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Realities of Tertiary-Level English Study in Japan: To What Extent Are Students Time-Constrained While Studying At University?

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Every L2 learning situation is unique, though there are a combination of factors that affect each context. 'Unmodifiable' factors - such as culture, institution, and home-situation - are all considered to construct an environment in which L2 learners and their 'modifiable' attributes are situated. This paper seeks to conduct a small-scale experimental investigation into the 'environmental' factors affecting a specific tertiary-level Japanese L2 learners' situation. A brief literature review will seek to illuminate issues for examination. Following this, a questionnaire will be constructed to examine these aspects. The results suggest that, in this specific tertiary-level L2 study context, a relatively large number of students possess little free time in which to study for their classes. In examining data concerning these 'environmental' factors, this paper seeks to provide insight into the Japanese tertiary-level EFL context.

Introduction:

Studying a foreign language, a lengthy and difficult task, is influenced by many factors, such as the features of the student's native tongue (L1) and their target language (L2), their motivation and their learning strategies. While factors concerning motivation, purpose, study strategies, identity and so forth are no doubt important, it would not be unreasonable to assume that situational factors may also affect L2 acquisition.

Indeed, particularly in Japan, EFL teachers frequently investigate the situations in which they teach. Tertiary-level learning at university is seen worldwide as the culmination of academic achievement and motivation, where

language students can truly engage with their chosen L2. However, regarding the Japanese context, many EFL commentators note a disparity between the belief in the requirement of English and the relative lack in English proficiency. In a previous study, McVeigh commented that Japan seemingly has a 'love-hate relationship with English' (2004). Stapleton suggests that the education system itself desperately needs a change of direction (Stapleton, 2011). Warrington focuses on the socialisation factors which put priority on non-academic pursuits (Warrington, 2006). Others examine the national, macro-environment (Cozy, 2010; Kamada, 2011; Seargeant, 2009). All, however, seek to understand the micro- and macro-situations in which L2 study takes place in Japan.

This paper, too, seeks to understand some of the factors affecting students' learning in a specific tertiary-level situation. After conducting a brief review of the current literature regarding learner factors, I undertake a short study in attempt to further understand the background in which Japanese university students study.

Learning Situation Theory:

Previous studies have highlighted several learner variables which may affect learners' English achievement. Larsen-Freeman & Long point initially to factors ranging from age, aptitude, attitude and motivation to identity, cognitive style and learning strategies (1991). These mainly concern the individual learner, though others such as Carroll (1963), Biggs (1987), Wang (1993) and Lamb (2004), examine policy, society, home situation, learner autonomy and effort. In the case of Japan, Seargeant discusses social-cultural factors (2009), while Warrington highlights institutional factors (2006).

The extent to which these factors affect English achievement is the subject of much ongoing research; how these factors interact, on the other hand, is not quite so clear-cut. In order to highlight a processes-flow concerning these factors, Wen & Keith (1997: 29) used the following model (Fig. 1):

<u>Non-Learner Factors</u>		<u>Learner Factors</u>		<u>Outcomes</u>
<i>Environmental</i>	<i>Institutional</i>	<i>Unmodifiable</i>	<i>Modifiable</i>	<i>English achievement</i>
social	resources	intelligence	purpose	
economic	teaching aptitude		beliefs / identity	
cultural	assessment	sex	effort / motivation	
linguistic		age	management strategies	
contexts		prior learning	learning strategies	
home situation				

Pressage → Process → Product

Figure 1: Wen & Keith's model of factors affecting English achievement

This model draws together a wide range of learning variables and places them within Biggs' Pressage, Process, Product (PPP) framework (1987: 103). As Wen & Keith state, while "both non-learner and learner factors influence learning outcomes, non-learner factors do so *through* learner factors" (1997: 30). From the 'situational pressures' of a context, factors can evidence an increasing degree of influence as the process progresses and factors compound (Biggs, 1987: 105).

