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## Promoting learners' noticing with natural conversation

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### Abstract

The present study attempts to clarify effective methods for using video footage of natural conversations as pedagogical material. An experiment was conducted to reveal which of the following methods most promotes learner noticing and understanding: 1) simply showing the video, 2) providing a transcript, and 3) directing participants to pay attention to specific aspects of the interaction. Twenty-four JSL learners took part in the study. The results indicate that directing attention proved to be the most effective method for promoting noticing. The level of noticing was nearly consistent across all groups when participants watched the video and read the transcript. However, among intermediate learners, paying attention to specific aspects of the interaction led to more noticing than among beginners and advanced learners, and more than half of the instances where participants used the transcript and paid attention were accompanied by understanding. The potential for applying the methods examined in this study to other contexts is also discussed.

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## 1 Introduction

In the field of language pedagogy in general, and Japanese language pedagogy in particular, focus has long been placed on communication. At the same time, however, pedagogical considerations such as simplifying, clarifying, or systematizing materials have also been made, especially at the initial stages of learning. Typical instances can be found in textbooks where grammar points are arranged from simple to complex, and syntactically complete sentences are embedded in exchanges that superficially bear some resemblance to natural conversation but are in fact quite different: sentences do not overlap with each other, each word is clearly pronounced, and so forth. As a result, learners are often frustrated with differences between the target language inside and outside of the classroom.

To counter the frustration, there has been some movement toward using natural conversation itself as material for teaching, while recognizing the importance of pedagogical considerations

(Usami 2012). When it comes to authenticity, natural conversation stands above all other materials. It is rich in phenomena like fillers, disfluencies, and incomplete sentences, all without simplification.

This study aims to establish guidelines for using natural conversation as an educational resource. A particular emphasis is placed on assessing the various techniques for presenting natural conversations to learners. The primary focus is on "noticing," the foundational stage of second language acquisition according to Schmidt (1990).

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 *Second language acquisition and the role of noticing*

Typically, L2 learners instinctively process language for its meaning (Doughty 2001: 214). As a result, they attempt to decipher the meanings of utterances, topics, and the dynamics of the interactions they're involved in. Hence, they try to figure out the meaning of utterances, topics, and what is going on during an interaction in which they engage. Yet, in order to acquire a second language, learners must also engage with the linguistic structures. When an element in the input occurs frequently, holds perceptual significance, and garners attention, it becomes the subject of "noticing" (Schmidt 1990; Skehan 1998) or "apperception" (Gass & Selinker 2008). This then progresses to advanced stages within the evolving interlanguage system. Thus, noticing can be considered the initial step in second language acquisition.

The concept of noticing in the realm of second language acquisition was introduced by Schmidt (1990) through his Noticing Hypothesis and later fine-tuned by Robinson (1995) as a combination of attention and short-term memory rehearsal, referencing the discourse presented by Tomlin and Villa (1994)<sup>i</sup>. Schmidt himself also refined the definition of "noticing" as conscious registration at the surface level of the occurrence of phenomena or structures of the input, whereas "understanding" implies recognition of a general principle, rule or pattern, on which the notions awareness at the level of noticing, and awareness at the level of understanding are constructed (Schmidt 1995: 29–30, 2001: 5). Hence, noticing is also interpreted as a lower level of awareness. In addition, for materials to be incorporated into a developing inter-language system, a higher level of awareness, namely understanding, is necessary (Gass & Selinker 2008: 479–482, see also Skehan 1998: 48). This assumption is in line with a series of studies which show that awareness at the level of understanding leads to more linguistic gain than lower levels of awareness (Hama & Leow, 2010; Leow, 1997; Rosa & Leow 2004; Rosa & O'Neill 1999; Sachs & Suh 2007). Factors influencing the noticing would include at least the following five: expectation, frequency, perceptual salience, skill level, and task demands (Schmidt 1990).

The present study uses the term "noticing" in the same way as Robinson (1995), and its distinction from "understanding" will be shown in 4.4 below.

### 2.2 *Pragmatic awareness*

Here, the previous studies of awareness regarding pragmatic features are reviewed, since the present study attempts to use natural conversation, which contains pragmatic phenomena in abundance, to promote learners' noticing. Learner noticing concerning pragmatic features has been examined mainly in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. The term "pragmatic awareness" is frequently defined roughly as noticing with or without understanding and is often used interchangeably with "noticing" (Bardovi-Harlig 2018: 323).

