

**NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**



**HG4099 Final Year Project**

**Investigating the effectiveness of watching videos  
with L1 or L2 subtitles on second language acquisition**

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the School of Humanities and Social Sciences,  
Nanyang Technological University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Arts  
in Linguistics & Multilingual Studies***

**7 March 2016**

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**No part of this Final Year Project has been or is being concurrently submitted for any other qualification at any other university.**

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## **Abstract**

*This study investigates the effectiveness of watching videos for L2 learning and the effectiveness of L1 and L2 subtitles on L2 learning. Specifically it explores the potential for L2 videos in learning vocabulary and grammar. 60 Japanese L2 learners of various proficiencies were asked to watch clips from a native Japanese television drama with either English subtitles, Japanese subtitles or no subtitles. They were then asked to do a test which includes a comprehension section, vocabulary section and grammar section. A post-study interview was also conducted. Results were tabulated and overall test scores found that English subtitles were more beneficial for beginner learners while Japanese subtitles were more useful for intermediate to advanced learners (referred to as simply advanced learners in this study). Vocabulary scores showed a similar result. English subtitles impeded Japanese grammar learning for all levels of learners. Overall, Japanese subtitles are beneficial for Japanese learning for advanced learners for both vocabulary and grammar learning, while English subtitles are beneficial for beginner learners for vocabulary learning. Results from the study can serve as a pedagogical tool giving language learners a better idea as to how videos can benefit their learning, and as to which subtitles, L1 or L2, are more effective for their current proficiency level. Suggestions for future research have also been included.*

## **1. Introduction**

Ever since video recording devices which were cheap and reliable became available in the latter half of the 1970s, the world has witnessed a steady growth in audiovisual material, and recent advancements in technology have further allowed people from all over the world to easily gain access to audiovisual material through video sharing sites on the Internet. This provides L2 learners with an additional channel to be exposed to their L2 within the comforts of their home. Studies have shown that visual aids are a useful tool in facilitating auditory processing, because they provide both audio as well as visual stimuli (Guichon & McLornan, 2008; Stempleski, 2003). Greater listening comprehension can be achieved with the addition of images to sound, along with paralinguistic cues. Subtitles can be added to films and television

shows and have provided a means for non-speakers of the language to still enjoy them. Close-captions, which are transcripts of the video added for the hearing-impaired or for when audio cannot be heard clearly, are another form of subtitles, except these are in the language spoken in the video.

While videos have now been recognised as a source of L2 learning, the question remains to what extent and in what aspects do videos, more specifically subtitled videos, help learners. For the L2 learner, L1 subtitles can provide an instantaneous translation of the spoken L2. On the other hand, in the case of a video with L2 subtitles, subtitles can assist by providing the written form of the utterance, allowing learners to see the word whilst hearing it. This leads to the second question: How do various subtitles affect the L2 learning of people of different levels of proficiency?

## **1.1 Past research**

### *1.1.1 Videos in language learning*

Much research has looked into the advantages of learning language through viewing videos. Videos expose learners to native L2 speech, which improve listening comprehension in real-life interactions with time (Herron et. al., 1995). Audiovisual material has visual and auditory cues (often referred to as bimodality or multimodality) which are more beneficial for L2 comprehension as compared to auditory cues alone (Guichon & McLornan, 2008).

Visual cues in videos have also been found to be advantages in language learning. Demirezen (1992) points out that videos show the language being used in context, building social competence by allowing language students to become more sensitive to nonverbal cues and cultural behaviour of the L2. This is supported by Baltova (1994), who did a study on French L2 learners, and found that audiovisual material has visual cues tied to speech, encouraging viewers to pay more attention to the content, thus allowing more auditory processing takes place. Watching videos also help learners to gain more cultural information about the language, for example, the gestures and facial expressions associated to certain words or phrases being spoken. However, the French learners in this study did not have a heightened comprehension of specific pieces of text from watching the video. Macedonia & Knösche (2011) also found that L2 acquisition is aided when single words are given corresponding symbolic gestures, visual cues aid the memory retrieval of abstract

and non-abstract words, enhances speech production. This symbolic gesturing can be likened to watching people's actions and emotions when uttering certain words or phrases in videos.

Furthermore, videos have merits which cannot be achieved with instruction within the classroom alone. Videos where the L2 is used features a natural and 'real-world' setting for the language, providing a social context to the language that goes beyond the classroom (McGovern, 1983).

### *1.1.2 Subtitles (captions) in language learning*

Closed-captions (L2 subtitles) were initially thought to have little real pedagogical value (MacKnight, 1983). Because they provide a visual element to the spoken word, some language teachers or language learners view subtitles as a form of 'cheating' in language learning (Danan, 2004). In 1983, Price asked 500 students of various language backgrounds to watch four closed-captioned excerpts in their L2, English, and found that all participants had had benefitted in terms of L2 acquisition in just one viewing due to increased comprehension, regardless of their language background or level of education. Unfortunately, little was mentioned in the MATESOL Newsletter, the only article produced on this study. Vanderplank (1991) also found that videos with L2 subtitles are useful for both L1 and L2 learning. Our senses are not overwhelmed by the multimodality of having the nonverbal visual cues, auditory cues as well as subtitles because they are not in conflict with each other and are instead offering multiple representations to the same piece of information (Holobow et al., 1984; Lambert & Holobow, 1984).

There is now a considerable amount of empirical evidence which support that videos with L2 subtitles leads to greater comprehension of the content as compared to without (Price, 1983; Guillory, 1998; Baltova, 1999; Huang & Eskey, 1999; Chung, 1999; Guichon & McLornan, 2008; Bianchi & Ciabattini, 2008; Winke et al., 2010; Kvitnes, 2013) and also great learning of vocabulary (Danan, 1992; Baltova, 1999; Huang & Eskey, 1999; Markham, 1999; Bianchi & Ciabattini, 2008; Sydorenko, 2010; Winke et al., 2010; Montero Perez et al., 2014; Nely, 2015). Segmentation of L2 subtitles along with speech flow is also found to aid listening comprehension (Vanderplank, 1988). Indeed, a meta-analysis done by Montero Perez et al. (2013) on



this topic showed this, citing that both listening comprehension and vocabulary learning is enhanced from L2 subtitles as compared to no subtitles.

## **1.2 Research focus**

### *1.2.1 Japanese comprehension, vocabulary and grammar learning*

Subtitles, in general, have proved to be useful as a pedagogical tool in L2 learning. However, it is still unclear whether all aspects of language can be learnt from watching videos, and the role that subtitles play in the learning of these language aspects. As illustrated above, many of the studies done on subtitles and videos were on comprehension, listening comprehension or vocabulary acquisition, while aside from studies such as Bianchi & Ciabattoni (2008) and Van Lommel et al. (2006), grammar acquisition has received significantly lesser attention, and results have not been very conclusive, possibly because research methods are less straightforward and much more varied as compared to studies on comprehension and vocabulary learning.

Moreover, much of the research conducted revolves around the learning of English as a second language. In this study, however, English is the native language of the learners, while Japanese is being learnt as a second language.

### *1.2.2 Which subtitles for what level of proficiency?*

Past research has attempted to identify which language, whether the native L1 or non-native L2, subtitles should be in for effective second language learning to take place. Markham et al.'s (2001) study suggested that L1 subtitles lead to greater listening comprehension. The study included writing a summary of the movie and answering a multiple-choice test in their L1. The results are however inconclusive, as the greater comprehension when L1 subtitles were used could be attributed to the fact that the participants were not actually listening to the audio, but were basing their knowledge on the L1 subtitles. In fact, Mitterer & McQueen's (2009) study on Dutch natives who possess a good command of English suggested the reverse, that native language subtitles can impede L2 English language production. Baltova (1999) supported that L2 subtitles aided listening comprehension. His study used a gap-fill test and comprehension questions and the results were that the L2 subtitle group trumped over the L1 subtitle group. Hummel (1995), on the other hand, argues that

that L1 subtitles enhance language processing, which leads to better L2 recognition and recall. De Bot et al. (1986) asked participants to watch news clips subtitled in their L1, Dutch, with some differences in information between the subtitles and the audio. They found that audio processing of the L2, English, still occurs, although the exact extent of language learning which took place is not certain.

The usefulness of subtitles in language learning is still not entirely clear. There remain many factors that are worth investigating, namely the L1 and L2 of the participants, the genre of the visual material (For example, a news report or an action film can have a vastly different use of words and visual structure.) (Bianchi & Ciabattini, 2008), and most importantly the proficiency of the learner's L2. A beginner learner may be overwhelmed by L2 subtitles, and benefit more from L1 subtitles. An advanced learner may, on the other hand, be distracted by L1 subtitles, due to interference with their existing knowledge of the L2, and thus benefit more from L2 subtitles. The relationship between the viewing of videos with L1 or L2 subtitles and its effectiveness in language learning is explored in this research paper. Furthermore, this will be compared alongside the condition of viewing videos with no subtitles. Should subtitles be indeed useful in L2 language learning, and L1 or L2 subtitles be more useful than the other, subtitled videos can become a more effective pedagogical tool that language instructors can incorporate into language teaching.

## **2. Experiment**

### **2.1 Participants**

60 Japanese language learners from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) were recruited for this study. The participants are bilingual speakers of English and Mandarin Chinese. Participants are students who are taking or have taken in the previous semester a Japanese language course offered in NTU. There are seven Japanese language course offered in the university, from Japanese Level 1 (J1) to Japanese Level 6 (J6), followed by Advanced Practical Japanese (APJ), which is the highest level offered in the university. Students taking APJ are expected to have at least a Japanese-Language Proficiency Test (JLPT) certification of N3, or have taken J6 previously in the university. As data collection for this study took place about one month from the commencement of the semester, J1 students were not allowed to

participate in the study, as they would not yet have sufficient knowledge of Japanese to read or write in Japanese. Therefore, only students from Japanese Level 2 (J2) to APJ were recruited for the study. Participants were recruited via a mass email sent out to all current students of Japanese language courses in the university, a Facebook post written on the group page of the university's Japanese cultural club, the Japanese Appreciation Club, and personal visits to several of the university's Japanese language classes.

Participants are grouped into one of two groups, the beginner learner group and the advanced learner group, according to which level they were in. J2 and J3 students were slotted into the beginner learner group, while J4, J5, J6 and APJ learners were slotted into the advanced learner group. Although the group is labelled as the advanced group, they include those at the intermediate to advanced level. People from this group are usually at least be able to hold simple conversations in Japanese. The division between beginner and advanced learners is based on the Japanese proficiency level required to understand the Japanese used in the video. The video does not use particularly complicated Japanese, thus, while J2 and J3 learners have some difficulty understanding the video without English subtitles, J4 learners and above are able to understand most of the video even without the aid of English subtitles.

## **2.2 Methodology**

Participants were invited to the computer lab in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) in NTU. After reading and signing a consent form saying that they are willing to participate in the study, participants were given an instruction leaflet (see Appendix A), which was also used to brief them. Participants held on to the instruction leaflet throughout the experiment. They were told beforehand that the goal of the study is to see how much Japanese can be learnt from watching videos, and were not told explicitly that the study is also looking at the usefulness of subtitles in L2 acquisition. Instead, they were simply asked 'not to peek at other participants' computer screens', as other participants may be watching a different 'version' of the video.

