memory span test. Here are the examples of items in Japanese listening span test:

Listening memory span test (in Japanese)

Level One

中3国語教科書から

- ① 妹は口数が少ないまま、母の敷いた布団に横になった。
Q 母は布団を敷きましたか？
- ② 目を閉じるとまぶたに、海辺の広い緑の砂地が浮かんでくる。
Q 砂地は黄色ですか？

(5 sets in total)

Level Two

- ① 野球が初めて日本に伝えられたのは明治5年頃である。
子供らは、あんまり月が明るいので外へ出かけた。
Q 月は明るいですか？
- ② 川の水は冷たそうにゆっくりと流れていた。

祖母は黙って家の外を眺めるような目つきをしていた。

Q 水ははやく流れましたか?

(5 sets in total)

Just as in the English listening memory span test, the participants listened to the sets of sentences, and answered the words of each set. This time, however, they answered the first word of each set, not the last word as in the English memory span test. It is because, in Japanese, sentences often end with similar expressions like *-iru*, *-ita*, *-da*, *-datta*, and so on. Therefore, asking for the first words is more appropriate to evaluate the participants' memory capacity. Yes-no questions were also asked to prevent the rehearsing effect also in Japanese listening memory span test. Therefore, the participants wrote two answers on the answer sheets for each set. All the sentences were taken from the textbooks for junior high school students, and in order to avoid the influence of inference, they were chosen and arranged not to form any meaning.

Listening test. Listening questions were taken from the listening sections of the STEP (Eiken) 2nd and pre-2nd grade though the listening test items in TOEFL or TOEIC would have been more desirable. They were not adopted since the author thought they are too difficult for the participants. Instead, the author adopted the listening section of the STEP test since the difficulty of the questions was appropriate for the participants. In fact, the reliability coefficient by Cronbach alpha was $\alpha = 0.786$. As a result, total scores ranged from 4 to 19 out of 20 questions.

Procedures

The relationships were examined by the correlations between the variables. The correlations among the memory test scores and the listening test scores show the relationships between memory capacity, L2 memory capacity, and the listening ability.

Scoring was done by hand. The sentences were counted as right only when the participants provided right answers to both recalling and Yes-No questions. The participants were regarded as cleared the level only when they cleared more than three sentences out of five sentences. The results of the test, in other words, the participants' listening memory span levels, were correlated with the listening test scores in the STEP listening test.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

As is shown in Tables 1 and 2, and Figures 1-3, the Japanese listening memory span test (SPANJ) was rather easy for the participants. Some difficulties were found in scoring. For example, the participants came to be more motivated toward the latter half of the test. It may be

because of the practice effect. Some participants said that they wanted to try more sets, or that they understand more in the latter half of the test.

As it is shown in the tables and figures, English listening memory span test (SPAN E) was not too difficult. As is in Figure 2, the distribution is close to normal score distribution. However, some participants could not clear any level, which suggests that this kind of test is appropriate for the participants with the advanced level of English as it is mentioned in Ishio and Usaka (1994).

As in Table 1, 2 and Figure 3, the listening items of the STEP were rather difficult. The item difficulty indexes range from .2 to .95. Even from the distribution, we can see that several participants found the test difficult. Moreover, although the test was for intermediate or lower-intermediate learners, some participants were still at the beginner level. According to their

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Each Measure

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Error	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
								Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
SPANJ	22.00	3.00	2.00	5.00	4.00	0.26	1.23	-0.67	0.49	-1.30	0.95
SPAN E	22.00	11.00	10.00	21.00	15.45	0.60	2.81	-0.12	0.49	-0.29	0.95
STEP	22.00	15.00	4.00	19.00	9.14	0.93	4.36	0.58	0.49	-0.45	0.95

Table 2
Item Difficulty Indexes of Each Test

STEP	Span J	Span E
0.25	0.6	0.05
0.3	0.4	0.06
0.5	1	0.1
0.7	1	0.14
0.25	0.6	0.05
0.6	1	0.12
0.6	1	0.12
0.8	1	0.16
0.35	0.4	0.07
0.95	1	0.19
0.6	1	0.12
0.45	1	0.09
0.5	1	0.1
0.75	0.6	0.15
0.2	1	0.04
0.2	0.8	0.04
0.2	0.4	0.04
0.2	0.4	0.04
0.3	0.6	0.06
0.5	1	0.1
0.5	1	0.1

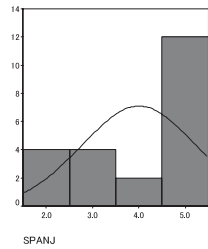


Figure 1 Score Distribution of SPANJ.