In the field, it has been reported that learners can notice pragmatic aspects of the target language. However, few studies have adopted natural conversation as an instrument for invoking learners' pragmatic awareness, since the main concerns have been to investigate the influence of learners' level of proficiency on their degree of awareness of pragmatic and grammatical infelicities (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin 2005; Bella 2012; Niezgodna & Rover 2001; Schauer 2006, 2009), the choice of the T/V system (Kinginger & Farrell 2004), and features of specific speech acts (Abrams 2014; Alcón 2005; Cheng 2016; Takahashi

2001). As materials for these studies, non-authentic instruments have been adopted. For instance, not only Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), a pioneering study, but also following studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin 2005; Bella 2012; Niezgodá & Rover 2001; Schauer 2006, 2009), purposefully adopted non-authentic scenarios. Teachers' mime (Tomlinson 1994), and films (Abrams 2014; Alc3n 2005) were adopted as well. While recognizing that the ideal would be to use natural conversation when teaching language, non-authentic instruments have been adopted due to the difficulty of collecting authentic data (equipment and setting), the change of people's language use under observation (i.e. "observer's paradox," cf. Labov 1972), along with performance errors and overlaps by speakers (Grant & Starks 2001: 40).

Two noteworthy exceptions are the works of Cheng (2016) and Sekizaki (2009). Cheng (2016) discovered that the utilization of video recordings and transcripts informed by Conversation Analysis for authentic interactions carries evident pedagogical significance. This approach enriches the awareness of L2 speakers regarding contextual influences on speech act sequences, their pragmatic decisions, and the multi-modal nature of pragmatic actions. In this study, learners were tasked with watching video excerpts, analyzing action types and their effectiveness, and drawing comparisons among the excerpts. Sekizaki (2009) directed learners to meticulously transcribe conversations among native Japanese speakers. The findings revealed that learners not only observed aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, but also identified pragmatic elements inherent to natural conversation. These findings make it evident that the potential benefits can outweigh the challenges associated with using natural conversation, as highlighted by Grant and Starks (2001). Furthermore, learners can also perceive performance errors or overlaps among interlocutors as inherent features of natural discourse.

Additionally, tasks involving exposure play a significant role in facilitating learners' ability to notice pragmatic aspects of the target language. It's important to consider how pedagogical procedures can effectively support learners in this noticing process, as highlighted by Daughy (2003, p.291). Attention, as discussed earlier, stands as a fundamental element in the concept of noticing. Previous research has indeed designed tasks that necessitate focused attention in various ways. For instance, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) instructed learners to assess the appropriateness of utterances in different scenarios—20 in total, including 8 with pragmatic infelicities, 8 with grammatical errors, and 4 without any inappropriate content. Similar approaches were adopted by Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin (2005), Bella (2012), Niezgodá & Rover (2001), and Schauer (2006, 2009). Other tasks prompted learners to recontextualize issues within dialogs and skits (Abrams, 2014), identify character dynamics and challenges through teachers' mimed interpretations of novels (Tomlinson, 1994), evaluate the type and effectiveness of actions taken (Cheng 2016), or meticulously transcribe detailed interactions (Sekizaki, 2009).

Furthermore, transcripts have been employed in pragmatic awareness-raising activities, although their primary goals were to facilitate general learner understanding of interactions or to aid in discussions (House 1996; Alc3n 2005; Cheng 2016). However, the specific impact of using transcripts on noticing remains unclear, particularly regarding which aspects of the interaction participants focused on when using the transcripts.

Several other influential factors are related to the study contexts. While second language contexts are preferred for fostering high-quality and substantial pragmatic awareness (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Niezgodá & Rover, 2001; Schauer, 2006, 2009), learners in study abroad settings also demonstrate an ability to notice pragmatic features of the target language (Kingingér & Farrell, 2004; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005). Additionally, the duration of residence plays a pivotal role; learners with a residence of one year or more tend to notice more grammatical and pragmatic aspects (Bella, 2012; Schauer, 2006; Taguchi, 2011; Xu et al., 2012). Factors like task instructions (Alc3n 2005; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; House, 1996; Takahashi, 2001, 2005; Tateyama, 2007) and variations in language proficiency also exert influence on the noticing process (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Niezgodá & Rover, 2001).

### 3 Research questions

The present study aims to uncover techniques for effectively promoting the identification of elements within natural conversation. In this context, I refer to "natural conversation" as

as unplanned interactions where interlocutors engage without any predetermined scenario. Recognizing and understanding these features can be highly advantageous for learners, as such insights would enable them to bridge the linguistic gap between their classroom experiences and real-world communication.

Three exposure tasks were examined in the current study. Given that noticing must require attention as discussed above, asking learners to pay attention to specific aspects of interaction is assumed to be effective. On the contrary, simply showing a video would be an easy method for most instructors, in that the method doesn't require a large amount of specialized knowledge or techniques, and thus it would be a good candidate if it were facilitative. Additionally, the effect of transcripts on noticing is also examined, considering that the effect is still unclear in the previous studies.