### 2.2.1 Video

In classroom teaching, videos vary greatly in length, from short sequences of 5 minutes, to 10 to 20 minutes for elementary groups and 20 to 40 minutes for intermediate and advanced groups, or even up to 45 minutes (Demirezen, 1992). Studies which use subtitled videos as experimental material have various lengths. Mitterer & McQueen (2009) used a 25-minute video, while Baltova (1999) used a 7.5-minute video. Often, shorter clips are extracted from a longer show, which is what has been done for this study.

In this study, the briefing of participants was followed by the screening of a 9-minute video, which features clips from the tenth episode of the Japanese drama *Nihonjin no Shiranai Nihongo*. All participants must not have watched this episode of the show before. Participants were seated apart from each other, and were given a maximum of 30 minutes to watch the video as many times as they liked, replay specific parts and pause at any part of the video. Before watching the video, participants were reminded to take note of the Japanese grammar and vocabulary used in the video, as it will be tested later. *Nihonjin no Shiranai Nihongo* was chosen as it presents informational content in the form of light-hearted and humorous interactions in non-complicated Japanese between the characters in the video, which provides entertainment similar to typical Japanese dramas, but also has the added bonus of educating viewers on lesser known aspects of Japanese culture. Also, ample Japanese vocabulary featured in the video are not taught in Japanese classes, and are therefore more likely to be new words to the participants. A transcript of the video is included in Appendix B, to give a better idea of the difficulty level of the Japanese in the video.

There are three videos used in this study, one with Japanese subtitles, one with English subtitles and one without any subtitles. Participants will be shown one of the three videos. The English-subtitled version of the video is taken from YouTube and shortened. The Japanese subtitled and non-subtitled versions are cut according to the English subtitled version, and the Japanese subtitles are formatted to be stylistically similar to the English subtitles (in terms of size, colour, outline of wording, outline colour, spacing etc.). Considering that most Japanese learners living outside of Japan will mostly be exposed to Japanese audio-visual media through the

Internet, an English-subtitled video which can be readily found on YouTube, instead of a video translated and subtitled by the researcher, is intentionally chosen for this study, in hopes that this will be more reflective of subtitles available online.

### *2.2.2 Test*

The viewing of the video was then followed by the commencement of a Japanese language test to determine what they have learnt. There are three sections to this test, a comprehension test, vocabulary test and grammar test. The former two are in multiple-choice format, while the grammar section is in fill-in-the-blank format. There are 6 comprehension questions, 9 vocabulary questions and 23 grammar questions. The test paper used in this study can be found in Appendix C, and the answers to the test can be found in Appendix D. The test paper was printed out in hardcopy. Each section was collected after being completed before the next section was distributed, as later sections can give hints to the answers of the previous sections. Questions used in the test are all pertaining to the video, and the sentences used for the vocabulary and grammar sections are all taken from the video itself. For the comprehension section, the questions are written in English, so that beginner learners will not have problems understanding these questions. Likewise, the options of the multiple-choice questions in the vocabulary section are in English also to ensure that beginner learners can understand the multiple-choice options. In the vocabulary section, participants were given the sentence in which the vocabulary item appears in in the video, and were asked to select the definition that best defines the underlined word. The underlined words in question are written in Hiragana, even though a Kanji equivalent may exist, to prevent participants from using their knowledge of Mandarin Chinese to infer the meanings of the words from their Kanji.

Questions asked in the vocabulary questions varied in a number of ways: How often the word or phrase is used in the video, how many different contexts it appeared in, whether it was uttered only, appeared as text in the video only or both uttered and appeared in text in the video. The words to be defined had an assortment of verbs, adjectives, nouns and phrases as well. For the grammar section, there are three parts, the changing of verb forms (for example, present to past tense), filling in of missing particles, and rearranging of sentences. These types of grammar questions frequently

appear in the grammar section of Japanese language exams, which means that all participants should be comfortable with the format of the questions.

After the test is complete, participants were given a debriefing explaining to them why they did what they did, and participants were asked for their feedback regarding the video, the test, or the study in general.

### **3. Results**

Participants were put into one of six categories. After splitting the participants into the beginner group and advanced group, these two groups were further split into one of three conditions. Each participant from either group was assigned to watch the same video with either English subtitles, no subtitles or Japanese subtitles, such that there were exactly 10 participants in each category. The raw data collected can be found in Appendix E. No analysis across each Japanese course level was done, as the standard of each level varies with each semester, that is, someone who is in level 6 this semester may be of a higher standard of a level 6 student from last semester. In order to ensure as much accuracy as possible in the divide between the beginner learners and advanced learners in this study, participants whose level lie on the borderline of the divide (level 3 and level 4) are all taken from the current batch of students this semester, so that their standard will not be too varied. The scores collected were then tabulated and the results have been presented below. After each table is the graphical representation, including the standard deviation of each value, of the data. An initial analysis of the data showed that, due to the small effect size, none of the differences are statistically significant, therefore no further statistical tests were conducted with the data.

### 3.1 Overall

	English subtitles	No subtitles	Japanese subtitles
<b>Beginner learners</b>	16	14.2	11.8
<b>Advanced learners</b>	25	28	31

Figure 1a. Mean total scores (out of total score of 38)

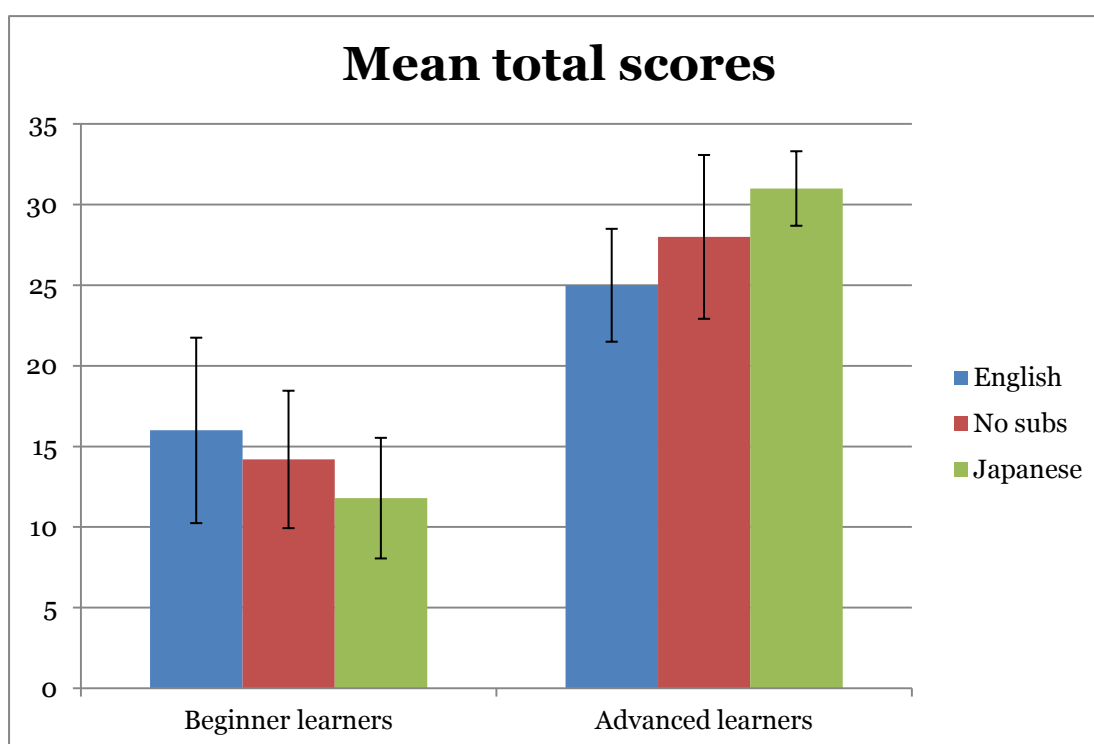


Figure 1b. Graphical representation of mean total scores

Advanced learners scored the highest when they watched the video with Japanese subtitles, while beginner learners scored the highest when they watched the video with English subtitles. On the other hand, beginner learners scored the lowest when they watched the video with Japanese subtitles, while advanced learners scored the lowest with English subtitles.

### 3.2 Comprehension

	English subtitles	No subtitles	Japanese subtitles
<b>Beginner learners</b>	5.4	4.6	4
<b>Advanced learners</b>	5.7	5.1	5.6

Figure 2a. Mean comprehension scores (out of total score of 6)

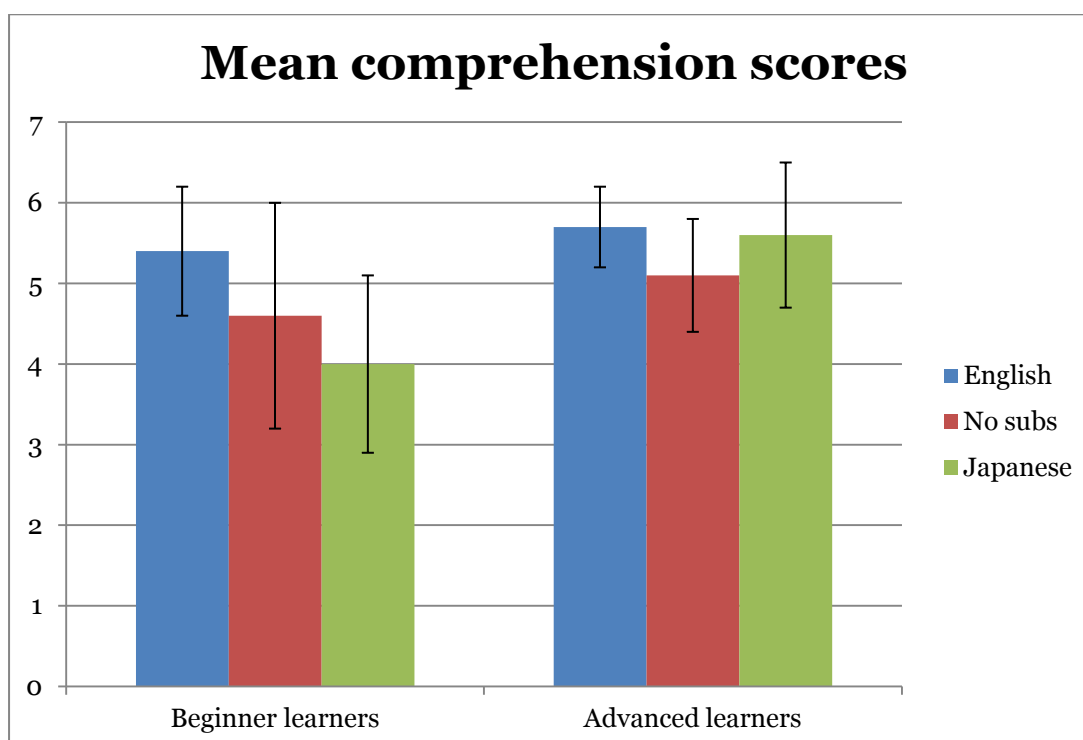


Figure 2b. Graphical representation of mean comprehension

The purpose of the comprehension test is to determine how much the learner relied on the particular subtitles. Naturally, English subtitles aided comprehension the most, especially for the beginner learners. For the advanced learners, there is little variation in comprehension scores, likely because participants are more or less adept at understanding the video in Japanese. Interestingly, beginner learners performed the worst when given Japanese subtitles.