Thus, regarding the language development of learners, researchers and teachers are faced with the need to first know about the learning context, and then to determine if this context exerts influence upon their learners. These concerns can be encapsulated into two simple research questions:

1. *What are the day-to-day activities engaged in by Japanese university-level English students?*
2. *To what degree might these activities affect their language achievement?*

Although a small-scale study cannot hope to answer these questions completely while covering the whole range of environmental factors, it is hoped that this paper might focus on providing a glimpse into the day-to-day, time-centered background. First, a brief literature review will be conducted, streamlining issues from previous research. Additionally, the factors concerning learning situations will be discussed.

Second, based on these factors a questionnaire will be constructed in order to test the research questions. This will be administered to the students in a controlled fashion.

Third, the data gathered will be presented. Trends and figures will be discussed to answer, as best as possible, the two research questions, and speculation will be given as to how these results might affect learners' L2 acquisition.

Finally, by drawing these results and factors together, I hope to provide a snapshot of a particular learning situation. While of course unique, there may be factors which could exist in other contexts. In doing so, I hope to provide examples for future enquiry, specifically how further investigations of learning situations could provide a more comprehensive look at the realities of Japanese EFL, and how this information could practically inform teachers.

Learning Situation:

In this section, I will briefly describe the institution which is the location of the learning situation under investigation in this study. Student names will of course not be mentioned in this study, thus naming the institution should not breach ethical conduct.

The learning situation under focus is that of the English-major students attending courses at Kwansei Gakuin University (KGU), one of roughly 745 Higher Education (HE) institutions in Japan (CEJ, 2008). KGU is located in Nishinomiya, midway between Osaka and Kobe, about a 15-minute walk from a branch-line railway station, itself a 5-minute ride from the main-line. Roughly 20,000 undergraduate students attend this private university, and it is one of the "Kansai Big 6", the six largest universities in the central-Japan region (Wikipedia, 2014).

The participants in this study were students enrolled in a range of the 1st-2nd year elective Language Center English courses, in which students can choose to study several of their required English-study credits.

Literature Review – Factors For Consideration:

Socio-cultural Factors -

Japan is considered to have many unique social-environmental factors that may affect second language acquisition. According to Japan's own researchers, a major influence negatively affecting the potential for language acquisition by

contemporary Japanese students remains the 鎖国 / *sakoku* / *closed-country* isolationist period between 1633 and 1853 (Ike, 1995) (Ito, 1998). Seargeant states that this renders the issues far too simply (2009: 54); others, while agreeing, focus on other influences (Kamada, 2011) (Daulton, 2011) (Lees, 2013).

Recently, Kamada and Daulton have highlighted treatment of items, acts and persons considered to be ‘not Japanese’. In examining the use of loan-words, termed “外来語 / *gairaigo* / *language-come-from-outside*”, Daulton shows that while these loan-words are prevalent in Japanese society owing to high grammatical flexibility and the degree to which the foreign concepts are necessary, the words are marked by a phonetic script used primarily to differentiate them from native words (Daulton, 2011: 8).

In a similar way, Kamada’s study highlights a persistent practice of ‘marking’ acts and people within society as being ‘not Japanese’. Aleles reminds us that Japan is a predominately-monolingual, homogenous society (2009: 24), with a thus highly conspicuous foreign minority. Kamada’s investigation features several different methods, examining this “*gaijinization*” – or “outsider-making” – process in use. Concerning appearance, when shown 6 photographs (4 of naturalised or mixed-heritage Japanese nationals, 1 of native Japanese with bleached-blond hair and 1 of an American with a Japanese grandmother), non-Japanese respondents all correctly identified the people in line with their nationality, whilst Japanese respondents failed to do so, identifying 3 “half” celebrities and 1 naturalised athlete as being “non-Japanese” (Kamada, 2011: 11). Based on this visual assessment of who is “Japanese” and who is “outside/other”, “half” Japanese are often “marked” by the majority native-Japanese as being “English-knowing”, thus “different”; Kamada further notes that mixed-heritage Japanese who participated in her investigation reported frequently being asked how to say certain English phrases, or being spoken to in broken English at supermarket registers or other public locations (2011: 10). This “outsideness/otherness” based on looks, language and nationality, prevalent in the Japanese social context today, adds weight to the analyses of Ito (1998), as well as suggesting that in spite of a perceived move from such stark stereotyping (Seargeant, 2009: 54), the social-identification of “unmarked/Japanese” language acts and behaviours and those “marked/foreign” is strong in contemporary Japan (Kamada, 2011: 13). This practice, according to De Mente, almost always goes unrecognised as discriminatory (De Mente, 2003).