The effects of each method have to be examined from the perspective of language proficiency. In addition, it is important to distinguish understanding from noticing, as it is understanding that leads to develop interlanguage system (Gass & Selinker, 2008, pp. 479-482, Skehan, 1998, p.48). Consequently, my research questions are as follows:

RQ1: Which method among the three, namely 1) simply showing the video, 2) providing transcripts to the participants, and 3) directing them to pay attention to specific aspect of the interaction, invokes noticing the most?

RQ2: Do aspects of interaction which participants notice differ depending on the method of exhibition?

RQ3: Does the amount of noticing differ depending on the proficiency of the participants?

RQ4: To what degree do the learners understand what they notice? (operational distinction of understanding will be shown below in 4.4)

## 4 Materials and methods

### 4.1 Participants

The participants of the survey are 24 Japanese learners in a JSL context, whose length of residence in Japan is less than 1 year, considering that a residence period of 1 year or longer is said to effect learner tendencies of noticing (Bella, 2012; Schauer, 2006; Taguchi, 2011; Xu et al., 2012). They can be distinguished from the perspective of their proficiency. Each grouping (beginner, pre-intermediate, intermediate, advanced) consisted of 6 participants. Participants' Japanese proficiency was determined via a test<sup>ii</sup> in order to maintain objectivity. The test concerns various aspects of learners' language ability including knowledge of grammar, audio processing regarding grammar and vocabulary, Kanji including its reading, writing and vocabulary. Moreover, it incorporates SPOT<sup>iii</sup> (Kobayashi, 2016) that may measure degree of automaticity of language processing. 100-point scale results of the test were then used to sort participants into each group. The ranges of scores for each group were 0-30, 48-58, 75-82, 90-100, respectively. Therefore, the participants' condition is controlled in terms of their length of residence and Japanese proficiency, although the areas of origin vary from Asia, Europe, to South America as shown in Table 1. All of them were asked to deal with three exposure tasks, as shown in 4.3.

**Table 1.**

*Regions of the participants (with percentages shown in parentheses)*

Level	Regions
J1 (Beginner)	Peru (2), Taiwan (2), China, Fiji
J3 (Pre-intermediate)	China (2), Indonesia, Mexico, Peru, Singapore
J6 (Intermediate)	Korea (3), China, Taiwan, Uzbekistan
J8 (Advanced)	Korea (2), Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan (2), Ukraine

Their academic backgrounds include life and environmental science, systems and information engineering, humanities and social science, and so on. Some were short term exchange students in undergraduate courses, and others non-degree research students and graduate students. They were compensated for their participation.

## 4.2 Instruments

### 4.2.1 Video footage

The video was taken from a conversation between two very close undergraduate students of Japanese who were instructed to talk as they normally would with each other during the recording of the footage. From the video, a section was selected that met the following five conditions: 1) footage with highly audible speech, 2) footage with non-complicated speech, 3) sections containing a well-balanced assortment and number of characteristics including turn-taking, paralanguage, fillers, examples of colloquial vocabulary and phonetic alterations and so forth, 4) a length of about 1-2 minutes, due to the repetitive nature of the exposure tasks and necessity of the participants' maintaining focus.

As the result, a clip of 1 minute 48 seconds, where the interlocutors talk about candy and develop the topic regarding its variety, how they love it, and how they worry about its caloric content.

### 4.2.2 Transcript

A range of speech transcription methods has been developed, each aligned with the specific goals of researchers (Edwards and Lampert, 1993; Jefferson, 2004; BTSJ: Basic Transcription System for Japaneseiv). However, in order to allow participants to focus their attention on the interaction's inherent characteristics rather than the intricacies of the transcript, this study opted for a straightforward approach, adhering to the following principles..

To ensure widespread accessibility, the utterances were transcribed using spreadsheet software. The use of annotations to capture interaction nuances was generally minimized. Regarding orthography, the transcript was presented in standard Japanese, encompassing both kanji and kana. Moreover, a version in Romanized Japanese was prepared specifically for beginners. A sample of the transcript is illustrated in Table 2 for reference.

**Table 2.**

*Transcript samples in kanji-kana and romanised versions*

Kanji and kana version		
1	L	お菓子はね、
2	R	うん。
3	L	はまったらもう、
Romanized version		
1	L	okashi wa ne,
2	R	un.
3	L	hamattara mō

