

A Study into Out-of-Class Autonomy : Does Extracurricular Homework Lead to the Development of Taking Control of One's Learning?

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There are many goals that educators try to achieve in the classroom. One of those goals should be to foster learner autonomy (Benson, 2011). In fact, criticism in Japan has been leveled at the education system because the way that languages are learned does not foster autonomy in learners because of the prevailing teacher-centric model of English education (Hughes, Krug & Vye, 2011). Subsequently, scholars have stated developing autonomous learning could be one of the most important goals in the educational field (Sakai & Takagi, 2009).

Becoming proficient in a second or third language can take a long time and requires a consistent degree of motivation, but due to time and curriculum constraints there may not be enough actual time in the classroom to help students become competent users of the target language (Nunan, 1989). That only leaves outside the classroom. However, it was found Japanese students on average did only four hours of total homework per week in 2013, ranking 30th out of 38 countries (OECD, 2014, p. 2). Therefore, work students do outside of class may not be ultimately leading to developing autonomous behaviour.

According to Gardner & Miller (1999) and Serra Salvia (2000), Self-access centres (SACs) help to meet the needs of learners and develop learner autonomy. These spaces offer students a place to engage in the target language in ways that meet the needs of many individual learners, and may often include a free conversation space or other materials. The number of these centres has seen an increase as more educators realise their benefits. In Japan, too, SACs have now become popular in many universities. Researchers in Japan have found that SACs can lead to language gains (Krug, Wurzinger, Hughes & Vye, 2011 ; Vye, Krug, Wurzinger & Hughes, 2011) and build a sense of a second language community among the users (Bibby, Jolley & Shiobara, 2016).

The mere physical presence of students in SACs, however, may not result in learning that could be construed as meaningful (Fukuda, Sakata & Takeuchi (2011). It is, therefore, important that educators and the establishments they work in strive to educate students about the benefits of becoming autonomous. There should also

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be a clear link between what happens in the classroom and the curriculum in general and what happens outside (Gardner & Miller, 1999 ; Thompson & Atkinson, 2010). However, what is not readily available in the literature is the degree to which SACs develop autonomous habits in learning. Considering that to build and run an SAC takes time and money, its justification should be a prerequisite.

2.0 Literature review

This section describes self-access centres, the construct of learner autonomy and how learner autonomy is linked to curricular design.

2.1 Self-Access Centres

Self-access is an approach to language learning, rather than language teaching (Gardner & Miller, 1999). It is a vehicle through which learner autonomy in learners can be fostered. Through self-access, students learn to move from teacher-directed study and dependency towards learner autonomy. SACs have appeared in language learning research and shown to positively promote learner autonomy and self-directed learning (Malcolm, 2004 ; Rose & Elliott, 2010) and have employed online resources (Castellano, Mynard & Rubesch, 2011).

Many universities in Japan now have these facilities, which may include a mix of learners and teachers with an emphasis on a target language-only environment (Corker & Torpey, 2004). SACs can provide structure for the development of autonomous learning by offering a space where students can address their needs in a personal manner (Gardner & Miller, 1999).

2.2 Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy was initially defined as an “ability to take charge of one’s own learning”, and to have “the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning”, (Holec, 1981, p.3). Inherent in this responsibility is the capacity for applying metacognitive abilities like reflecting, monitoring, and planning, (Holec, 1981 ; Little, 2006) and also an affective dimension (Little, 2006), as well as attitudes towards taking responsibility for learning (Dickinson, 1993.)

Later models of learner autonomy describe it as an “independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions” (Littlewood, 1996, p. 428). Identified in this model are core components of ability and willingness (sometimes referred to as will and skill). This implies that a person may have ability, but will not choose willingly to carry out a choice ; and on the contrary, a person may wish to make choices, but lacks the ability to do so. Ability is further broken into knowledge of alternatives and skills for execution of those alternatives. Willingness is dependent on confidence (general or domain specific self-esteem) and motivation to make choices.