While it may yet be the case that such social influences exist within the

Japanese EFL context, they no doubt remain ethereal and somewhat difficult to examine. For the moment, then, we will move on to discuss other 'environmental' factors which might affect our learning situation.

Institutional Factors:

Institutional factors cover the influences which relate to education. As with social issues, Japan has several unique factors shaping its educational context. Studies point to a range of factors which are commonly discussed (Lees, 2013); institutional direction (Aspinal, 2006: 255; Barry, 2004: 59; Honna, 1995: 57; K. B. Kikuchi, Charles, 2009:172; K. S. Kikuchi, Hideki, 2009: 198; Stapleton, 2011: 37; Stewart, 2009: 9), assessment (Barry, 2004; Berwick, 1989; Clark, 2009; Gunning, 2009), socialisation (Clark, 2009; Gunning, 2009; Warrington, 2006) and differences between Western and Japanese universities (Cummings, 1986; Warrington, 2006).

First, regarding institutional direction, many point out that the Ministry of Education's policies (MEXT) are rarely utilised or enforced; Browne (1998) notes that “avoidance was the overwhelming reaction” to the Oral Communication courses of 1989. Stewart (2009: 10) cites Yoshida (2009), who states “nobody adopted the 2003 curriculum”. Sato, while somewhat outspoken, insists that CLT and Task-Based Learning (TBL) are not suitable for the Japanese EFL context (2009: 13). Indeed, Kikuchi & Sakai comment that “the reality seems to be that most lesson still focus on explicit grammar instruction and preparation for SHS and University entrance exams” (K. S. Kikuchi, Hideki, 2009: 198). Clark, in complaining that “the bureaucrats plan to solve this problem by giving us more of what caused the problem” (2009), is echoed by Gunning (2009) and Miura (2010: 10).

Second, and linked to the previous issue, the Japanese education system is based on fact-retention, tested through frequent and high-stakes exams (Browne, 1998) (Yoshida, 2009) (Tahira, 2012: 4). While this system supports the current entrance-exam system for Junior- and Senior High Schools as well as Universities, many commentators are quick to critique it. Extensive studies of learners' motivation to study English conducted by Berwick & Ross (1989), Irie (2005) and Miura (2010) all demonstrate similar results; that motivation declines through the course of study, spikes prior to the exams, and falls dramatically afterwards. This continual academic-social exam pressure distorts English into a “test” instead of a “language” (Barry, 2004: 54) (Aleles, 2009: 25), which, as well as being

de-motivating (Miura, 2010: 32), does not appear to be facilitate L2 acquisition (Berwick, 1989: 208).

Third is the issue of what "University" actually entails in Japan. Many researchers believe that there is a difference between the Western and Japanese 'idea' of university (Barry, 2004: 49; Clark, 2009; Gunning, 2009: 17). Warrington notes that students possess a "unique perception... of what university is for" (Warrington, 2006: 2). McVeigh suggests that the current system "encourages apathy towards learning" (2001: 31), and Mack-Cozzo even suggests that "once students gain admission to university, virtually all learning and study seem to cease" (2002). While this is perhaps a little overreaching, attitudes towards university study do seem to be at odds with other nations' perceptions. Ward comments that students' "...participation consists only of showing up for class, signing the attendance sheet, and listening until they doze off" (2003). Perhaps due to policies excusing absence for social obligations and sports matches, Cummings suggests that university students mainly use their time to have fun, make friends and participate in club activities (1986).

Finally, intertwined with the previous points, social obligations constitute an important part university life. Commentators state that university in Japan acts as a "socialisation training" school for students to become a 社会人 / *shakaijin* / *member of society*. The club activities, compulsory through Junior- and Senior high school, remain a central part of a Japanese university student. Sugahara notes that these サークル / *saakuru* / *circles* are increasingly common among younger Japanese (2005: 27). Forming such groups, and exploring the social boundaries of it and learning to function as is expected within it all require a lot of time and effort (Warrington, 2006: 5). Club activities are viewed as an integral part of university, and, as Warrington suggests, "the more that a student takes part in a club, circle or social event, the more that person is seen as 'prepared', 'trained' and 'bettered' socially for transition to the working world" (2006: 10).