## 4.3 Procedure

### 4.3.1 Exposure tasks

Participants were asked to deal with the three tasks; (1) to just watch the video, (2) to view the transcript (with the video), and (3) to pay attention to specific aspects of the interaction. During the first and second tasks, no additional instructions were given. However, for the third task, participants were specifically directed to sequentially pay attention to five categories of characteristics exhibited by the speakers in the video-recorded interaction:: nonverbal communication (gestures, orientation of bodies), voice (par-alanguage, including intonation and tone, etc.), grammar, vocabulary, and conversational structure (see Sekizaki, 2009). The

establishment of the categories was based on practical limitations (see Sekizaki, 2009). Indeed, in natural conversation, a multitude of factors collaboratively facilitate effective communication. Given the restricted timeframe allocated for the task, it's impractical for participants to discern every single one of these factors. Through the creation of the aforementioned categories and instructing participants to focus on each sequentially, the intent is to enhance participants' capacity to identify not only the overt attributes but also those features that might be less immediately apparent. Directly after completing each task, participants were prompted to articulate their observations regarding the video. Unlike conventional language learning programs, participants were not furnished with explanations concerning elements such as vocabulary and grammar.

#### 4.3.2 *Methods for recording learner noticing*

Learners' noticing was captured using a think-aloud protocol. However, it's acknowledged that the reliability of this protocol can be a concern (Jourdenais, 2001: 372). Nonetheless, no measurement instrument or technique, including retrospective reports, can be assumed to fully align with the content of awareness and noticing (Robinson 2003: 640). Despite this, the collective findings from the studies (see 2.1) are largely congruent with Schmidt's noticing hypothesis and do not contradict it (Robinson, 2003: 640–641). Therefore, the selection of a think-aloud protocol was motivated by its ability to mitigate memory limitations that might arise in other methods.

Furthermore, recognizing that enhanced reliability is often achieved through a combination of techniques (Philip, 2013), participants were also prompted to take notes about their observations when they found it challenging to verbalize all that they had noticed.

#### 4.4 *Classification and coding*

Participants' reports were classified into six categories; topic category in addition to five categories to which the participants were directed to pay attention. A sixth category was added due to the fact that participants were frequently found to have reported noticing concerning the topics of the conversation. The classification was conducted following operational definitions of each category, as participants' reports didn't necessarily fit the categories to which the researcher asked them to pay attention (i.e., they reported specific words when asked to pay attention to the vocal quality). An example of the classification procedure is provided using a report about use of an expression, *Oishi yo ne* 'it's delicious, isn't it'. This was classified as "4) vocabulary and expressions" as a chunk, whereas noticing as to specific elements such as the final particle *ne* in the same expression was classified into "3) grammar". When more than 2 comments are contained in a noticing as seen in "It's hard to understand the meaning of some word and the way they connect or end sentences," each comment was classified into the appropriate categories respectively. Examples of noticing such as "There are a lot of hand gestures, for example..." are not counted. Therefore, the participants' thick reporting, obtained through a Think-aloud protocol, is reflected in the results of the coding.

Each noticing was coded as to whether it was accompanied by understanding or not. Since more understanding leads more linguistic gains as reviewed above, it is essential to know the aspects of natural conversations which are difficult to understand and for which careful explanation should be provided. For coding understanding, the description by Schmidt (1995, pp. 29-30) is referred to, which suggests understanding implies recognition of a general principle, rule or pattern. In the present study, the noticing, which refers to meaning, rule, or language attributes about vocabulary, grammar and voice of the interaction, was coded as understanding. For instance, when a participant reported the chunk *Oishi yo ne* 'it's delicious, isn't it' without any other comment, it was coded as noticing, whereas the same comment accompanied by a function of the particle for confirmation, would be coded as understanding. When the reports as to non-verbal communication, conversational structure and role of the participants, along with topic of the conversation, contained the aim, goal, function, or relation with pragmatic aspects, they were coded as understanding.

Comments such as Hai, hai, hai 'um, um, um' were coded as noticing, whereas a report as to the function of these elements to show agreement was coded as understanding. Since the results contain small numbers of noticing (less than 5), no statistical method, such as Chi square, was conducted.

## 5 Results

The results with respect to RQ 1, namely, "Which method among the three, namely 1) simply showing the video, 2) providing transcripts to the participants, and 3) directing them to pay attention to specific aspect of the interaction, invokes noticing the most?" along with RQ 2, "Do aspects of interaction which participants notice differ depend on the exhibiting method?" are shown in Table 3. The following abbreviations are used in the tables: NV: non-verbal communication, Voi: voice, Gra: grammar, Voc: vocabulary and expressions, CS: conversational structure and role of the speaker, Top: topic. In table 3, percentages in categories are calculated against total of each method.

**Table 3.**

*The amount of noticing for each task (with percentages shown in parentheses)*

	N-V	Voi	Gra	Voc	CS	Top	total
<b>Video</b>	26 (12.6)	8 (3.9)	8 (3.9)	99 (48.1)	14 (6.8)	51 (24.8)	206
<b>Transcript</b>	6 (2.1)	23 (7.9)	58 (19.9)	164 (56.2)	12 (4.1)	29 (9.9)	292
<b>Attention</b>	142 (20.5)	100 (14.4)	113 (16.3)	163 (23.5)	147 (21.2)	29 (4.2)	694

Table 3 shows that directing participants to pay attention is most facilitative for noticing, and to view a transcript while watching is more effective than to just watch the video.