### 3.3 Vocabulary

	English subtitles	No subtitles	Japanese subtitles
<b>Beginner learners</b>	4.9	4.3	2.7
<b>Advanced learners</b>	6.4	6.6	7

Figure 3a. Mean vocabulary scores (out of total score of 9)

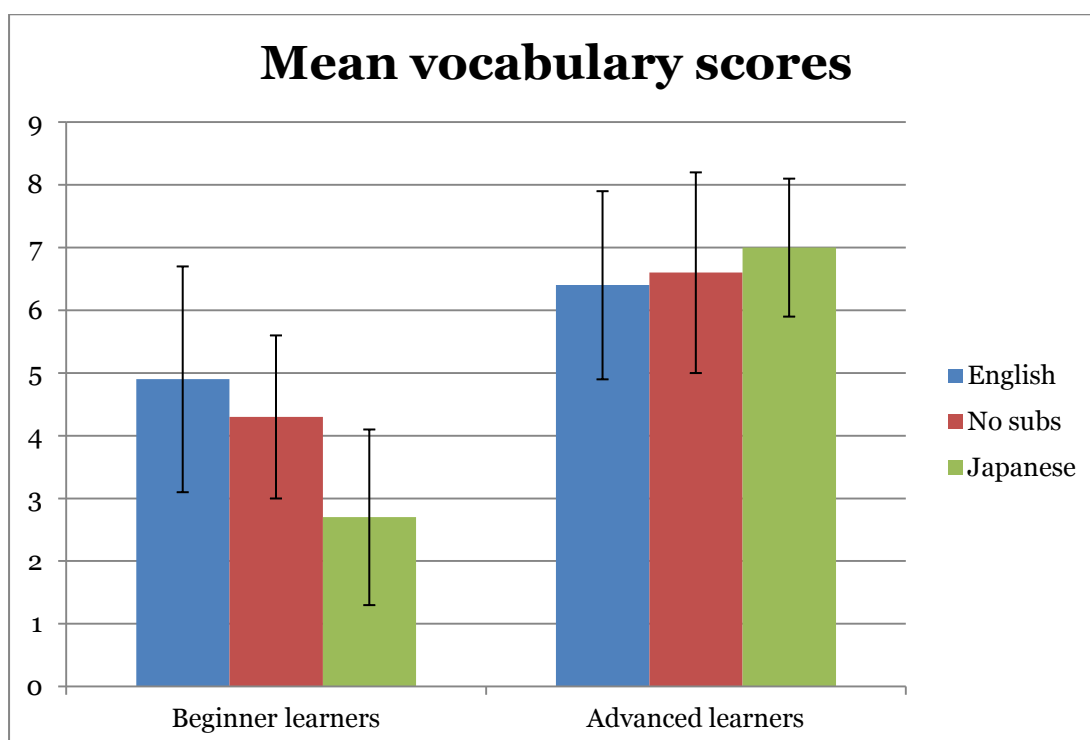


Figure 3b. Graphical representation of mean vocabulary scores

Advanced learners scored the highest when they watched the video with Japanese subtitles, while English learners scored the highest when they watched the video with English subtitles.

	English subtitles (%)	No subtitles (%)	Japanese subtitles (%)
<b>Beginner learners</b>	53.3	46.9	34.2
<b>Advanced learners</b>	62.3	61.7	70.8

Figure 4a. Mean ratio of questions not known but answered correctly to questions not known before test for Vocabulary section ( $Vno(\text{correct})/Vno$ ) i.e. how much the participant learnt

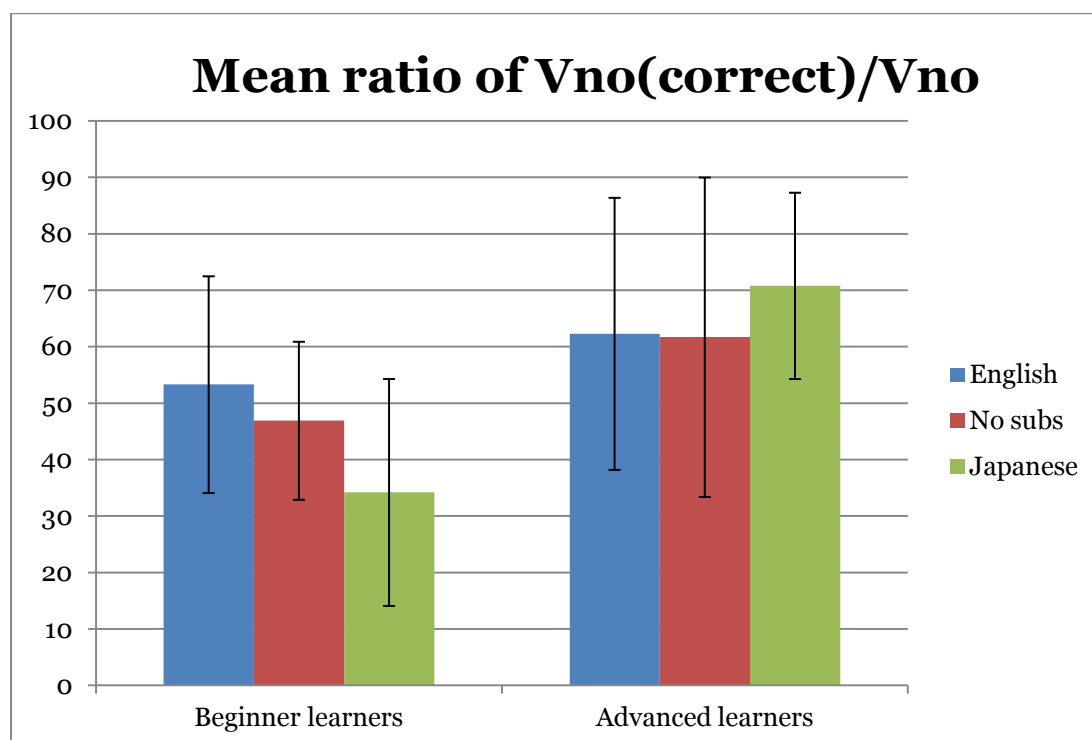


Figure 4b. Graphical representation of mean ratio of questions answered correctly to questions not known before test for Vocabulary section ( $Vno(\text{correct})/Vno$ )

The ratio of vocabulary questions which the participant did not know how to answer before viewing the video, but nonetheless answered correctly, over the total number of vocabulary questions the participant did not know how to answer prior to viewing the video is  $Vno(\text{correct})/Vno$ . This ratio is used to calculate how much of vocabulary has been learnt. Overall, advanced learners appear to have learnt more vocabulary as compared to the beginner learners. Advanced learners have the highest mean  $Vno(\text{correct})/Vno$  for the Japanese subtitle condition, which suggests that the most learning took place under this condition, while beginner learners have the highest

mean  $Vno(correct)/Vno$  for the English subtitle condition, suggesting that the greatest amount of learning took place under this condition. Interestingly, beginner learners learnt the least from the Japanese subtitles. In this case, the Japanese subtitles could perhaps have confused learners, and their attempt at trying to concentrate on the subtitles may have caused the reverse effect of learning less vocabulary.

#### 4.4 Grammar

	English subtitles	No subtitles	Japanese subtitles
<b>Beginner learners</b>	5.7	5.3	5.1
<b>Advanced learners</b>	12.9	16.3	18.4

Figure 5a. Mean grammar scores (out of total score of 23)

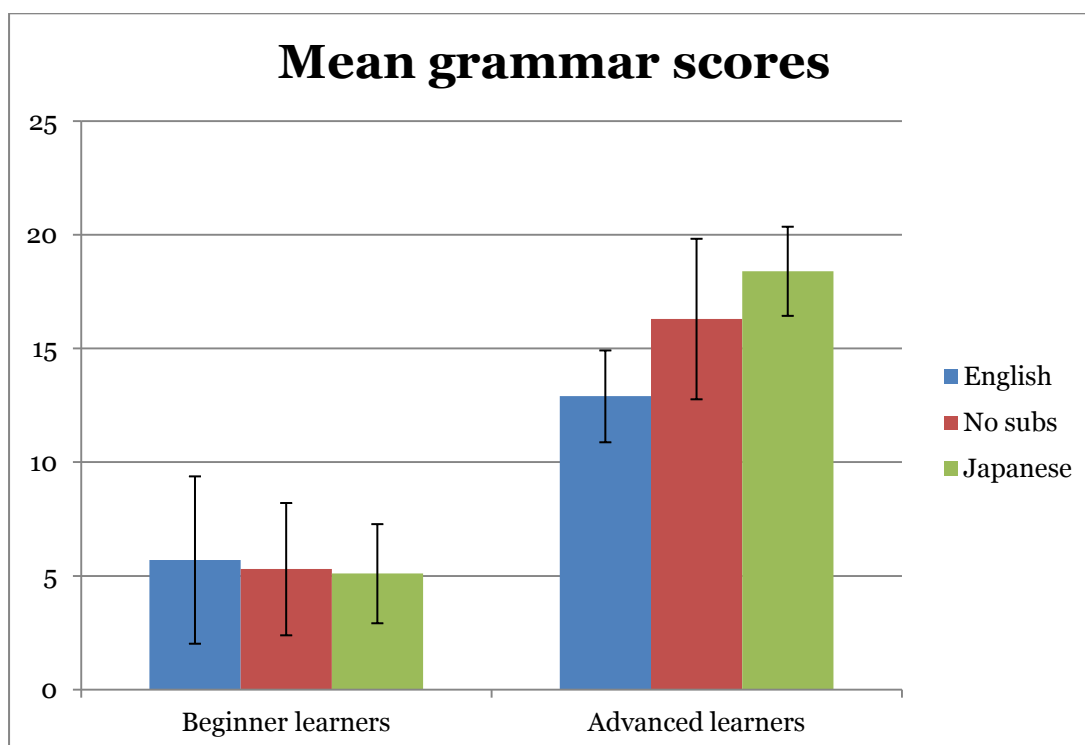


Figure 5b. Graphical representation of mean grammar scores (out of 23)

Beginner learners scored roughly a 5 to 6 out of 23 across all conditions. English subtitles, however, impeded the performance of advanced learners when it comes to grammar.