While institutional direction remains outside our testable purview, and the effect of education system's test-based approach upon students' motivation to study is a valid line of inquiry, these both remain outside the scope of a small scale investigation. What "university study" means to Japanese EFL students, as well as the amount of time they devote to their studies, club activities and other social obligations, however, holds potential for examination.

Factors For Analysis:

In the previous two sections, I provided a brief overview of the salient environmental factors considered to exist within the Japanese social and institutional contexts. Though several of these factors cannot be easily assessed, the institutional factors, and in particular the amount of non-academic activities, should fall within our testable range. Indeed, as Warrington discussed, mainly the prevalence of other social "obligations" over studies, might prove suitable. Dedication to a club is expected, to the degree that foreign students complain about amount of time required to 'sustain' membership of the club (Warrington, 2006: 6). Such devotion could be supposed to have an effect on the overall attainment of university students, if just for the time and effort necessary. Additional to this, we might do well to investigate the amount of time university students have available in their weekly routine. In doing so, we should also take into account commutation time, as well as part-time employment.

Questionnaire Construction:

A questionnaire seeking the amount of time spent on a given set of activities over a typical week was constructed, with each day divided into 30-minute segments. Four categories were chosen, and care was taken to select a manageable number of pertinent, recognisable activities:

1. *Lessons* - The amount of time spent on lessons was held as an important unit of time for consideration.
2. *Commute* - The amount of time spent commuting to university is an important factor. While some may constructively utilise this time, most view lengthy commutes as boring, disconnecting, and detrimental to health (Ninh, 2011).
3. *Part-time Job* - Many students have part-time jobs to pay for their club-activities, social obligations, recreational and circle-activities.
4. *Club Activities* - Club activities at university are held to take up a large amount of time and effort (Warrington, 2006: 6); thus, this requires investigation.

These activities are believed to be at the core of those which make up the

typical Japanese university student's day-to-day routine. By using only these four selected activities, students will be protected from divulging more private information, such as time spent with friends, partners, families and so forth. The time not covered by these activities will be labelled under "Free Time", in which the remaining day-to-day human activities, such as "sleep", "eating" or "homework", are assumed to be undertaken.

Method:

The questionnaire, in the form of a 24-hour, 7-day grid separated into 30-minute sections, was administered to 112 students studying English in courses offered by the KGU Language Center. Students were directed to fill in the schedule grid using the categories outlined above after a visual and aural demonstration of how to complete it. 2 students who fell asleep during the surveys were permitted to take it home and hand it in when they were able, which they both did the next lesson.

After the questionnaires were all completed and collected, data was compiled first into separate report tables, then into totals, percentages and averages. The results are shown and discussed in the following sections.

Results & Discussion:

From the 112 students surveyed, the following results were collected and collated:

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total Hours of Activity	Average Hours of Activity	% of Available Hours in Week
Commute	281	274	274	275	282	68	43	1497	13.37	7.96%
School	498	522	449	545	513	0	0	2526	22.55	13.42%
Part-time	143	122	152	102	186	406	316	1426	12.73	7.58%
Club	59.5	71.5	85.5	62	87	123	81	569.5	5.08	3.03%
Free	1707	1699	1728	1705	1620	2091	2249	12797.5	114.26	68.01%

Figure 2: Totals and Overall Averages for Selected Activities

In addition to this initial data-set, a series was calculated to adjust for an 8-hour sleep period, as recommended by the National Sleep Foundation of the USA (NSF, 2011). The adjusted data set is shown below:

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Sun	Total Hours of Activity	Average Hours of Activity	% of Available Hours in Week
Commute	281	274	274	275	282	68	43	1497	13.37	11.93%
Lessons	498	522	448.5	545	513	0	0	2526	22.55	20.14%
Part-time	143	122	152	102	186	406	315.5	1426	12.73	11.37%
Club	59.5	71.5	85.5	62	87	123	81	569.5	5.08	4.54%
Free	810.5	803	832	809	724	1195	1353	6525.5	58.26	52.02%