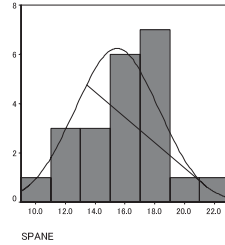


Figure 2 Score Distribution of SPANE.

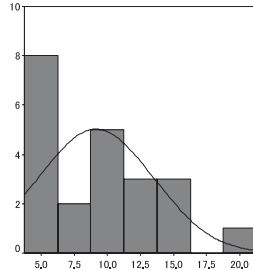


Figure 3 Score Distribution of STEP.

confession, some of them were not motivated to learn English at all when they were at junior high schools and high schools. This fact seems to explain these results naturally.

Correlational Analysis

Table 3 shows the results of the correlational analyses. We could find some significant correlations in the matrix. First of all, the result of the listening memory span test in Japanese (SPANJ) has a significant correlation with that in English (SAPNE) ($r=.44$, $p<.05$). This probably means that the listening memory capacity in L1 influences that of L2, as it was observed in Usaka (1992).

Secondly, the result of the listening memory span test in English (SPANE) shows a significant correlation with the result of the STEP listening test (STEP) ($r=.72$, $p<.01$). This suggests that the English listening ability influences the memory capacity in that language, and

Table 3
Correlation among Listening Working Memory Span Levels
and the STEP Test Scores

	SPANJ	SPANE	STEP
SPANJ	-	0.44*	0.58**
SPANE		-	0.72**
STEP			-

*-Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** -Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

the higher the students' listening ability is, the bigger listening memory capacity they have.

Finally, the result of the listening memory span test in Japanese (SPANJ) also showed a significant correlation with the result of the STEP listening test (STEP) ($r=.58$, $p<.01$). This suggests that the listening memory capacity in L1 influences English listening scores even if it is in the students' native language. Judging from the result, there seem to be consistent relationships from the listening memory capacity, which seems to be common both in L1 and in L2.

Discussions

The results of the present study can be summarized as follows:

1. There is a significant relationship between L1 working memory capacity and L2 working memory capacity.
2. There is a significant relationship between L2 working memory and L2 listening ability.
3. There is a significant relationship between L1 working memory and L2 listening ability.

These results are all very reasonable, and none of them contradicts our intuition. The listening memory capacity test in L1 influences that of L2. L2 listening ability influences the L2 listening working memory capacity, and L1 listening working memory capacity influences L2 listening scores. In other words, students with higher L2 proficiency can store more information, and the students with bigger memory capacity in L1 have bigger memory capacity also in L2.

These are all predictable results. Nevertheless, these turn into a more complicated problem once we start to consider the role of working memory capacity in listening. What is listening ability? Should we include the listening memory capacity as a part of listening ability? Is it possible to exclude the listening memory capacity from measured listening ability?

As for these questions, Bachman (1990, 1996) introduces the two concepts, namely, interactiveness and authenticity. Interactiveness is a function of the extent and type of involvement of the test taker's language ability (language plus metacognitive strategies), and affective schemata in accomplishing a test task. On the other hand, authenticity is the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the characteristics of a TLU (target language use) task.

According to Bachman (1990, 1996), both of them are relative to construct validity and both are inversely proportional to each other. When interactiveness increases, in other words, when non-linguistic factors are involved more, authenticity decreases. In order to construct a test with authenticity, we need to decrease interactiveness. If we can admit the listening memory capacity as a part of listening ability, then we need not think about the problems with interactiveness and authenticity. If we cannot, however, we need to conclude that the present research demonstrated that there is a certain degree of interactiveness in the listening test score.

Conclusion

There are some limitations of this study. For example, the sample size of the study was small for the correlational analysis. Moreover, some of the questions in the listening working memory span tests in L1 and L2 had better be improved since the author created both tests. In addition, the listening working memory span test should have done to the students with the advanced level of English. If the listening ability of the participants is not high enough, L2 listening ability level always gets in the way when they take the L2 listening working memory. The participants in more advanced level should be included in the next experiments.