	English subtitles (%)	No subtitles (%)	Japanese subtitles (%)
<b>Beginner learners</b>	11.0	18.0	13.9
<b>Advanced learners</b>	25.8	27.3	57.8

Figure 6a. Mean ratio of questions not known but answered correctly to questions not known before test for Grammar section ( $Gno(\text{correct})/Gno$ ) i.e. how much the participant learnt

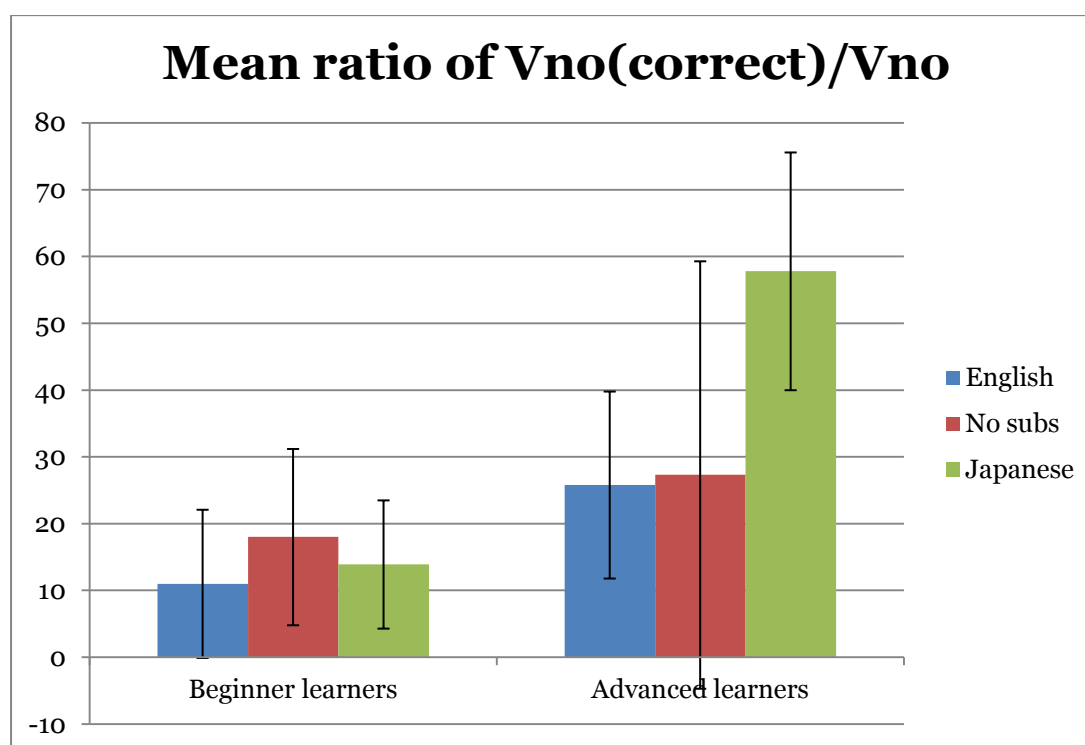


Figure 6b. Graphical representation of mean ratio of questions answered correctly to questions not known before test for Grammar section ( $Gno(\text{correct})/Gno$ )

On calculating ( $Gno(\text{correct})/Gno$ ), English subtitles seemed to have impeded the learning of grammar for both the beginner and advanced learners. The advanced learners, when presented with Japanese subtitles, appear to have acquired much more grammar as compared to the other conditions.

## 4. Discussion

Based on the scores and the  $(Vno(correct)/Vno)$  and  $(Gno(correct)/Gno)$  ratios (Figures 1-6), we can say that participants were able to learn both L2 vocabulary and grammar from watching videos when being told to take note of the L2 while watching the video, however, under certain conditions participants learn more than other conditions.

### 4.1 Japanese subtitles for advanced learners

Overall, the total scores (Figure 1) suggest that advanced learners benefited the most from Japanese subtitles. Also, Figure 4a shows that the ratio of vocabulary learnt is the highest for advanced learners who watched the video with Japanese subtitles. This is in line with Guichon & McLornan (2008), who tested intermediate level students, asking them to watch a BBC broadcast, and also found that L2 subtitles were more beneficial for L2 learning because of the lower lexical interference from the L1, as compared to L1 subtitles (note that 'advanced learners' in this study includes both intermediate and advanced level learners).

During the post-study feedback, participants made comments that were reflective of the results collected from the test scores. Advanced learners who participated in the study showed a preference for Japanese subtitles or found it more useful in Japanese learning, while beginner learners preferred English subtitles. An advanced learner (J6) who watched the video with Japanese subtitles and who enjoys watching Japanese variety shows in her free time remarked that she recently began watching more Japanese variety shows without subtitles, which she felt helped her improve her Japanese. For variety shows in Japan, there are usually captions in Japanese for the parts which are more amusing or for the parts where emphasis is desired, similar to Japanese subtitling. She highlighted that these captions were particularly useful in her learning of Japanese. Another advanced level participant (APJ) who watched the video with Japanese subtitles also commented that she usually watches Japanese videos with either English subtitles or no subtitles, and felt like she had learnt the most from watching in Japanese subtitles during this study. She added that was keen on watching more Japanese-subtitled videos in the future. These comments reinforce

the result that advanced learners reap more benefits in terms of L2 learning when watching videos in L2 subtitles.

Some participants from both the beginner and advanced learner groups who watched the video with Japanese subtitles remarked that they were able to derive the meanings of certain Kanji from their knowledge of Mandarin Chinese, and that being able to do so has helped in being able to understand more of the Japanese subtitles. This advantage did not affect the results too greatly, as English is still found to be more beneficial than Japanese subtitles for beginner learners. However, it may lower the proficiency level needed for the learner to be comfortable with the Japanese subtitles, as knowledge in Mandarin Chinese means that participants can read the Japanese subtitles faster as compared to a non-Mandarin Chinese speaker, and can decipher the meanings of certain Kanji due to their possible closeness of meaning to the word in Mandarin Chinese. Pujolà (2002) found that L2 subtitles are useful for various learners (so long as they are able to read the captions). For highly advanced learners, they serve as backup for comprehension, while for learners who are less advanced, they serve as an important tool for L2 comprehension.

#### **4.2 English subtitles for beginners**

The converse is true for beginner learners. The total scores (Figure 1) suggest that beginner learners benefitted the most from English subtitles. Likewise, Figure 4a also shows that the ratio of vocabulary learnt is the highest when beginner learners watch the video with English subtitles. This is in line with past research (Bianchi & Ciabattini, 2008), where L2 subtitles are more beneficial as proficiency increases.

Reasons for this are that some beginner learners found it difficult to read the Japanese subtitles in real-time, which defeats the purpose of the subtitles in the first place. In Vanderplank's (1988) study, L1 Arabic learners of English who had lower levels of reading were unable to follow the L2 subtitles, and also did not benefit from watching videos in the L2. In the current study, a beginner learner (J3) from who watched the video with Japanese subtitles commented that she was unable to read the Japanese subtitles as it is being presented in the video and ended up relying on the spoken Japanese and non-linguistic cues from the video. She jokingly remarked that she would need all day in order to read the Japanese subtitles, and even then will not understand much of the video.

Beginner learners also struggle to understand the video when no subtitles are given. A beginner learner (J2) who watched the video without subtitles commented that he was only able to pick up little snippets of what was being said without the aid of subtitles, which impeded his overall understanding of the video, which in turn caused it to be very difficult to learn of Japanese as he was unable to grasp the content of the video.

Unlike advanced learners, beginner learners do not have a capacity to internalise new words yet, due to their limited knowledge of the Japanese language. English subtitles help them to make sense of what is being said, allowing them to continue building the context of the video. Because of this, they are able to grasp the gist of the video through the English subtitles, and match the spoken Japanese to the English subtitles, thereby learning some Japanese. The beginner learners who watched with English subtitles remarked that they had learnt from the video by matching certain sounds they heard in the L2 to the L1 subtitles, finding patterns from there and thus establishing the relationship of certain words in the L2 to words or phrases in the L1.

If beginner learners were given the time and resources to look up words they did not understand, L2 subtitles could perhaps be more useful as compared to when they are not allowed to look anything up, as they are given much more room for clarification (Katchen, 1996). Note-taking while watching videos with L2 subtitles have been shown to have a positive impact in learning because the viewer has to focus on the L2 in order to take notes (Vanderplank, 1988, 1990). This is practical for video-viewing in the classroom. However, few L2 learners meticulously look up every word they do not understand when watching videos for the purpose of being entertained.

Participants who possess a habit of looking words up while watching videos commented that even if they do so, they do not look up every single word, but rather a handful of words, as it will cause too much interruption to their viewing pleasure. In order to look words up without greatly compromising viewing pleasure, a basic level of competency in the L2 is nonetheless necessary. In fact, the participants who said that they watch Japanese shows in either Japanese or no subtitles and look up words that they did not know tended to be from the advanced learners group.

### 4.3 The reverse can do more harm than good

It is interesting to observe from the results that for the beginner learners, Japanese subtitles actually impeded their learning of Japanese. Likewise, for the advanced learners, English subtitles impeded their learning of Japanese. This overall trend observed is also reflected in the vocabulary results, where a much greater amount of learning took place for the beginner group with English subtitles, and advanced group with Japanese subtitles, but the least learning took place when beginner learners watched the video with Japanese subtitles and advanced learners with English subtitles (Figure 4a). Interestingly, participants who were given no subtitles were not the lowest scorers, despite them having no transcription nor translation of the spoken audio. On conducting written and recall tasks in his study, Sydorenko (2010) found that captioned videos (videos with L2 subtitles) assists the learning of vocabulary through familiarising the learner with the written form of the word, while videos with no subtitles helps to improve listening comprehension, as learners will be more focused on the spoken form rather than relying on the written form.

This means that subtitles do not always act as a constructive tool in L2 learning, but can be in fact a disruption in L2 learning. In this study, it is found that if the subtitles are not suitable for the learner's current proficiency level, learning can also be impeded. Subtitles which do not suit the learner's needs are distracting to the learner, because he or she is not able to 'switch off' their focus on the subtitles, regardless of their proficiency level in either the spoken language or the language of the subtitles (d'Ydewalle & Gielen, 1992). This sentiment that inappropriate subtitles impede learning was also echoed by the participants. During the post-study feedback, a participant from the advanced learner/English subtitle condition felt himself focusing more on English subtitles than the actual spoken Japanese, which drove his attention away from the Japanese being spoken and impeded his learning of Japanese. Another advanced level participant also felt that the English subtitles were at times distracting because she could more or less understand the bulk Japanese in the video. A third advanced level participant mentioned that he would subconsciously translate the Japanese speech in his head, and would get distracted when the English subtitles were slightly different from what he had in his mind.



#### **4.4 English subtitles impede Grammar acquisition**

Virtually all participants felt that it was more difficult to learn grammar than vocabulary from videos. Many remarked that they did learn some vocabulary, but felt that grammar could not be learnt from watching videos. They were stumped by the grammar section despite the fact that all the questions in the test were actual sentences used in the video. An advanced level learner who watched the video with Japanese subtitles was the only participant who commented positively about learning grammar from videos. She remarked that although she feels that it is difficult to learn grammar from videos such as the one she had just watched, she might learn some Japanese grammar if that grammar item is used in a very similar way repeatedly throughout the video, and if the grammar item is crucial for understanding what was being said. This is in a way similar to the concept of children's shows, where content is often repeated multiple times either by using the same grammatical structure again and again, or by using different grammatical structures expressing the same concept, or both.