The above concepts work on the assumption of learner autonomy having perceived importance in the con-

text of second language setting, but in the context of foreign language settings the view of learner autonomy may be different. Littlewood (2000) makes the point that different pedagogies should be established for different learning contexts. In Asian countries like China and Japan, often education demands obedience, and deference to authority (p.31). On top of this, Herriman (2007) cites problems of learning English through the medium of Japanese, and because of the concentration on grammar study within learning English, English becomes something to be studied, and not used. Herriman adds that the "... teacher is the expert and students perceive the situation in this way and expect it to be that way" (p. 144). On the face of it, these situations appear to provide little leeway for learner autonomy.

Rather than reject outright the notion of learner autonomy in Asia, some researchers such as Littlewood (1999) have begun to rethink the concept. Along with the traditional concept of autonomous learner, he adds the concept of "relatedness", being part of a social network, to help explain autonomy in Eastern contexts (p.74). Littlewood believes that Japanese have the same capacity for learner autonomy as their western counterparts, but he makes a distinction between proactive learner autonomy, which is espoused in the West and consists of learners setting goals, selecting methods and making personal agendas, and reactive autonomy that does not mean learners set their own directions. Instead, once direction is initiated, learners can organize resources to reach learning goals (p. 75). This can include such activities as learning new vocabulary without being requested to do so by the teacher or students making groups and working together to complete difficult assignments.

Studies of out-of-class autonomy in other South East Asian countries have found learners have a tendency to avoid face-to-face interaction (Hyland, 2004), but there is a realization that English is more than just a subject for passing exams (Wing, 2001). However, studies in Japan related to learner autonomy outside the classroom are limited. One qualitative study by Inomata (2008) focused on three high school students and found that they engaged in activities such as comprehension exercises for short readings and sentence translation from Japanese to English mostly sanctioned by the school. Participants did not use the Internet at all for out-of-class learning, despite using it for many other personal activities. Lastly, they engaged in no speaking activities of any kind out of class. A final survey study by Fukuda (2014) found that in a sample of 173 Japanese university students, many were graduating with low levels of autonomy and high degrees of anxiety about using English. It was further found that low instances of student out-of-class study were highly correlated with students' low autonomy levels ($r = .60, p < .05$).

These Japanese studies show student attitude towards autonomous learning lies somewhere between reactive autonomy and no autonomy. However, it is important to increase and vary the number of studies that measure learner autonomy in out-of-class learning in Japan. This may provide a more complete picture of the situation.

2.3 *Linking Learner Autonomy to the Language Curriculum*

In order to promote learner autonomy among learners, an accumulation of positive experiences inside the classroom may lead some students to seek out similar opportunities outside the classroom. Therefore, clearly, there should be a link between inside and outside the classroom. Some researchers advocate the use of a guided autonomy syllabus (Clifford, 1999 ; Fukuda, Sakata & Takeuchi, 2011). Through this process, students focus specifically on their goals and needs of learning, followed by teachers raising the awareness of “how to” learn. These actions are interspersed with continual self-assessment and opportunities for students to ask questions about their learning. Fukuda et. al. proposed that one of the possible reasons for increases in students’ motivation after the learning process was due to a teacher who specifically provided feedback and advice in student journals. This study suffered from a small sample size, so results may be difficult to generalize, but, more importantly, the authors did not explain how what was learned in the class was used outside of the class.

In another study in Japan, teachers were present to provide input for students about sociolinguistic competence in an SAC as part of a university’s overall goal of promoting self-directed learning (Cooker & Torpey, 2004). First year students in that study were required to spend thirty hours in self-directed learning for 20% of their class grade, with the SAC being one of the places where they could undertake autonomous activities, supplemented by student reflection on their learning experiences and a final interview with the teacher. Although the authors state that this was a preliminary study and fail to provide data such as sample size and classification of student comments, anecdotal accounts indicated that students felt more motivated to self-study.