Figure 3: Totals and Overall Averages for Selected Activities, Adjusted for 8 hours sleep per day

The data shown above provides some interesting information. As you can see, in both the raw data and the sleep-adjusted set, “Free Time” accounts for the bulk of the available hours in the week. The next-largest time requirement is clearly “Lessons”, or time spent at school. “Part-time jobs” appear to be slightly more time consuming than the school “Commute”, with the least amount of time spent on “Club Activities”. While the sleep-adjusted data does appear to provide a more realistic image, this is clearly the trend, suggesting that Warrington’s statements on club activities might perhaps be somewhat exaggerated. On the surface and on average, then, it would appear that Japanese tertiary-level students do not appear overly time-constrained during their four years at university. However, as stated, these are but averages; further examination of the data might perhaps uncover more information

The data tables below show the raw results sorted by Activity. Using these and the averages tables above, I will attempt to put as much of this data into perspective as possible through a more detailed analysis, focusing on the sleep-adjusted data.

Data	Commute	Lessons	Part Time	Club	Data	Commute	Lessons	Part Time	Club
78	28	19.5	0	44	5	12	22.5	23	6
107	28	21	0	18	57	12	30	21	2
26	26	24	15	12	68	12	25.5	23	0
32	26	22.5	16.5	18	73	12	22.5	0	11
55	25	24	33	0	84	12	21	19	2.5
72	25	22.5	2	0	92	12	22.5	38	0
77	25	21	29	0	41	11	21	8.5	2
64	24	19.5	35	14	10	10	22.5	23	2
8	22	25.5	25	0	16	10	19.5	13	0
25	22	22.5	13.5	0	18	10	25.5	15	3
85	21	21	8	28	23	10	25.5	7	0
97	21	21	12	3	42	10	25.5	24	0
7	20	19.5	22	2.5	47	10	28.5	26	0
29	20	21	0	12.5	49	10	24	0	2
33	20	18	22	0	51	10	25.5	19	0
50	20	28.5	39	0	89	10	21	0	0
56	20	25.5	28	3	93	10	21	6	0
59	20	25.5	10	0	103	10	22.5	11	7
60	20	27	0	0	106	10	22.5	11	0
61	20	30	14	0	111	10	21	0	7.5
63	20	27	32	0	35	9	19.5	4	7.5
67	20	21	30	0	34	8	21	20	0
70	20	22.5	11	0	43	8	22.5	20	0
79	20	22.5	0	10.5	58	7.5	22.5	17.5	0
87	20	19.5	0	0	62	7.5	21.5	20	30
94	20	22.5	14	3	91	7	22.5	16	32
95	20	22.5	5	2	109	7	21	0	33.5
96	20	21	21	0	2	5	21	0	0
99	20	21	6	0	13	5	21	22.5	0
104	20	22.5	0	0	14	5	21	0	0
105	20	21	0	2	15	5	21	17.5	2.5
108	20	21	18	0	28	5	21	0	0
36	19.5	10.5	18	0	30	5	18	4.5	8
52	19	21	18	10.5	31	5	18	26	6
9	18	25.5	14	0	37	5	21	0	9
88	18	22.5	0	22	38	5	24	0	0
45	17.5	27	16	0	40	5	19.5	0	0
6	17	25.5	23	0	46	5	27	24	0
22	17	21	22	2	48	5	33	6	3
17	16	22.5	26	0	69	5	21	0	20
4	15	19.5	4	0	71	5	21	0	2
11	15	21	0	6	82	5	22.5	0	2
12	15	24	9	0	90	5	22.5	0	0
19	15	25.5	0	0	102	5	22.5	0	0
21	15	24	21	2	53	4	19.5	0	0
24	15	19.5	36	0	65	2.5	34	10.5	0
27	15	25.5	6	2.5	1	0	24	0	2
39	15	22.5	12	0	20	0	25.5	0	27
44	15	25.5	43	3	66	0	21	25	0
75	15	21	12	0	98	0	7.5	0	0
76	15	22.5	14	0					
80	15	22.5	14.5	0		Statistical Analysis			
81	15	18	15.5	0		Average	13.54		
83	15	22.5	2.5	0		STDEV	6.79		
86	15	19.5	0	0		n-1	6.75		
101	15	21	21	0		n	13.54		
112	15	21	15	11		n+1	20.33		
54	14	27	2	51.5					
74	14	21	33	3					
100	14	21	42	0					
110	14	22.5	0	18					
3	12	25.5	12	18					