However, the results show that some learning of grammar did take place, especially for the advanced learners watching with Japanese subtitles (Figure 6a). This observation suggests that learning of grammar from videos is possible, to a limited extent, but is a more subconscious process as compared to the learning of vocabulary. Also, participants in both the beginner and advanced learner groups learnt the least from the English subtitles, which suggests that English is a distraction to grammar learning from videos. While vocabulary learning is enhanced for beginner learners when given English subtitles, grammar learning is not improved in the same way. This could be because vocabulary learning is a more conscious process, and participants were constantly trying to map words they did not know to the English subtitles. As grammar learning seems to be a more subconscious process, the same sort of mapping does not occur, and so learners learn through listening and watching to the auditory and visual cues provided in Japanese. However, as mentioned above, beginner learners are not able to 'catch' the Japanese subtitles, and attempting to read the Japanese subtitles actually impedes their learning. This could be why the beginner learners learnt the most grammar from watching the video without any subtitles - by focusing on the Japanese audio without distractions from the Japanese subtitles.

#### 4.5 Foreignization and domestication

Another factor worthy of consideration is the foreignization and domestication of the translations of the L1 subtitles. Foreignization is when a translator tries to retain as much information from the L2 as possible, which may involve the breaking of L1 conventions. Domestication is when a translator tries to translate something to sound as natural as possible in the L1, which may lead to some information from the L2 to be lost (Venuti, 1995, Gile, 2009). Foreignization and domestication deal with “the question of how much a translation assimilates a foreign text to the translating language and culture, and how much it rather signals the differences of that text” (Venuti, 1998). L1 subtitles which are translated without a large deviation from the L2 (foreignization) will be easier to compare with the L2 audio output, which will be in turn more helpful for learning the L2. On the other hand, L1 subtitles do not conform to the L2 in order to avoid any deviation from the conventions of the L1 (domestication) will be less helpful in L2 acquisition. Idiomatic expressions, for example, in the L2 which does not have an equivalent expression in the L1 are sometimes translated to another idiom in the L1 to serve purpose of progressing the plot. However, the process of domestication of translations to fit the L1 culture can lead to a loss in information, and more importantly make it more difficult for learners to learn the L2. Some translators who choose not to stray too much from the L2 will choose not to translate the text, or will choose to provide a direct translation of the L2 speech, followed by a short explanation of the idiomatic expression at a corner of the screen. The subtitles in the video used in for this study retain the original Japanese to a certain extent. The teacher, Ms. Haruko, is written in the subtitles as “*Haruko-sensei*”, retaining the salutation used for teachers in Japanese. In some parts of the video where the teacher is explaining certain words, the original Japanese words are kept in the subtitles, with an explanation of the word following them in brackets. For example, “*sasu (to cut)*” and “*atari - to be on the mark*”. Additionally, there was a part in the video where a character used a similar sounding word with a totally different meaning to achieve a humorous effect. This is spoken by a character from the video, Diana, while at a shrine:

ここにいるんですね、おかみさんが！

*koko ni iru n desu ne, okami-san ga!*

The subtitles wrote:

*The God is in here! (Diana uses “okami-san” instead of “okami-sama”, which refer to a woman running a restaurant).*

In this scene, the foreignization approach is employed, where the actual fumbling of words is not translated but explained by the translator to aid the viewer’s understanding. This is commonly found in ‘fansubs’ - subtitles done by non-professionals who are fans of the video or people in the video, which are easily found on the Internet for free and can serve as a great tool for beginner learners of Japanese.

#### **4.6 Limitations**

While the results support the hypothesis, the numbers are not significant. This can be attributed to several reasons below.

##### *4.6.1 Participant numbers*

The participant numbers for each category is 10 people, which means that any variation in scores can produce a large standard deviation. A larger pool of people per category will lower the standard deviation and therefore produce more significant results.

##### *4.6.2 Assumption of common baseline in proficiency level of participants*

Participants’ language proficiency was determined by the Japanese language course level which they are attending or have attended in the previous semester. This may not be a good enough gauge for proficiency, as there can be variations in proficiency level within each Japanese language course level. In the study, scores were based on the assumption that all learners from either the beginner or advanced learner group started out on the same baseline, that is, all beginner learner group participants have the same proficiency prior to the study. Without assessing each participant's proficiency before watching the video, it will not be possible to determine the actual baseline (proficiency prior to viewing the video) of each participant.

Participants taking the same Japanese level course in the university may vary in their standard of the language; One participant may score an A for the Japanese language course that they are taking, while another from the same level course may score a C,

which means that the Japanese level course that participants are taking does not reflect one single level of proficiency, but rather a range of it. Because of this, there may be some overlap between consecutive course levels, that is, a J5 participant who scores a C for his or her Japanese language course may be similar in standard to a J4 participant who scores an A. Therefore, what the participants' Japanese language course level does is to narrow the pool of participants down to a smaller range of language proficiencies.

This study has however ensured as much as possible that there is a clear divide between the beginner and advanced learners. When deciding where to divide the beginner and advanced learners, data from pilot studies and the actual study, both which use the same video, as well as participant feedback were considered. The results suggested that there is a clear distinction between J3 and J4 learners. All J3 participants tended to struggle with understanding the video as long as there were no English subtitles, while all J4 participants seemed comfortable with understanding most of the video without subtitles, or tended to not rely on English subtitles even when they were presented with them. In addition, special precaution has been taken such that J3 and J4 participants were all from the current batch of students, to avoid any differences in standards between the students from last semester and this semester. The level of Japanese used in this video appears to be that of J4 and above, which is why it was decided that J4 to APJ learners are placed in the advanced group, while J2 to J3 learners are placed in the beginner group.

#### 4.6.3 Ratio of $X_{no(correct)}/X_{no}$

To avoid the assumed equal baseline, in the results calculations were made for the ratio of  $X_{no(correct)}/X_{no}$  (the ratio of questions which the participant did not know how to answer before viewing the video, but nonetheless answered correctly, over the total number of questions the participant did not know how to answer prior to viewing the video, where  $X$  is either vocabulary,  $V$ , or grammar,  $G$ ). However, this led to another limitation, which was that if the number of  $X_{no}$  is small, the ratio of  $X_{no(correct)}/X_{no}$  may be overrepresented. What this means is that, if a participant only has one  $X_{no}$ , and answers it correctly, the  $X_{no(correct)}/X_{no}$  ratio will be 1, even though the participant had only learnt one thing from the video, or perhaps had not learnt anything but had answered the question correctly by chance. In this case

where  $X_{no}$  is too small, the standard deviation of  $X_{no(correct)}/X_{no}$  will be far too large, and the results will not be significant.

#### *4.6.4 Number of questions asked*

Due to the short length and relatively simple speech used in the video, there were not many questions which could be asked to test the advanced level learners. The small pool of questions led to the small number of  $X_{no}$ , which in turn led to the insignificant  $X_{no(correct)}/X_{no}$  ratio. A longer video or video that contains more difficult Japanese will have more Japanese words or grammar that the advanced learners are unfamiliar with.

#### *4.6.5 Self-assessment of Yes/No questions*

After each question in the vocabulary and grammar sections, participants were asked to circle 'yes' or 'no', 'yes' meaning that they knew how to answer the question before watching the video, 'no' meaning that they did not know how to answer the question before watching the video, and after viewing the video, now knew how to answer the question or still did not know how to answer the question. For the vocabulary section, participants did not have problem with the self-assessment. For the grammar section, however, participants faced some problems with the self-assessment as it is less clear-cut to assess whether he or she has known the grammar beforehand, as compared to vocabulary. A participant circled yes, citing that she had some impression of learning a grammar form, but had forgotten what it is. Assuming that grammar learning occurs more subconsciously, it is also difficult for learners to decide if they knew how to answer a question before watching the video. Therefore, a proficiency test prior to the actual study will be a better gauge as compared to a self-assessment task.

#### *4.6.6 Closeness of multiple choice options in vocabulary section to actual answer*

Multiple choice options in the vocabulary section of this study have been made to be very close to the correct answer and to fit into the context of the video, which means that participants may have possibly gotten the gist of the meaning of the word, but did not necessarily capture its meaning to such detail as to eliminate the other options which closely resembles the correct answer. Baltova (1994), when testing the

effectiveness of videos on L2 learning, found that despite having heightened speech perception from watching videos, learners did not have a heightened comprehension of specific pieces of text from watching the video.

This could be the case for the Japanese subtitle or no subtitle conditions in this study as well, where the visual cues are insufficient for giving pinpoint definitions for specific words. For example, *susugu* (すすぐ) means ‘to rinse’, but in the video two of the characters use the word *susugu* when one of them pours water into the other’s mouth from the top, which looked like they could also be gargling the water. As such, some people might use the visual cues to arrive at the misconception that *susugu* refers to the option ‘gargle’, instead of the correct answer ‘to rinse’, where no correct visual cues of the word is used.

#### *4.6.7 Amount of time allocated to view video*

The duration of time given to watch the video might be insufficient, especially for the less advanced learners to internalise the information presented in the video. As many participants have limited time to participate in the study as they have to go off for classes, participants were given a maximum of half an hour to watch the video. However, this might be insufficient for the beginner learners. Many beginner learners were unable to read the Japanese subtitles in real-time, hence given more time to watch the video, participants will have more opportunities to pause at certain parts of the video or watch the video more slowly and carefully, which might possibly lead to increased beginner learner scores under the Japanese subtitle condition.

## **5. Future research**

Measuring the effectiveness of subtitles on Japanese language acquisition still depends on many factors which call for further exploration.

Firstly, instead of an assumed baseline where all learners are assumed to have same level of proficiency, actual proficiency tests can be carried out before the experiment to distinguish the beginner learners from advanced learners. This may produce more significant results. The study itself took about an hour for each participant, and no incentive is given for participating, aside from “the opportunity to learn about

Japanese culture and learn some Japanese language” as written in the signup form for the study. Without sufficient incentive, participants will be less willing to stay for a long duration of time, and also their attention may also dwindle by the time they are asked to do the test.

Secondly, it has to be noted that the results from this study is not reflective of all types of videos and further study can be done for other genres of videos as well (variety programmes, for example). This study only suggests that informational dramas featuring common day-to-day interactions are effective in Japanese learning. The video used in the study utilises a rather large amount of visual cues, slightly slower speech and relatively simple speech patterns and vocabulary, which aids overall comprehension. Considering the importance of visual cues in the comprehension of a video (Herron et. al., 1995, Baltova, 1994), a video with much less visual cues may have differing results from those found in this study. Also, in Canning-Wilson's (2000) paper, she recommends language teachers to show instructional videos in the L2, as it encourages active listening, which requires more mental effort, over passive listening, which requires much less mental effort.