When asked to just watch the video, participants noticed vocabulary the most (approximately 50 percent of the total), and the topic of the conversation is second (24.8%). These results correspond to a statement that default mode for L2 learners is processing for meaning (Doughty, 2001, p. 214), in that the participants oriented to comprehending what was communicated in the interaction. Hence, when a word appeared repeatedly, it seemed to be meaningful to participants and attracted their attention (note that "frequency" is listed as a factor of noticing by Schmidt, 1990). A specific example of which is *Tabe*, stem of a verb "to eat". It was also observed that the participants tried to correlate what they heard with what they already have in their mental lexicon. For instance, when beginners were exposed to the unknown word *Sensenshu* 'the week before last', they reported words such as *Sensei* 'teacher', to which they were introduced from the beginning stages and which would have appeared frequently in the input they received. Another possible reason that the participants noticed more about vocabulary than grammar is that short phrases are easier for participants to report, since they don't impose a burden on participants to logically connect elements in a sentence, and thus consume less cognitive resources than reporting on grammar.

When provided with the transcript, participants predominantly identified vocabulary as the most noticeable aspect. This observation aligns with the participants' tendency to focus on comprehending the video's content. When confronted with unfamiliar terms in the video, participants endeavored to locate corresponding words within the transcript. Additionally, it was noted that participants often simply read the words in the transcript without necessarily grasping their meanings (this aspect might influence the outcomes presented in table 4, which pertains to the subsequent research question). Consequently, the process of noticing vocabulary with the transcript encompasses elements that participants had already discerned by solely watching the video, as well as novel insights. It's noteworthy that participants had the liberty to read the transcript at their preferred pace and meticulously scrutinize even minute components like particles. This contributed to an increased frequency of reported instances where participants noticed aspects related to

grammar and voice quality. Numerous participants reported their observations of final particles like "ne," "sa," and "mon" which appear at the end of sentences and convey the speakers' emotions, including empathy, emphasis, and so on. For the same reason, phonetic features such as geminate consonants and vowels, which are phonologically relevant in Japanese, were easier to capture with transcript than audio only since their sounds are short and unfamiliar to many learners of Japanese. On the other hand, it is quite natural that the participants rarely noticed non-verbal communication, since those features were not transcribed. Additionally, little about topic or conversational structure and role of the speaker was reported, although the researcher prepared the transcript in a manner so as to make those features observable, as stated in 4.2.2.

When paying attention, participants notice features across categories with approximate percentages of 14.4 to 23.5, except topic, as the topic category was added post hoc and the participants didn't receive any directions about paying attention to it. It is remarkable that, unlike the other two methods, features which were classifiable as non-verbal communication, along with conversational structure and role of speaker were also frequently noticed.

The results regarding RQ3 ("Does the amount of noticing differ depending on the proficiency of the participants?") are shown in table 4. In table 4, a subtotal of each level is added, and percentages in categories are calculated against the subtotals, and that of subtotal against the total in each method.

**Table 4.**

*The number of noticing in each level for each task (with percentages shown in parentheses)*

Exposure task	Level	N-V	Voi	Gra	Voc	CS	Top	Sub-total	Total		
<b>Video</b>	J1	5 (8.2)	2 (3.3)	2 (3.3)	38 (62.3)	3 (4.9)	11 (18.0)	61 (29.6)	206 (100.0)		
	J3	17 (42.5)	2 (5.0)	2 (5.0)	12 (30.0)	2 (5.0)	5 (12.5)	40 (19.42)			
	J6	0 (0.0)	1 (2.0)	1 (2.0)	28 (54.9)	6 (11.8)	15 (29.4)	51 (24.8)			
	J8	4 (7.4)	3 (5.6)	3 (5.6)	21 (38.9)	3 (5.6)	20 (37.0)	54 (26.2)			
	<b>Transcript</b>	J1	2 (3.1)	6 (9.4)	13 (20.3)	40 (62.5)	0 (0.0)	3 (4.7)		64 (21.9)	292 (100.0)
		J3	3 (3.4)	4 (4.6)	17 (19.5)	47 (54.0)	6 (6.9)	10 (11.5)		87 (29.8)	
		J6	1 (1.5)	6 (9.2)	17 (26.2)	38 (58.5)	3 (4.6)	0 (0.0)		65 (22.3)	
		J8	0 (0.0)	7 (9.2)	11 (14.5)	39 (51.3)	3 (3.9)	16 (21.1)		76 (26.0)	
<b>Attention</b>	J1	35 (24.3)	20 (13.9)	20 (13.9)	17 (11.8)	48 (33.3)	4 (2.8)	144 (20.7)	694 (100.0)		
	J3	40 (18.3)	28 (12.8)	35 (16.0)	65 (29.7)	38 (17.4)	13 (5.9)	219 (31.6)			
	J6	32 (16.7)	22 (11.5)	35 (18.2)	54 (28.1)	42 (21.9)	7 (3.6)	192 (27.7)			
	J8	35 (25.2)	30 (21.6)	23 (16.5)	27 (19.4)	19 (13.7)	5 (3.6)	139 (20.0)			