Figure 6: Table showing sorted results for Commute, Largest to Smallest

Data	Commute	Lessons	Part Time	Club	Data	Commute	Lessons	Part Time	Club	
44	15	25.5	43	3	65	2.5	34	10.5	0	
100	14	21	42	0	59	20	25.5	10	0	
50	20	28.5	39	0	12	15	24	9	0	
92	12	22.5	38	0	41	11	21	8.5	2	
24	15	19.5	36	0	85	21	21	8	28	
64	24	19.5	35	14	23	10	25.5	7	0	
55	25	24	33	0	27	15	25.5	6	2.5	
74	14	21	33	3	48	5	33	6	3	
63	20	27	32	0	93	10	21	6	0	
67	20	21	30	0	99	20	21	6	0	
77	25	21	29	0	95	20	22.5	5	2	
56	20	25.5	28	3	30	5	18	4.5	8	
17	16	22.5	26	0	4	15	19.5	4	0	
31	5	18	26	6	35	9	19.5	4	7.5	
47	10	28.5	26	0	83	15	22.5	2.5	0	
8	22	25.5	25	0	54	14	27	2	51.5	
66	0	21	25	0	72	25	22.5	2	0	
42	10	25.5	24	0	1	0	24	0	2	
46	5	27	24	0	2	5	21	0	0	
5	12	22.5	23	6	11	15	21	0	6	
6	17	25.5	23	0	14	5	21	0	0	
10	10	22.5	23	2	19	15	25.5	0	0	
68	12	25.5	23	0	20	0	25.5	0	27	
13	5	21	22.5	0	28	5	21	0	0	
7	20	19.5	22	2.5	29	20	21	0	12.5	
22	17	21	22	2	37	5	21	0	9	
33	20	18	22	0	38	5	24	0	0	
21	15	24	21	2	40	5	19.5	0	0	
57	12	30	21	2	49	10	24	0	2	
96	20	21	21	0	53	4	19.5	0	0	
101	15	21	21	0	60	20	27	0	0	
34	8	21	20	0	69	5	21	0	20	
43	8	22.5	20	0	71	5	21	0	2	
62	7.5	21.5	20	30	73	12	22.5	0	11	
51	10	25.5	19	0	78	28	19.5	0	44	
84	12	21	19	2.5	79	20	22.5	0	10.5	
36	19.5	10.5	18	0	82	5	22.5	0	2	
52	19	21	18	10.5	86	15	19.5	0	0	
108	20	21	18	0	87	20	19.5	0	0	
15	5	21	17.5	2.5	88	18	22.5	0	22	
58	7.5	22.5	17.5	0	89	10	21	0	0	
32	26	22.5	16.5	18	90	5	22.5	0	0	
45	17.5	27	16	0	98	0	7.5	0	0	
91	7	22.5	16	32	102	5	22.5	0	0	
81	15	18	15.5	0	104	20	22.5	0	0	
18	10	25.5	15	3	105	20	21	0	2	
26	26	24	15	12	107	28	21	0	18	
112	15	21	15	11	109	7	21	0	33.5	
80	15	22.5	14.5	0	110	14	22.5	0	18	
9	18	25.5	14	0	111	10	21	0	7.5	
61	20	30	14	0						
76	15	22.5	14	0						
94	20	22.5	14	3						
25	22	22.5	13.5	0	Statistical Analysis					
16	10	19.5	13	0	Average	12.80				
3	12	25.5	12	18	STDEV	11.61				
39	15	22.5	12	0	n-1	1.19				
75	15	21	12	0	n	12.80				
97	21	21	12	3	n+1	24.40				
70	20	22.5	11	0						
103	10	22.5	11	7						
106	10	22.5	11	0						