Thirdly, because of time constraints, this study could only explore the short-term learning of L2 from videos. Bianchi & Ciabattini (2008) found that in the long run, Italian beginner learners of English actually benefitted more from L2 subtitles in vocabulary learning, and L1 subtitles were disruptive. Past research has suggested that there are interesting effects to long-term viewing of L2 subtitles on L2 acquisition. Lambert & Holobow (1984) found that, with time, L2 subtitles increased in effectiveness. L2 English learners who were asked to watch an hour of L2-subtitled videos a week over a period of nine weeks witnessed an improved ability to process longer chunks of spoken and written texts in their L2, as they become more adept in segmenting stretches of L2 better (Vanderplank, 1988). Several other studies have also indicated that L2-subtitled videos are useful in improving reading comprehension (Goldman & Goldman, 1988; Bean & Wilson, 1989; Neuman & Koskinen, 1990). It will be worth exploring the impact of the long-term viewing of subtitled Japanese videos on the learning of Japanese.

## 6. Conclusion

This study has explored the possible effectiveness of videos and subtitles on the acquisition of Japanese as a second language. Japanese subtitles are more effective overall and in vocabulary learning for advanced learners, while English subtitles are more effective overall for beginner learners. Conversely, English subtitles impede learning for advanced learners while Japanese subtitles impede learning for beginner learners. This could be attributed to beginner learners struggling to keep up with the Japanese subtitles, and as a result getting overwhelmed by them. On the other hand, advanced learners are able to grasp most of the Japanese audio, and as a result are distracted by the English subtitles, which are an additional and unnecessary visual aspect for advanced learners to focus on. For grammar learning, however, English subtitles appears to lower the performance of learners, while Japanese subtitles benefit the advanced learners. This is possibly because grammar cannot be 'directly translated' the way vocabulary items are, and thus English subtitles do not provide a source of reference to the Japanese grammar being used in the video. Past research has suggested that L2 subtitles are beneficial for learners across the board, but this study shows that the merits of watching L2 subtitles depends on whether the learner is at a level which has the capacity to read the L2 subtitles. Nonetheless, past studies have suggested that L2 subtitles can 'train' learners in their reading and 'chunking' of texts (Vanderplank, 1988), which calls for further study.

Overall, this study hopes to serve its purpose of promoting the use of videos in independent learning of Japanese and for Japanese language teaching. With the large pool of subtitled (and non-subtitled) Japanese videos available in the form of DVDs or Internet videos, videos are a valuable resource which should be tapped. Although there are still areas which have to be explored when it comes to videos and subtitled videos in L2 learning, the available research suggests strongly that videos and subtitled videos do play a role in language learning. At the same time, they have to be used wisely - the learner has to use the appropriate subtitles according to his or her proficiency level to achieve the most effective learning from videos. Alternatively, past research mentioned in this article suggests that even if the learner is watching an L2 video for entertainment and not for conscious learning, and even if learning is therefore less effective, learning does ultimately take place implicitly. Despite its



limitations, videos and subtitled videos serve the purpose of entertainment, L2 exposure and L2 education, which in itself makes it a valuable asset.

Unfortunately, while it is not difficult to find Japanese videos with English subtitles online, the same cannot be said for Japanese subtitles. Japanese subtitles are usually available in the form of DVDs for Japanese audiences or closed-captions on television for the hearing impaired. There are much less sources of Japanese subtitles than English subtitles for Japanese programmes outside of Japan, especially when learners search online in English. Given the pedagogical value of same-language subtitles, it might be good for foreign language teachers to explicitly show students how and where to search for Japanese-subtitled (and in general L2-subtitled) videos.

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## 8. Appendices

### Appendix A - Instruction leaflet used to brief participants

Note: This was also distributed to participants so that they can refer to the instructions again at any point during the study.

## Instructions

### About watching the video:

- You will now watch a short video of clips from a drama called "Nihonjin no Shiranai Nihongo".
- You may watch the video as many times as you want, pause at any time and re-watch any parts you want. Just watch it at a leisurely pace.
- You are **not** allowed to take notes nor look anything up on the Internet or any devices.
- You are given about half an hour to watch the video. Feel free to take less than half an hour if you wish.
- As your neighbour might not be watching the same version of the video as you, please refrain from looking at other people's computer screens.
- When you are done with watching the video, let me know and you will be seated in front where you will be given the test paper.

### About taking the test:

- There are 3 sections, a comprehension section, vocabulary section and grammar section.
- I will first pass you the first section. When you're done, come up to me with the first section and I will hand you the second section. Again with the third section.
- After each question in the **Vocabulary section and Grammar section**, you will see this:

Y / N

I would like you to indicate whether or not you know the answer to the question before viewing the video. If you already knew how to answer the question before watching the video, circle "Y". If you did **not** know how to answer the question prior to watching this video, circle "N". Kindly do not leave this part blank.

- Don't worry about not being able to do some questions. This test is meant to be for all levels, and so not being able to do some question is normal, especially for beginner and intermediate learners.

- Once you are done, hand in your paper and I will give you a short explanation about what my project is about. If you're interested in knowing the answers to the test, you can leave your email behind.

**Appendix B - Transcript of Japanese speech and English subtitles**

## 「日本人の知らない日本語 10 クリップス」

(教室で)

王：「するめ」と「あたりめ」どこが違う？味 同じです。

ハルコ：当たり前でしょ。「するめ」も「あたりめ」も同じなんだから。

王：え〜っ!?

金麗：じゃあ 何で名前違うの？

ハルコ：それは 「する」が縁起が悪いから言いかえてんの。

ジャック：「する」は悪い言葉なのですか？

ハルコ：この場合の「する」っていうのはお金を無くすっていう意味。

ボブ：おお、そういやよく鷹栖先生が…。

鷹栖：なっ！またスツた！くっ！！

ボブ：…って言ってる。

ハルコ：そう。ね？何か やな感じでしょ？だから そういう縁起の悪い言葉を「忌み言葉」って言うの。

エレーン：イミ言葉？

ルカ：どういうイミですか？

ハルコ：「忌み」っていう言葉は嫌うってこと。だから そういう言葉はハッピーな言葉に置きかえようってことで「する」めを「あたり」めにしたわけよ。「あたり」のほうが何かいい感じじゃん？

王：そうですね！

ハルコ：そういう言いかえは他にもあって 例えば「刺身」っていうのを「おつくり」って言うでしょ。「刺す」って言葉が怖い言葉だからよ。

エレーン：身を刺す？ 切腹でござる。

ハルコ：あと、「終わる」って言葉もあんまり縁起が良くないから、結婚式では「お開き」って言うでしょ。

生徒達：へえ〜なるほど。そうなんだ。

ハルコ：縁起の悪いものって 気になっちゃうとかえたくなるもんなのよ。

ボブ：だったらハルコ、これもかえてくれよ。13点はないだろ！

ハルコ：はあ？

ジャック：欧米では13は 一般的に不吉な数字とされてますからね。

ボブ：こんなことなら12点にしてくれよ！

ハルコ：下げて どうすんのよ！

ルカ：僕もかえて欲しいです。イタリアでは17 縁起悪いです。死を表す。

金麗：中国では4と5がダメ！発音が「スー」（死）と「ウー」（無）で似てる。

ハルコ：あんた達 縁起も悪いけど、もうちょっと勉強しなさいよ！

ボブ：俺達の運は最悪だ！ハルコのせいだぞ！

ハルコ：ちょ…自分のせいでしょ！

（鳥居の前で）

ハルコ：はい、みんな！着いたわよ！早く～。

生徒達：ホントだ ホントだ！スッゲ～！

ハルコ：こちらに見えるのが、鳥居でございます。

生徒達：うお～！

王：スゴイ！

ボブ：アメフトのゴールみたいだな。

王：そうそうそう！

ハルコ：違うわよ！いい？鳥居をくぐってから先の道は「参道」っていうの。で、参道の真ん中は「正中」って言って 神様が通る道なの。だからみんな 端っこ歩くように。いいわかった？

生徒達：は～い。

ハルコ：じゃあ 一礼お辞儀して…はい。はい じゃあ行くわよ！みんな、ストップ！真ん中ダメよ！ダメよ。真ん中。はい 端っこ！端、端っこ！

鹿取：今日のハルコ先生は頼りになりますね。

ハルコ：ふふん。私の実力は こんなもんよ。

（ボップとポールの行動を見てびっくりしたハルコ）

ハルコ：えっ！？こらこらこらこら！あ～っ！

ボブ：お～！真ん中にタッチダウンだ。

鹿取：罰が当たりますよ。

ハルコ：いででで…。

鹿取：大丈夫ですか？

ハルコ：私は大丈夫だけどさ～サンダルがさ～ほら。

鹿取：鼻緒が切れたみたいで 不吉ですね。



ハルコ：遠足始まったばっかなのに…

(狛犬の前で)

王：お～！こんなとこにいた！みんな見て！ほら、ハチ公！

生徒達：お～

ルカ：うわ、これがそうか！

ハルコ：ちょ…ちょ…違う違う違う！ピピピピーッ！これは狛犬（こまいぬ）。口をアーッって開いてる方はライオン。獅子ね。そして、口をんって閉じてる方は犬。

生徒達：へえ～

(手水所の前で)

ハルコ：はい。ここは神様に会う前に体を綺麗にする所です。

エレーン：体をキレイに？

ルカ：タオル持ってくればよかった…

王：あるよ～。

ハルコ：違う違う！洗うのは手だけ。手を水で洗う所で「手水所」（ちょうずどころ）ね。手を洗うだけで体を清めたことになんのよ。

金麗：この竜のよだれで？

ハルコ：よだれじゃないから。その後は、口をすすぐ。これは言葉を綺麗にするって意味なの。ただし！柄杓（ひしゃく）には直接口をつけないように。わかった？

ボブ：すぐ　すすぐ！

ポール：はい　入れるよ～。美味しいかい？

ハルコ：そういうことじゃないから！

(本殿の前で)

ハルコ：はい…ここが本殿です。

ダイアナ：ここにいるんですね、おかみさんが！

ハルコ：料亭じゃないから…。あ　こんにちは～。はい！正式なお参りの仕方を今から教えるよ。まず　お賽銭を投げます。そして　鈴を鳴らして神様を呼ぶ。2回お辞儀をします。そして　2回手を打つ。そして　お祈りをします。お祈りをし終わったら　最後に　一礼。わかった？

生徒達：はい。

(神様が宿ってる木の前で)

