

**Selective attention to contextual information in Japan:
An examination in both visual and auditory modality**

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Abstract

To examine whether the selective attention to context in Japan could be validated, two cognitive tasks were conducted for a group of Japanese in a larger age range (18–78 yrs). To begin with, they listened to a series of emotional utterances and judged the pleasantness of either verbal meaning or vocal tone for each utterance. Next, they were presented with a square in which a line was printed, and then shown another square frame and asked to draw a line that was identical to the first line in terms of either absolute length (absolute task) or proportion to the height of the pertinent square (relative task). The results showed that not only young, but also older subjects showed a strong interference effect by vocal tone in the verbal meaning judgment and a greater mean error score in the absolute task. Moreover, the amount of the interference and the mean error score was significantly correlated, suggesting that both tasks draw on a common capacity of attending to context. Implications for culture-and cognition research are discussed.

Key words: attention, context, aging, and Japanese