Figure 7: Table showing sorted results for Part-time Job, Largest to Smallest

Commute

First, then, it should be noted that the averages show that nearly 12% of students' available time each week is being spent on getting to and from the university. This does strike as being a rather large amount of time, especially when compared to students educated in western-style universities with halls of residences, dormitories and nearby purpose-built apartments. While the averages show that each student might commute for about 13.5 hours a week, the raw data illustrates that a wide range of commuting times exist within this cohort; Figure 6 shows the time spent on commuting ranges from less than 30 minutes per day (0 in the data) to about 5.5 hours per day (28 hours per week), which is over 2.5 hours each way. The standard deviation for the commute data is 6.79, which puts $n+1$ at 20.33 and $n-1$ at 6.75 hours. The distribution of the data is rather wide, with the number of observations similar in each percentile; notable, however, is the fact that 1 out of 4 students have a commute of roughly 4 hours a day, and nearly two-thirds of the students commute for more than 2 hours a day.

Part-time Job

As we can see in the part-time job data, roughly a third of the students surveyed appear to not have a routine part-time job. Despite this, the mean amount of time devoted to this activity is still 12.8 hours a week; this skewing is caused by the top-heavy data at the higher end of the results. The highest number of hours worked each week is shown to be 43 hours a week, almost as much as a regulation full-time working week for adults in the EU. In the top percentile, consisting of a sixth of the students, data ranging from 43 hours/week to 25 hours/week shows that more time is being devoted to work than to studies (averaging at 22.5 hours/week). We can also note that of the 3 main activities excluding Lessons, it seems that if a student has a high "Part-time Job" and "Commute" requirement, little or no time is spent on "Club Activities". This holds true from other perspectives, with most students in this percentile seemingly able to choose only two of the three activities. Indeed, contrary to assumptions, there appears to be a wide range of data, with some students working practically full time and almost a third not working at all. When combined, however, it is quite possible that a large number of students spend more time on their extra-curricular routine activities than on their studies, even before we factor in social activities, familial duties, and so on.

Club Activity

The data for the "Club Activity" set also provides some interesting information. Counter to previous hypotheses, it seems that the more than half (62 out of 112) of the surveyed students studying at the institution in question do not take part in any official club activities. The standard deviation for this data-set is 9.55, which suggests a rather wide spread of values amongst the remaining students that do take part in clubs. The mean average itself stands at only 4.9 hours/week; this clearly does not seem to equate to the emphasis placed on socialisation training by Warrington and other commentators (2006) (B.J McVeigh, 2001). However, the top sixth of the data does show students spending more than 10 hours/week devoted to club activities; based on experience, this tends to suggest a sports club, with weekday and weekend practices, matches and training sessions. In fact, even the gap between the lowest and mid-range values is roughly 10 hours/week. It would appear, then, that although the majority of students studying in this learning context do not take part in the club activity, those that do devote time equal to almost half of their study-time to their club. Here, we should also note that perhaps the nature of the institution and the elective nature of the courses in which the data was collected may also have an effect on Club participation. Warrington's admonitions do, however, seem to ring true for the top 10% in this survey, who reported between 18 and 52 hours a week spent at their club. Thus, in part, the data collected regarding club activities does seem to relate to Warrington's suggestions; chiefly that much time and effort is required to be in a club and maintain ones position there.

General Impressions

After analysing the data gathered from the questionnaire, we can suggest that, if nothing else, the range of values in our observations is rather wide. Particularly for the "Part-time Job" and "Club Activity" data-sets, we observed a high variation between the results. Some students seemed to be working almost a full full-time working week of 43 hours alongside their studies, whilst a sizable number of the others did not work at all. Similarly, although over half of the students studying at the institution did not in fact take part in a club activity at all, those who did devoted at roughly 10 hours/week to it, with some members of sports teams spending over 30 hours/week in their club. On a side note, it might perhaps be the case that students are beginning to spend more time at University "Circles" (a recent, less rigorous version of a Club), though this is simply speculation. At any rate, economic requirements aside, the amount of time spent

on these activities by some would suggest that their studies could be affected.