マリエ：これは何ですか？

鹿取：日本の神様はヤオヨロズの神といって、こういう木とか石とか ありとあらゆるところに宿ってるんです。

ボップ：ヤオヨロズ？

鹿取：八百万っていう字です。

ボップ：八百万！？いすぎだろ。

鹿取：それだけ色んなものに宿ってるっていう事ですね。

ダイアナ：お客様にも宿ってます！「お客様は神様です」。

鹿取：それはまた違う意味だと思いますけど…。

ジャック：何んでも魂が宿ってるという考え方ですね。

ポール：あそこに魂抜けた奴がいるぞ。

エレーン：ハルコ！大丈夫でござるか？

ハルコ：ござらんよ…。ああ～！ついてない。

鹿取：あ そうだ。おみくじ引きましょ？流れが変わるかもしれませんよ。

ハルコ：そうね…そうよ！

ポール：小吉！

ボブ：吉！やった～！勝ったぜ。

ポール：マジかよ～ホントに。

ハルコ：違う違う…それ 小吉の方が悪い気がするけど、実は逆なのよ。

ボップ：おっ？

ポール：マジで？

ボップ：えっ？小吉の方が上？

ハルコ：そう。ちゃんとした順番に並べると、運のいい方から大吉、中吉、小吉、吉、末吉、凶、大凶ってなんのよ。

ポール：へっへへ。俺の勝ちだよ、ボブ。

ボップ：くっそ～！もう1回引く！

ハルコ：ちょっと ダメ！引きなおしは。

ボップ：えっ！

ハルコ：頼むわよ 大吉！

鹿取：ハルコ先生 一緒に開けてみませんか？

ハルコ：いいわよ。せ～の！

鹿取：やった～！大吉！ハルコ先生は？え？大凶！？

ハルコ：最悪だ…。

鹿取：まあ たかがおみくじですからね。

ハルコ：もう1回 引き直すわ。

鹿取：引き直しはダメなんじゃ？

ハルコ：あ…。

鹿取：ま 悪いおみくじも 吉に転じろと結んでおけば良いと聞きますよ。

ハルコ：は…そっか！そうしよう！

ハルコ：こら～！

ボツブ：お～ハルコ。ここのおみくじ タダだぞ。

ハルコ：タダじゃないわよ！そのおみくじは誰かが引いたヤツなの！

生徒達：ええ～！？

ハルコ：そこに結んで願かけんの！全部 戻しなさい！早く！

エレーン：早く言ってよ～。

### "Nihonjin no Shiranai Nihongo 10 Clips"

Note: The English subtitled version is extracted from the following link, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9HrcXKITiQc>, from the beginning to the 8:53-minute mark. There are some errors in the translation, in which case have been left the way they are.

(In the classroom)

Ou: What's the difference between "surume" and "atarime"? They taste the same.

Haruko: Of course. "Surume" and "atarime" are the same thing.

Ou: Huh?

Kinrei: Then why are the names different?

Haruko: Because "suru" has a bad meaning.

Jack: "Suru" is a bad word?

Haruko: In this case, the "suru" means to lose money.

Bob: Oh yeah, Takasu-sensei says...

Takasu: Ah! I lost (suuta) again! Damn it!

Bob: ...like that.

Haruko: Right. Sounds bad, doesn't it? So, these words with a bad meaning are actually taboo.

Ellen: Taboo words?

Luca: What's the taboo?

Haruko: Taboo, here, means something to hate. So, these words were replaced with a happier version. The "suru" in "surume" became "atarime". Doesn't "atari" sound better? ("Atari" - to be on the mark)

Ou: That's right.

Haruko: By the way, there are others. Like, sashimi can be "otsukuri". The "sasu" (to cut) is a scary word.

Ellen: "Mi wo sasu" means to commit ritual suicide.

Haruko: And "owaru" (to end) doesn't sound all that good so, you end a marriage ceremony with "ohiraki". ("Ohiraki" contains the character meaning 'to open')

Students: Oh, I see...

Haruko: When people worry about the bad meanings, they actually change the word.

Bob: So Haruko, go ahead and change this too. It can't be 13!

Haruko: Huh?

Jack: In the West, 13 is actually an unlucky number.

Bob: Why not make it 12?

Haruko: Why do you want it down?

Luca: I'd like to change it too. 17 is a bad omen in Italy. It signals death.

Kinrei: 4 and 5 are no good in China. It sounds like "su" (death) and "uu" (nothingness).

Haruko: Well, if your grades are so bad, study harder.

Bob: You've given us all bad luck, Haruko!

Haruko: Hey, It's your own fault!

(By the Torii gate)

Haruko: Okay everyone, we're here. Hurry!

Students: We are! Wow!

Haruko: This is the gateway to the shrine.

Students: Oh...

Ou: Wow!

Bob: It looks like a goal in American football.

Ou: Yeah!

Haruko: It's not! Okay? The pathway to the shrine right under the gate is called "sandou". And the exact middle of the path, the "seichuu", is the path the god walks.

So everyone walk on the edge. Okay, get it?

Students: Yep.

Haruko: Okay, everyone bow. Let's go in! Everyone stop! Don't go in the middle!

Okay! Edges. Edges!

Katori: You're doing really well today Haruko-sensei.

Haruko: Yep. This is my true strength.

(Haruko sees what Bob and Paul's are doing and is shocked)

Haruko: Huh!?

(Subtext: Don't do this!)

Haruko: Hey hey!

Bob: Oh, touchdown in the middle!

Katori: You're going to be punished now.

Haruko: Ow ow...

Katori: Are you okay?

Haruko: I'm fine but my sandal, look!

Katori: Your sandal strap breaking is a bad sign.

Haruko: And our trip just started...

(In front of guardian statues)

Ou: Oh! They have this? Look! It's Hachiko! (Hachiko is a famous statue of a dog in Shibuya)

Luca: Oh! It is!

Haruko: Hey hey! It isn't! These are the guardian lion and dog. The one on the left with the mouth open is a lion. And then one with the mouth closed is a dog.

Students: Oh...

(At mouth-rinsing point)

Haruko: Okay. Before you meet the god, you need to cleanse your body.

Ellen: Cleanse your body?

Luca: Should have brought a towel.

Ou: I got one.

Haruko: No no! You just wash your hands. A place where you wash your hands is called "chouzu dokoro". All you need to do to cleanse your body is wash your hands.

Kinrei: With this dragon's drool?

Haruko: It's not drool. Next you rinse your mouth. It's to cleanse your words. But! You have to drink it from the ladle, okay?

Bob: Time to rinse!

Paul: Okay, here it comes. Taste good?

(Subtext: Don't do this!)

Haruko: Not like that!

(At the main shrine)

Haruko: Okay, here's the main shrine.

Diana: The god is in here! (Diana uses "okami-san" instead of "okami-sama", which refer to a woman running a restaurant)

Haruko: This isn't a restaurant...Hello... Okay, I'll teach you the right way to worship here. First, throw in the money. And then, ring the bell. It calls the god. Bow twice. Clap your hands twice. And then, pray. When you're done, bow again. Got it?

Students: Yep.

(At a tree where the gods are said to be dwelling)

Marie: What's this?

Katori: Japanese gods can be found all over, like in trees or rocks. They can be found in everything.

Bob: Everything?

Katori: It uses the characters for "eight million".

Bob: Eight million? That's too much.

Katori: Haha... Well, it just means there's a lot of things.

Diana: Even customers have gods! "The customer is our god."

Katori: Well, I think that's something different...

Jack: So they think there's a spirit in everything?

Paul: I think that one there lost her spirit.

Ellen: Haruko! Are you well?

Haruko: I'm not well... I have no luck!

Katori: Oh, how about we pull fortunes? Maybe your luck will change there.

Haruko: Yeah. That's right!

Paul: Slightly good luck!

Bob: Good luck! All right! I won!

Paul: Really? Come on...

Haruko: Hey hey, it might look like "slightly good luck" is worse but it's actually reverse.

Bob: Huh?

Paul: Really?

Bob: Slightly good luck is better?

Haruko: Yep. From best luck to worse luck... Excellent luck, average luck, little luck, luck, uncertain luck, bad luck, terrible luck. Just like that.

Paul: I won Bob!

Bob: Man! I'm going again.

Haruko: Hey! You just can't pick it again!

Haruko: Come on, excellent luck!

Katori: Haruko-sensei, let's open it together?

Haruko: Okay. One two...

Katori: All right! Excellent luck! Haruko-sensei? Huh? Terrible luck?

Haruko: Horrible...

Katori: Well, it's just a fortune.

Haruko: I'm going to pick again.

Katori: Didn't you say you shouldn't?

Haruko: Right...

Katori: Well, even the bad fortunes can become good if you tie it up here.

Haruko: Yeah! That's right! Let's do that.

(Subtext: Don't do this!)

Haruko: Hey!

Bob: Oh Haruko, these fortunes are free!

Haruko: They aren't free! People left those behind on purpose!

Students: Huh?

Haruko: They left those behind for a reason! Put them all back! Hurry!

Ellen: Should've told us earlier.



## Appendix C - Test paper used in this study

### Question Paper

There are 3 sections to this paper, the **Comprehension section, Vocabulary section and Grammar section**. Instructions for each section are written before each section. Each section will be distributed separately. If you are unsure of what to do for any of the sections, please approach the experimenter for clarification.

#### I: Comprehension section

Choose which of the options, A, B, C or D, is the most appropriate answer for the questions below.

1. Around the beginning of the video, why did the students want to change their test scores?
  - A. In Europe, the scores they obtained have a negative connotation
  - B. Their test scores were too low and were unhappy with Ms. Haruko's strict marking
  - C. They felt that it was Ms. Haruko's fault that they got the scores they had
  - D. The scores they obtained weren't considered auspicious in their own countries
  
2. Why do certain objects have two different names?
  - A. Some words have a negative meaning, and so a more positive word is used instead
  - B. Some words sound vulgar, and so a more sophisticated word is used instead
  - C. Some words are inappropriate to be used in certain occasions, and so another word referring to the same thing is used instead
  - D. Some words do not sound good, so a better-sounding word is used instead
  
3. What instruction did Ms. Haruko give the students about walking along the path at the Torii gate?  
What reason did she give for asking them to do so?
  - A. Don't walk in the middle, as walking in the middle will cause bad luck
  - B. Don't walk in the middle, as the middle part is meant for the gods
  - C. Walk on the path in twos, far apart from each other, as this will ward off bad luck
  - D. Walk on the path in twos, far apart from each other, as this is what the gods do

4. At this area, why did the students think that they needed a towel?



- A. Because they thought that they had to wipe their mouths clean
- B. Because they thought that they had to drink the water
- C. Because they thought that they had to bathe themselves
- D. Because they thought that they had to dry their hands after washing them

5. When Ms. Haruko realised that she pulled the worst fortune, she wanted to pull another fortune. What was she told to do instead by the other teacher?

- A. She was told that she should do more good deeds to improve her luck
- B. She was told that she should ignore the fortune as it was just a slip of paper
- C. She was told that she should tie it up so that her fortune will be improved
- D. She was told that she should exchange fortunes with the other teacher to receive some of her good luck

6. What misunderstanding did the students have when they helped themselves to the fortunes that were tied up?

- A. It will ward off bad luck
- B. The fortunes were specially prepared for them
- C. By taking other people's good fortunes they will improve their own luck
- D. The fortunes were free of charge

## II: Vocabulary section

Choose which of the options, A, B, C or D, is the best definition for the underlined words below.