First, table 4 shows that the as a result of just having watched the video, the vocabulary and topics are frequently reported whereas vocal qualities, grammar, conversational structure and role of the speaker are rarely noticed regardless of the level, except J3. In particular, participants at higher proficiency levels have a stronger tendency to notice topics, and then vocabulary. As an exception,



J3 level participants noticed non-verbal communication the most; 2 participants reported 7 and 9 noticings, respectively, in regard to non-verbal communication.

With regard to video plus transcript, table 4 shows that participants noticed vocabulary the most, and then grammar, along with a few noticings in regard to conversational structure and role of the speaker (see also table 3). These tendencies can be observed regardless of the level. A reason that even participants of the lowest proficiency levels noticed to almost the same amount as the participants of other levels is that half of them were from regions where Chinese characters are used, and thus would have been able to comprehend to some degree what was written in the transcript.

Lastly, concerning directing participants to pay attention, table 4 shows that noticing by J3 and J6 level participants was comparatively more than that of J1 participants, and that J8 participants had the fewest instances. Aspects of the interaction to which the participants notice differ depends on their level. For instance, J1 level participants notice non-verbal communication the most, and then conversational structure and role of the speaker, both of which don't require much linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, J3 and J6 participants noticed vocabulary the most, and then non-verbal communication (J3 participants), and conversational structure and role of the speaker (J6 participants). One remarkable result of the J8 participants is that they, unlike participants of the other levels, noticed non-structural elements, such as non-verbal communication and the vocal quality of the speakers.

Finally, the results concerning RQ4 ("To what degree do the participants understand about what they notice?") are shown in table 5. In table 5, the amount of understanding in each category is shown, and the percentages are calculated against noticing in table 4.

**Table 5.**

*Ratio of understanding against noticing in each level for each task (with percentages shown in parentheses)*

Exposure task	Level	N-V	Voi	Gra	Voc	CS	Top	Sub-total	Total
Video	J1	1 (20.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (50.0)	18 (47.4)	2 (66.7)	0 (0.0)	22 (36.1)	87 (42.2)
	J3	5 (29.4)	1 (50.0)	2 (100.0)	8 (66.7)	2 (100.0)	0 (0.0)	18 (45.0)	
	J6	0 (0.0)	1 (100.0)	1 (100.0)	8 (28.6)	5 (83.3)	4 (26.7)	19 (37.3)	
	J8	2 (50.0)	3 (100.0)	3 (100.0)	12 (57.1)	3 (100.0)	5 (25.0)	28 (51.9)	
	Transcript	J1	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	13 (100.0)	20 (50.0)	0 (0.0)!	1 (33.3)	34 (53.1)
J3	3 (100.0)	1 (25.0)	12 (70.6)	19 (40.4)	4 (66.7)	2 (20.0)	41 (47.1)		
J6	0 (0.0)	3 (50.0)	8 (47.1)	18 (47.4)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	29 (44.6)		
J8	0 (0.0)	5 (71.4)	11 (100.0)	25 (64.1)	2 (66.7)	6 (37.5)	49 (64.5)		
Attention	J1	20 (57.1)	14 (70.0)	16 (80.0)	7 (41.2)	3 (6.3)	1 (25.0)	61 (42.4)	350 (50.4)
	J3	20 (50.0)	15 (53.6)	23 (65.7)	25 (38.5)	9 (23.7)	1 (7.7)	93 (42.5)	
	J6	18 (56.3)	13 (59.1)	19 (54.3)	29 (53.7)	10 (23.8)	2 (28.6)	91 (47.4)	
	J8	25 (71.4)	24 (80.0)	22 (95.7)	18 (66.7)	12 (63.2)	4 (80.0)	105 (75.5)	

Table 5 shows that, among the three methods, video plus transcript invokes noticing with highest ratio of understanding. On the contrary, the lowest ratio of the understanding resulted from just watching the video.