Perhaps even more interesting is the data for the "Commute" category. Here, we find that students with a short commute, under 30-minutes a day, were in the minority. With an average of roughly 13 hours/week, and a maximum of 28 hours/week with the majority of the students falling between 7 and 25 hours/week, the amount of time required to commute to and from their lessons appears at first glance to be rather large (at least, from a Western perspective). Whilst it might be possible to utilise the time commuting to learn vocabulary or quickly do homework, it is doubtful that this use of between 9% to 20% of the available time in the week to merely get to the university is constructive and facilitative of their attention, motivation and wellbeing.

What are the day-to-day activities engaged in by Japanese university-level English students?

The answer to this question, at least from the data gathered, appears to be "Lessons", "Part-time Jobs", "Commute" and "Club Activity", in descending order. Averages, however, only tell us so much; as shown, there are many different combinations of these activities, with each student engendering a higher diversity to our results. Some students commute for 26 hours/week, attend a club activity for about 18 hours/week and still work at a part-time job for 16 hours/week, whilst another might have no commute, but instead devote 37 hours/week to a part-time job or club activity; at the other end of the spectrum, we can find students with a short commute of less than 30 minutes a day, who don't work or take part in official clubs or circles on campus.

Our data is, of course, limited, and in no way completely answers our research question. We only recovered data which was for the most part inflexible and invariable; data for more private activities such as seeing friends, cooking, shopping and so on, as well as more variable activities such as homework, eating, exercise etc., are notably absent, though this was admittedly by design. Despite reaching a similar conclusion to Lockley & Farrell (2011: 184) - that it is perhaps unhelpful to classify our students homogenously as "Japanese students" when such a degree of variation has been shown to occur - we have nevertheless collected useful data which can help us draw insights into the daily activities of our students.

To what degree might these activities affect their language achievement?

Here, though, we must give way to speculation; our data is not correlated with a measure of English competence or ability, such as recent class-grades, TOEIC scores or even anecdotal evidence based on the experience of the researcher. Even the negative effect of long-distance commutes is currently based mostly on qualified, not quantified, research.

Having said that, there are some general points which this data might help shed light upon. In reference to general motivation for study and energy levels, for example, one could theorise that students with longer commutes, more hours at part-time jobs and less sleep as a result will be more likely to be late for class, and be somewhat lethargic when or indeed if they do arrive. Students with a sports-club activity, and thus a higher number of hours devoted to it, would perhaps be more prone to missing classes entirely as they submit official excuse cards to train or to take part in a match. These points, at least, remain credible, though the data range gathered from this survey does not cover the effects of the hours devoted to these activities on the students' English studies.

Conclusion:

This research paper, being based on a study with only 112 participants, does not, it must be admitted, satisfactorily resolve the research questions posed within it. It does, however, reveal an interesting range of data regarding the day-to-day scheduled activities of a cohort of Japanese tertiary-level students of English; through this research we have been able to see that previous preconceptions about the amount of time the student body as a whole spent engaging in club activities were mostly incorrect. On the other hand, the research has shown that club activities (when engaged in) are indeed quite time consuming. Furthermore, we have seen that although not all students have part-time jobs, there exists a set of students who devote as much if not more time to their work as they do to their studies. Commutation data also proved to be interesting, demonstrating that on average roughly 12% of the available hours in the week are used to simply get to the university, with some students commuting for more than 25 hours a week.

This research, however, does remain limited, both by its scale and its scope. The extent to which these hours spent on activities other than studies and lessons affects English abilities, motivation and studies in general has yet to be established, though speculation and experience suggests that some detrimental effects may be witnessed. The results of this study are also linked to this specific institution; findings are limited to the type of person attending this university only.

Observations and values are likely to be very different when sited in another location.

Future research, then, should seek to replicate a similar yet larger study in different institutions, such as universities situated within a urban area, and additionally seek to compare differences, if any, in the data gathered between national, private, and different ranks of universities. Links to English abilities, motivation to study, types of club activities and so forth could also be more thoroughly investigated so as to provide a clearer picture as to the influence the environmental, day-to-day factors operating within the Japanese EFL context can be said to possess. As much as these results both in some ways support and in some ways challenge existing perceptions, one point should not be overlooked. While it is clearly no longer acceptable to declare Japanese students at any level to be a completely homogenous unit, there may yet be value in endeavouring to investigate the ways and to what extent they vary, in effort to better understand their learning situation.

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