1. それは、「する」がえんぎがわるいから 言い換えてんの。

Y / N

- A. Bad energy
- B. Bad omen
- C. Bad vibes
- D. Bad actions

2. だからみんな、はじっこ<sup>ある</sup>歩くように。

Y / N

- A. Walk respectfully while keeping on the path
- B. Walk while keeping on the path
- C. Walk respectfully while keeping to the side
- D. Walk while keeping to the side

3. ヤオヨロズ (八百万) とは、色んなものに やどってるっていうことですね。

何んでも 魂 <sup>たましい</sup>が やどってるとい かんが <sup>かた</sup>え方ですね。

Y / N

- A. Dwelling
- B. Existing
- C. Blessing
- D. Keeping

4. 鼻緒が切れたみたいで ふきつ ですね。

Y / N

- A. Dirty
- B. Physically demanding
- C. Unlucky
- D. Difficult to blow

5. 2回 おじぎをします。

Y / N

- A. Bow
- B. Clap
- C. Draw
- D. Select

6. 鳥居をくぐってから先の道は「さんどう」っていうの。

Y / N

- A. The sides of the pathway
- B. The middle of the pathway
- C. Both A and B
- D. None of the above

7. 絶対にマネをしないでください

Y / N

- A. Attempt
- B. Laugh
- C. Make fun of
- D. Imitate

8. その後は、口をすすぐ。

Y / N

- A. Rinse
- B. Cleanse
- C. Gargle
- D. Wipe

9. ながれがかわるかもしれませんよ。

Y / N

- A. Change the current situation
- B. As time passes by things will change
- C. The flow of things varies
- D. Change the momentum of things

### III: Grammar section

Change the underlined verbs to their appropriate verb forms and fill in the brackets provided.

For example, する→した、する→しない etc.

The verb forms may also be left unchanged. For example, する→する

Would you know  
this before the  
video?

1. これは 何という ( ) 意味ですか? Y / N
2. だったらハルコ、これも かえる ( ) くれよ。13点はないだろ! Y / N
3. 遠足始まる ( ) ばっかなのに… Y / N
4. その後は、口をすすぐ。これは言葉を綺麗にするって意味なの。ただし! 柄杓には  
直接口を つける ( ) ように。 Y / N
5. 悪いおみくじも 吉に転じると 結んでおく ( ) 良いと聞きますよ。 Y / N

Fill in the missing particles in the brackets. Each bracket can only contain 1 hiragana. If you do not think that a particle is missing, mark it with a "X".

1. 良くない言葉 ( ) 使えば、何 ( ) いやな感じでしょ? Y / N
2. 「刺身」っていう ( ) ( ) 「おつくり」っていうでしょ。 Y / N
3. 縁起の悪い ( ) ものって 気 ( ) なっちゃう ( ) かえたくなるもんなのよ。  
Y / N
4. 欧米 ( ) は13は 一般的 ( ) 不吉な数字 ( ) されてますからね。 Y / N
5. それ、小吉 ( ) 方が 悪い気 ( ) するけど、実 ( ) 逆なのよ。 Y / N

Rearrange the following words/phrases to form the correct sentences.

1. ね に です いるん ここ

\_\_\_\_\_。 Y / N

2. 持って よかった タオル くれれば

\_\_\_\_\_。 Y / N

3. に でございます 見えます こちら 鳥居 のが

\_\_\_\_\_、 \_\_\_\_\_。 Y / N

4. みたい 鼻緒 不吉 ですね が 切れた で

\_\_\_\_\_。 Y / N

5. を 呼ぶ 鳴らして 鈴 神様 を

\_\_\_\_\_。 Y / N

- End of paper. Thank you for your time! -

## Appendix D - Answers to test

### I: Comprehension section

1. D 2. A 3. B 4. C 5. C 6. D

### II: Vocabulary section

1. B 2. D 3. A 4. C 5. A 6. C 7. D 8. A 9. D (Option A was also accepted as it is used as such in the context of the video)

### III: Grammar section

#### First part:

1. いう      2. かえて      3. 始まった      4. つけない
5. おけば/おいたら/おくと

#### Second part:

1. 良くない言葉 (を) 使えば、何 (か) いやな感じでしょ？
2. 「刺身」っていう (の) (を) 「おつくり」っていうでしょ。
3. 縁起の悪い (×) ものって 気 (に) なっちゃう (と) かえたくなるものなのよ。
4. 欧米 (で) は13は 一般的 (に) 不吉な数字 (と) されてますからね。
5. それ、小吉 (の) 方が 悪い気 (が) するけど、実 (は) 逆なのよ。

#### Third part:

1. ここ に いるん です ね。
2. タオル 持って くれれば よかった。
3. こちら に 見えます のが、鳥居 でございます。
4. 鼻緒 が 切れた みたい で 不吉 ですね。
5. 鈴 を 鳴らして 神様 を 呼ぶ。

## Appendix E - Table of data collected

Note: Participants belonging to the APJ level are listed as 'level 7'

No.	Level	Subtitle	C/6	V/9	Vno	Vno (correct)	Vno (correct)/Vno	G/23	Gno	Gno (correct)	Gno (correct)/Gno	Total
3	2	E	6	6	9	6	0.6667	4	15	2	0.1333	16
4	2	E	6	7	7	5	0.7143	10	1	0	0.0000	23
12	2	E	6	6	9	6	0.6667	4	10	0	0.0000	16
25	2	E	4	3	9	3	0.3333	2	15	1	0.0667	9
55	2	E	4	2	9	2	0.2222	3	15	3	0.2000	9
33	2	E	5	3	9	3	0.3333	2	14	0	0.0000	10
16	3	E	6	7	9	7	0.7778	8	13	1	0.0769	21
18	3	E	6	6	9	6	0.6667	9	14	3	0.2143	21
24	3	E	5	4	9	4	0.4444	3	14	1	0.0714	12
30	3	E	6	5	8	4	0.5000	12	12	4	0.3333	23
MEAN			5.4	4.9	8.7	4.6	0.5325	5.7	12.3	1.5	0.1096	16
STDEV			0.84	1.79	0.67	1.65	0.1920	3.68	4.27	1.43	0.1106	5.75
6	4	E	6	7	6	4	0.6667	13	8	3	0.3750	26
35	4	E	6	5	8	4	0.5000	11	9	1	0.1111	22
36	4	E	5	4	7	3	0.4286	10	13	3	0.2308	19
19	5	E	6	6	3	1	0.3333	14	7	2	0.2857	26
26	5	E	6	8	7	6	0.8571	13	12	4	0.3333	27
8	6	E	5	6	9	6	0.6667	12	2	0	0.0000	23
14	6	E	6	7	9	7	0.7778	11	9	1	0.1111	24
44	6	E	6	9	7	7	1.0000	17	3	1	0.3333	32
49	6	E	5	5	4	1	0.2500	14	5	2	0.4000	24
43	7	E	6	7	9	7	0.7778	14	5	2	0.4000	27
MEAN			5.7	6.4	6.9	4.6	0.6258	12.9	7.3	1.9	0.2580	25
STDEV			0.48	1.51	2.08	2.37	0.2414	2.02	3.62	1.20	0.1401	3.50
1	2	J	5	3	5	3	0.6000	6	7	0	0.0000	14
10	2	J	4	4	5	3	0.6000	9	9	2	0.2222	17
48	2	J	5	2	9	2	0.2222	2	15	1	0.0667	9
53	2	J	2	3	9	3	0.3333	4	14	1	0.0714	9
57	2	J	3	1	9	1	0.1111	4	14	1	0.0714	8
58	2	J	3	1	9	1	0.1111	6	15	5	0.3333	10
9	3	J	5	4	9	4	0.4444	8	13	2	0.1538	17
17	3	J	6	3	9	3	0.3333	3	15	3	0.2000	12
22	3	J	2	1	9	1	0.1111	4	15	2	0.1333	7
23	3	J	5	5	9	5	0.5556	5	15	2	0.1333	15
MEAN			4	2.7	8.2	2.6	0.3422	5.1	13.2	1.9	0.1386	11.8
STDEV			1.41	1.42	1.69	1.35	0.2010	2.18	2.86	1.37	0.0957	3.74



5	4	J	6	7	4	3	0.7500	18	4	2	0.5000	31
34	4	J	6	9	4	4	1.0000	16	5	2	0.4000	31
2	5	J	5	6	7	4	0.5714	17	2	1	0.5000	28
20	5	J	6	7	8	6	0.7500	16	7	3	0.4286	29
38	6	J	6	8	5	4	0.8000	21	0	0		35
51	6	J	6	6	4	2	0.5000	21	5	3	0.6000	33
60	6	J	4	7	6	5	0.8333	17	10	6	0.6000	28
21	7	J	6	6	6	3	0.5000	18	4	2	0.5000	30
31	7	J	6	6	7	4	0.5714	20	9	6	0.6667	32
32	7	J	5	8	5	4	0.8000	20	1	1	1.0000	33
MEAN			5.6	7	5.6	3.9	0.7076	18.4	4.7	2.6	0.5772	31
STDEV			0.7	1.05	1.43	1.10	0.1651	1.96	3.27	2.01	0.1800	2.31
37	2	N	6	5	8	4	0.5000	10	8	2	0.2500	21
45	2	N	4	4	9	4	0.4444	1	14	0	0.0000	9
52	2	N	3	4	9	4	0.4444	4	15	3	0.2000	11
54	2	N	6	5	9	5	0.5556	4	13	0	0.0000	15
56	2	N	5	5	9	5	0.5556	2	15	2	0.1333	12
59	2	N	5	7	8	6	0.7500	9	15	5	0.3333	21
11	2	N	5	4	9	4	0.4444	5	14	1	0.0714	14
15	3	N	3	3	9	3	0.3333	5	14	2	0.1429	11
27	3	N	4	2	9	2	0.2222	5	9	3	0.3333	11
28	3	N	5	4	9	4	0.4444	8	15	5	0.3333	17
MEAN			4.6	4.3	8.8	4.1	0.4694	5.3	13.2	2.3	0.1798	14.2
STDEV			1.07	1.34	0.42	1.10	0.1401	2.91	2.57	1.77	0.1316	4.26
29	4	N	4	5	8	4	0.5000	13	6	1	0.1667	22
47	4	N	5	8	5	4	0.8000	21	3	2	0.6667	34
13	5	N	4	5	7	4	0.5714	15	4	0	0.0000	24
46	6	N	5	8	9	8	0.8889	20	4	3	0.7500	33
7	7	N	4	6	6	3	0.5000	16	8	5	0.6250	26
39	7	N	6	6	7	5	0.7143	10	4	0	0.0000	22
40	7	N	6	4	9	4	0.4444	13	8	2	0.2500	23
41	7	N	6	9	4	4	1.0000	19	1	0	0.0000	34
42	7	N	6	7	4	3	0.7500	18	1	0	0.0000	31
50	7	N	5	8	1	0	0.0000	18	0	0		31
MEAN			5.1	6.6	6	3.9	0.6169	16.3	3.9	1.3	0.2731	28
STDEV			0.88	1.65	2.54	1.97	0.2831	3.53	2.81	1.70	0.3194	5.08
Standard deviation of all English subtitle scores								6.541366				
Standard deviation of all Japanese subtitle scores								10.30278				
Standard deviation of all no subtitle scores								8.422401				