Finally, the listening test score data in the present study did not form normal distribution. Though the data was normalized in order to execute the correlational analysis, it is desirable to have normal-distributed data from the first. With a bigger sample size, it will be possible.

This is a one-shot experiment, but it was adequate to show that the L1 and L2 listening memory span significantly influences the listening test scores. Though I do not yet have a definite idea on how we should consider the problem of construct validity related to these results, the results clearly suggest that we should not create English listening questions which place big loads on test-takers' memory. We had better devise the format and procedure so that the test-takers do not need to memorize a lot of relevant information. Otherwise, the test-takers' L1 and L2 working memory capacity will influence the test scores.

REFERENCES

- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental considerations in language testing*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Bachman, L. F. & Palmer, A. (1996). *Language testing in practice*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Daneman, M. & Carpenter, P. A. (1980). Individual differences in working memory and reading. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 19, pp.450-466.
- Daneman, M. & Blennerhassett, A. (1984). How to assess the listening comprehension skill of prereaders. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 76(6), pp.1872-1881
- Harrington, M. & Sawyer, M. (1990). Working memory in L2 reading: Does capacity predict performance? ERIC NO: ED320446
- Harrington, M. & Sawyer, M. (1992). L2 working memory capacity and L2 reading skill. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 14, pp.25-38.
- Henning, G. (1991). A study of the effects of variation of short-term memory-load, reading response length, and processing hierarchy on TOEFL listening comprehension item performance. *Report 33*. ERIC NO: ED383720
- 石王、苧阪. (1994). 幼児におけるリスニングスパンの試み『日本教育心理学』、42号、pp.167-173、日本教育心理学会.
- Lynch, T. (1988). *Listening*. Oxford: Oxford University.
- Miyake, A. & Friedman, N. P. (1999). Individual differences in second language proficiency: working

- memory as language aptitude. In A.F. Healey & L.E. Bourne (eds.), *Foreign language learning: Psycholinguistic studies on training and retention*. pp. 329-364. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- 竹蓋. (1984). 『ヒアリングの行動科学—実践的指導と評価への道標』 研究社出版.
- Tsuchihira, T. (1992). A study of differential item functioning in English listening tests. A master thesis submitted to the University of Tsukuba.
- 亭阪. (1992) 日本語、英語版リーディングテストとワーキングメモリ 『大阪外国語大学コミュニケーション研究』、Ⅱ, pp. 41-56.

APPENDIX

Listening Memory Span Test (Japanese)

リスニングスパンテスト (日本語・英語)

1桁 (5セット)

中3国語教科書から (学校図書、教育出版)

- ① 妹は口数が少ないまま、母の敷いた蒲団に横になった。
…母は蒲団を敷きましたか?
- ② 目を閉じるとまぶたに、海辺の広い緑の砂地が浮かんでくる。
…砂地は黄色ですか?
- ③ 見覚えのある顔がたくさんあるのに、誰だか思い出せない。
…思い出すことはできましたか?
- ④ 雪こそ降らないが、霜の降りる日も多く、まれにひょうが降ったりもした。
…ひょうは降りましたか?
- ⑤ 彼女は素颜になると、遠くの森をもう一度見つめなおした。
…森は近いですか?

2桁

- ① 野球が初めて日本に伝えられたのは明治5年頃である。
子供らは、あんまり月が明るいので外へ出かけた。
…月は明るいですか?
- ② 川の水は冷たそうにゆっくりと流れていた。
祖母は黙って家の外を眺めるような目つきをしていた。
…水ははやく流れましたか?
- ③ ドライアイスは氷菓子を冷やすのにちょうどよい。
2人の子供が、青い湖のそばで遊んでいました。
…子供は2人ですか?
- ④ 上のほうや横のほうは、青く暗くはがねのように見えます。
これは現在世界で起こっている出来事と同じである。
…赤く鉄のように見えますか?
- ⑤ 丘の下に黒塗りの自動車が止まっていた。
身動きできないほどの寿司詰めだから暑くてかなわない。
…自動車は青でしたか?