Regarding the ratio of understanding in each level resulting from just watching video, it is quite natural that that by the J8 level exhibited the highest degree of noticing among the four levels, considering that they have rich knowledge of meaning, rules, or function of linguistic elements compared to the other levels. Based on this assumption, it is also reasonable that the ratio of understanding by J1 participants would be the lowest. For J1, J6, and J8 level participants, vocabulary was the most noticeable (see table 4), but less than 60% of instances were accompanied by understanding. It was observed that participants tended to say a word aloud when they heard it repeatedly, without referring to the meaning or language attributes. For J3 participants, the ratio of understanding of non-verbal communication, which was most noticed among the other categories (see table 4), was less than 30. This suggests that they didn't report much about the function. The ratio of understanding as to vocabulary by J3 participants was higher compared to the other levels, although it is also observable that approximately one third of the noticing was at the surface level.

Video plus transcript was facilitative for understanding, especially in regard to grammar (except J6). Contrary to this result, the participants didn't succeed in reporting the meaning of vocabulary. The reasons for J1 participants are, as has been stated above, that they just read what was written on the transcript without referring to the meaning. In addition, they read what they have learned and reported the wrong meaning, partly as a result of their limited experience with learning and being exposed to Japanese. For instance, one of them read *Ikura* 'how much', and reported its meaning as being "when". On the other hand, J3 and above participants succeeded in finding words on the transcript, which was correlated to what they heard in the video, without understanding their meanings. What enables them to do so is their comparatively high proficiency, which seems to have been enough to capture the sound of unknown words. For instance, they reported the sound *Ando*, which is a part of the word *Andonatsu*<sup>v</sup>, but failed to understand the meaning even with the transcript, since the morpheme *An* is unfamiliar to most of them. Additionally, even though they were successful in finding interactive expressions, including *Hai, Hai, Hai* 'um, um, um', on the transcript, they didn't report anything regarding the meanings or functions. The lower ratio of understanding grammar by J3 and J6 participants should also be noted here. As opposed to J1 participants, who reported basic grammatical elements which they already knew, J3 and J6 participants sometimes unsuccessfully tried to guess the function or meaning of grammatical elements, based on their knowledge. Some of them found expressions which they had heard outside of the classroom, and tried to connect them to what was written on transcript, not knowing that both expressions have different functions. However, this fact implies that participants at the intermediate level have an adequate ability to control basic level Japanese, and because of this, can spend more attentional resources to capture unknown expressions. Based on this assumption, it seems that advanced participants can spend more resources for understanding.

The ratio of understanding by J8 participants was the highest among the four levels with regard to paying attention, especially in the sub-totals. Compared to the other 2 methods, the ratios of J6 and J8 participants were higher, whereas that of J1 and J3 were lower. A possible reason for this is that when paying attention, learners with comparatively low proficiency notice more than they understand. With respect to each classification, little understanding accompanied noticing by J1 participants in regard to conversational structure and role of the speaker, which was the most noticeable aspect for them (also see table 4). Moreover, the ratio of understanding of non-verbal communication was only slightly higher than 50 percent. Hence, J1 participants can be said to notice only the surface phenomena of these aspects in most cases. As opposed to this, they can be said to understand comparatively well the aim or function of vocal quality and grammar, since the ratio of understanding was higher than 70 percent on these items. As for the J3 level, the ratios of understanding concerning vocabulary and non-verbal communication were not over 50 percent. In contrast, they understood more about the function of grammar. The ratio of understanding by J6 participants was less than 60 percent throughout the categories, including vocabulary, conversational structure and role

of the speaker. In contrast, features which were noticeable by J8 participants were accompanied by a higher ratio of understanding. In addition, they understood well about the rules or functions of grammar, the meanings of vocabulary, and also the topics. Lastly, from the perspective of the categories, ratios of understanding of conversational structure were lower regardless of participants' proficiency. One reason may be that these aspects are rarely taught in the Japanese classroom. Additionally, their aims or function may have been difficult to fully understand because of cultural sensitivity, even by advanced learners.

## 6. Discussion

Among the three methods, just showing the video to participants resulted in the least noticing, which was accompanied by lowest ratio of understanding. Hence, this suggests that just showing video to learners is not effective for promoting learners' noticing and understanding compared to other methods. Nonetheless, it was also found that participants oriented to interpreting what was exchanged in the interaction with just watching the video, based on the result that participants frequently noticed vocabulary along with the topic of the conversation, regardless of their proficiency (except J3). This result is quite natural, given that the default mode for processing language for L2 learners is processing for meaning (Doughty, 2001). Accordingly, just showing the video is a method readily available to provide opportunities for knowing topics in ordinary interaction. This may be beneficial, considering that there are risky or culturally sensitive topics (Brown and Levinson, 1987). On the other hand, the lower ratio of understanding, especially in regard to vocabulary and non-verbal communication, implies a necessity for supportive explanations by instructors.