3桁

- ① 弟の健二が、まぶしそうに目を動かしながら尋ねました。

さまざまな工夫をこらして、西洋の言葉を学ぼうとした。
大きなえびがたくさん並んでいるのが見えていた。
…えびはたくさん見えましたか？

- ② 農民たちは稲も麦も豊かに実ってくれるものと期待した。
彼は風邪をひいて宿屋で寝ていたが、知らせを聞いてはね起きた。
太郎は会議で弁舌を振るって警告を発した。
…彼は風邪をひいていましたか？
- ③ 地上に降った雨は海へ流れていくが、雪は降り積もる。
物事に対する自分の心の動きに注意深く目をむけよう。
2人はまるで声も出さず、居すくまってしまいました。
…雨は川に流れていきますか？
- ④ 父が娘当ての手紙に、しっかり勉強するようにと書いた。
彼も、科学的な調査の結果を見せられては反論できなかった。
降りしきる雨に、池の堤防はもろくも崩れた。
…堤防は持ち直しましたか？
- ⑤ 用語の中には、漢字で日本語に訳されているものもある。
妹が帰ってくる日、私と弟は家庭菜園のかぼちゃを全部収穫した。
人間は氷期と間氷期を何度も経てゆっくと進歩してきた。
…収穫したのはすいかですか？

4 桁

- ① はがきには紙いっぱいにはみ出すほどの、威勢の良いまるが書かれた。
私は話を聞いて、身体が一瞬揺らぐような不思議な感じに襲われた。
教師は一人一人の独自の意見が出せるような話題を選んだ。
子供は土産の紙袋の口を開けてみてびっくりした。
…紙袋を開けたのは先生ですか？
- ② 老人は私を隣に座らせ、風変わりな話を聞かせてくれた。
秋子は、人々の信頼に答えようと、昼も夜も働いた。
警官が広場中に聞こえるような甲高い声で叫んだ。
彼は5年生の時から天気予報の記録をずっとつけている。
…叫んだのは警官ですか？
- ③ 私の父親は毎回東京から土産に菓子を持ってくる。
良子は、滑るように空を飛んでいく一羽のかもめを見た。
聞く人の方は、相手の話の内容を知りたい、分かりたいと願う。
弟は一週間に、少なくとも2冊の本を読む習慣をつけた。
…空を飛んでいったのはつばめでしたか？
- ④ 道沿いに村を抜け、丘をあがると、海を見下ろすがけに出た。
手紙を私は輪ゴムで束ね、しばらく保存していた。
明るる日の朝早く私は我が家の表門の前に立っていた。
追いつめられた人達は、一通の要求書を彼のところに持ってきた。
…がけから見下ろせるのは海ですか？
- ⑤ ある人から、小さい鈴をもらい、私はそれを椅子にぶら下げた。

死んだ父親は筆まめな人で、三日あけず手紙をよこした。
私が長い間家族と住んでいた古い家はもう取り壊されていた。
気が付くと少年は、浜辺に打ち上げられていた。
…筆まめなのは母親ですか？

5 桁

- ① わたしは、屋内プールで、毎週一回水泳の練習をしている。
近くの駅からその町の駅までは、特急でおよそ二時間かかる。
優子は彼と目が合ったとたんに友達になれそうだなと思った。
彼はその日から、道のでこぼこを通るのが楽しみとなった。
彼女は真夜中に星空を眺めるのが大変好きだ。
…彼女が眺めるのは青空ですか？
- ② その女は美しい桜色に染まった糸で織った着物を見せてくれた。
この時突然、私の脳裏に不思議な光景が浮かんできた。
それは、英語が通じるといふのはちょっと訳が違う。
船乗りは少年を丘の上の自分の家に連れて帰った。
祖父は一か月後の九月七日に、永遠にまぶたを閉じたのである。
…船乗りの家は丘の上ですか？
- ③ 少女がそこで見たのは、信じられないような不思議な事件だった。
昼食をとった後、わたしはぶらぶらとその辺を散歩した。
茶の間に座っていた父は、はだして表へ飛び出した。
純子は元気に夏休みの一日一日を過ごしていた。
世界には、大体二千八百ぐらいの言語があるといわれている。
…はだして飛び出したのは私ですか？
- ④ 彼には女房はなく、内気な妹と二人で暮らしている。
その日は、山小屋には羊飼いや誰も来ていなかった。
今日では、日本語学習人口は百万人を超えるに至ったと推定される。
陽子は表書きを初めて見たとき、ひどくびっくりした。
彼はゆっくりと白い自転車を走らせて運動場を回った。
…山小屋に羊飼いはいましたか？
- ⑤ 厳しい寒さの中を、別れて 20 年にもなる故郷へと、友人は帰っていった。
日本語を学び日本を知ろうとする外国人の存在は貴重である。
太郎は今日は海に出るのはよした方がいいとその子に注意した。
わたしは、大人の男が声を立てて泣くのを初めて見た。
星野君が車椅子に乗るようになってから十二年が過ぎた。
…私は故郷に帰りましたか？

Listening span test (ESL beginner)

Level One

- 1 She likes judo very much.
Q. Does she like sumo?
What is the last word?

2 This is a present from my aunt.

Q. Is this a present?

What is the last word?

3 It has two eyes, a nose, and a mouth.

Q. Does it have a nose?

What is the last word?

4 They are playing soccer in the park.

Q. Are they playing baseball?

What is the last word?

5 She is running with a dog.

Q. Is she jumping?

What is the last word?

Level Two

1 Tom went to the lake with his father yesterday.

The escalator is faster than the elevator.

Q. Did Tom go to the river?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

2 I wanted to play tennis with you today.

There was a big forest near my hometown.

Q. Is the forest big?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

3 My grandfather gets up early every morning.

They were in the same high school.

Q. Were they in the same school?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

4 The little bird came from the south.

He is going to play soccer after school.

Q. Is he going to play baseball?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

5 The plane is going to take off very soon.

She visited her uncle this spring.

Q. Is the plane going to take off?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

Level Three

- 1 He has two tickets for tomorrow's game.

The birds spend winter on the lake.

After school she will go to the library.

Q. Does he have three tickets?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 2 We often use gestures in communication.

My family went to Yokohama by train.

I didn't eat breakfast this morning.

Q. Did they drive to Yokohama?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 3 I will collect cans and newspapers.

Computers must not control us.

We went for a walk in the woods.

Q. Did we run?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 4 The post office is on the left.

She should go to see the doctor.

French is spoken in Switzerland.

Q. Is the post office on the right?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 5 I have a lot of homework.

We had to wait for ten minutes.

Singing songs is a lot of fun.

Q. Did we have to wait?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

Level Four

- 1 Humans want wood, paper, and land.

I am a member of a badminton club.

I hope I can get the answer quickly.

Japan learned a lot from Asian countries.

Q. Did Japan learn a lot?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 2 She was invited to the birthday party.
He was absent from school yesterday.
It was a hot and quiet night.
The train has arrived in Kyoto.
Q. Was she invited to the wedding?
What is the last word of the first sentence?
- 3 They have no schools on Saturdays and Sundays.
His younger brother plays the guitar.
Natural food is safe and good for our health.
They watched a soccer game on TV.
Q. Do they have school on Saturdays?
What is the last word of the first sentence?
- 4 The car looks old, but it's new.
I have some pictures for you.
One night, there was a mysterious event.
Aki wanted to visit her aunt.
Q. Did Aki want to visit her uncle?
What is the last word of the first sentence?
- 5 The size of the fish is also interesting.
I want to help people in those villages.
He went to his uncle's house by bus.
They build it with wood and felt.
Q. Did he go to his uncle's house by train?
What is the last word of the first sentence?

Level Five

- 1 I want to buy a muffler for my mother.
We often use gestures for communication.
The people in the village love singing.
They never forget their unhappy history.
It will be cloudy all day in Nagoya.
Q. Do the people in the village love dancing?
What is the last word of the first sentence?
- 2 Jesse took her father's hands.
The boy has never played shougi.
He was so sad that he could not cry.
Sakura goes to school at seven everyday.

Our teacher will show us an interesting book.

Q. Has the boy ever played shougi?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 3 Elephants are huge, but their eyes are gentle.

I know a girl who has a lot of old CDs.

It's very important for us to help each other.

Something is wrong with our time machine.

Taro has no time to play baseball today.

Q. Can Taro play baseball today?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 4 We saw a strange machine in his house.

There are many villages without doctors.

I would like to introduce you to my son.

On Sundays I often cook lunch for my family.

She wants to study at a professional cooking school.

Q. Does she want to go to an art school?

What is the last word of the first sentence?

- 5 Yesterday I went to the museum to see old planes.

Sachiko was sleeping at nine last night.

We saw the blue earth from the moon.

A few years later, he broke his leg.

In Los Angeles, it is four in the afternoon.

Q. Did he break his arm?

What is the last word of the first sentence?