Video plus transcript turned out to be the second most facilitative method for noticing, and its ratio of understanding was highest among the three methods. Although the effect of transcripts on pragmatic awareness about aspects of natural conversation have remained obscure (House, 1996; Alcón, 2005; Cheng, 2016), the current study revealed that transcripts may have a facilitative effect on noticing, especially on vocabulary and grammar items in natural conversation, regardless of participants' proficiency. This seems to be the result of the fact that participants used the transcript to confirm what they had captured when viewing the video. Hence, the transcript can be used to let learners confirm the meaning of words and functions of grammar, as is usually done in listening classes. However, because of the nature of transcript (i.e., that participants can observe the interaction in detail at their own pace), they noticed more than they understood. Based on this result, supports for interpretation, especially the meaning of vocabulary and function of vocal qualities are indicated to be necessary. In addition, considering the fact that some learners at intermediate or upper levels remembered some expressions to which they have been exposed outside of the classroom when they see specific expressions on transcript, and then tried unsuccessfully to connect the expressions, pedagogical supports for ameliorating such problems should be provided.

It is quite natural that directing participants to pay attention was seen to be the most facilitative for noticing, since noticing is inevitably concerned with attention (Schmidt, 2001; Skehan, 1998; Robinson, 1995). At the same time, aspects of interaction which participants notice have been shown to differ depending on their level of proficiency. On the other hand, based on the result that the ratio of understanding is not high (except J8), pedagogical supports for learners are required. For instance, beginners should be given explanations as to pragmatic aspects of conversational structure and the roles of speakers, and functions of non-verbal communication, since the ratio of understanding was not high. Supportive explanation regarding non-verbal communication and vocabulary should be given even to advanced beginners. In addition, the meaning of vocabulary, pragmatic aspects of conversational structure and the roles of speakers in natural conversation should be explained for intermediate participants. Especially concerning vocabulary, desirable explanations for intermediate level learners will connect expressions in the video with those to which the learners have been exposed to outside of the class. Moreover, in spite of the fact that advanced participants noticed aspects of interaction with a higher ratio of understanding, the ratio was lower on non-verbal communication and vocabulary. This result indicates that it is not always

the case that they can correctly guess about those aspects, and that they may require pedagogical supports.

The present study highlights the potential of utilizing natural conversation as a resource in language education. The methods employed here are also anticipated to be applicable in Japanese as a Foreign Language (JFL) contexts, given that most participants in this study had a residence duration of less than one year—a circumstance resembling a JFL setting (Bella, 2012; Schauer, 2006; Taguchi, 2011; Xu et al., 2012). Within the framework of second language acquisition, particularly in the context of noticing, interaction (such as negotiation and recasts) directs a learner's attention towards specific aspects of language, particularly discrepancies between target language forms and interlanguage forms (Gass & Selinker, 2008, p. 355). Nonetheless, the outcomes of this study revealed that learners, when specifically instructed, exhibited a certain degree of attention and were able to identify features of interaction without direct participation. Given the limited opportunities for learners in JFL contexts to engage with native speakers, it becomes crucial to explore alternative methods that can effectively stimulate noticing about natural conversation.

## 7. Conclusion

In the present study, three methods for exposing learners to natural conversation are compared from the perspective of invoking noticing and understanding. As a result, directing participants to pay attention turned out to be the most effective method for invoking noticing in regard to various aspects of natural conversation, whereas viewing a transcript was shown to be most facilitative for their understanding. At the same time, it must be emphasized that pedagogical supports to promote learners' understanding are necessary.

The limitations of the present study are summarized as follows: (1) there were no ways for the researcher to confirm whether or not participants noticed more than they reported through the think-aloud protocol, (2) reactions to the video by learners with different attributes were not considered. This should be investigated as well. For instance, (under)graduate learners with different backgrounds from may report their noticing along different tendencies. Moreover, investigations with same design should be made under a JFL context in order to examine the effect of exposure to natural conversation on noticing. Since the present study only investigated method of exposing participants to natural conversation, additional studies should be attempted concerning effective pedagogical methods for supporting learners' intake, integration, and output, which learners have to face throughout the course of their acquisition the language.

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### End-notes

- i. The jury is out on whether language learning requires awareness (Hama & Leow, 2010; Williams, 2005).
  - ii This test was originally developed by the University of Tsukuba, and an identical test can be taken for free online (TTBJ: Tsukuba Test Battery of Japanese, <https://ttbj.cegloc.tsukuba.ac.jp/index.html>).
  - iii. SPOT is reported to have higher reliability than 0.95 (Kobayashi 2016).
  - iv. [https://ninjal-usamilab.info/lab/about\\_btsj/background/](https://ninjal-usamilab.info/lab/about_btsj/background/)
  - v. An means sweet bean paste, and Andonatsu means a donut with sweet bean paste inside.
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