At the same SAC site, separate researchers carried out more in-depth research about students’ use and motivation at this SAC (Rose & Elliott, 2010). From a survey of 550 students, 35% stated that they wanted to go, but just under half (48%) stated that they went to the SAC to only complete the task and get credit. Further analysis showed that 67% of the students went less than five times during the semester, but it is unclear if these students did any other self-directed activities outside of class. Interviews with English teachers in the curriculum revealed that both students and teachers saw a positive benefit and teachers saw a link between early use of the SAC and continued use. However, it is unclear over what period this refers to. Teachers further felt that if students did not use the SAC in their first year, it would be very unlikely they would use it in proceeding academic years.

One final study by Rose (2007) looked at the effect of visits to a conversation lounge after the introduction of a compulsory homework diary. First years in that study were asked to attend the lounge, speak for 15 minutes and record their thoughts. This action dramatically increased student visits to the lounge, but in follow-up interviews students still attested to high anxiety when visiting there. Rose reports that the high incidence of anxiety appeared to far outweigh many of the perceived positive benefits of attendance, but the use of a diary encouraged extrinsically-motivated students more at the pre-intermediate level.

All the above studies deal with what happened to first years as they use the SAC. What is not reported is what happens to those students when they become second and third years. Had any beneficial habits discovered

in their first year been carried through by students into the second year and beyond? Thompson and Atkinson (2010) carried out qualitative longitudinal research at a Japanese university site. Through ethnographic interviews of seven student participants and a teacher, the findings revealed that the SAC was becoming a “home-work centre,” and there was a “push” to visit the SAC, rather than something within the SAC acting as a “pull” to bring students in. Although part of the curriculum, due to the SAC use being too teacher-directed, a number of students did not visit the SAC in the second year when they had no reason to. In other words, when the push was removed, students’ motivation for using such facilities decreased. However, this study interviewed only seven people, and; therefore, it is impossible to ascertain how many students, other than those in this small sample, actually continued their use of the SAC without being instructed to.

The above studies attest to positive benefits of students visiting SACs as part of the curriculum, but little follow-up research has addressed how many students actually use SACs when not instructed to. If one of the desired outcomes of language learning is to lead to learner autonomy, there is value in investigating what students do in the SAC, and what attitudes they have associated with this kind of autonomous language learning. Indeed, Benson (2011) asks the question—how does a self-study practice help learners to achieve control over their learning? (p. 111) Continued use of an SAC, even when not tied to the curriculum, could indicate that some students perceive a benefit.

After briefly reviewing the literature on autonomy and SACs, the authors set the following research questions for this study :

1. What kind of out-of-class activities do students in this sample engage in?
2. How many times have students in the sample visited the ECZ when it was required compared to when it was not?
3. What general impressions do students in this sample have about the ECZ?
4. What attitudes do students in this sample hold about autonomous learning?
5. How do students in this sample perceive changes in their English levels?

3.0 Methods

3.1 Site for this study

The site for this study is an SAC in a mid-level private university in Japan. The lounge is referred to from now on by its name, the English Community Zone (ECZ). Administration of that ECZ is handled by an office that reports to the university as a whole. The space is mostly staffed by approximately ten foreign study abroad students visiting the university for periods of up to a year, predominantly from the U.S. and Europe.

The ECZ has been prone to having both insufficient and too many students in the facility at one time. Usually at the start and finish of the semester, students tend to visit the ECZ more often. However, if ECZ visits are incentivised in terms of grading towards the end of the semester students who do not want to fail or have not

visited there until that point crowd into the facility.

3.2 Participants in this study

Students ($n = 83$) in this study were drawn from the second year in one faculty at a mid-ranking university with this ECZ. This consisted of four classes that could be roughly described as lower intermediate and upper intermediate. The lower intermediate group consisted of two mandatory English classes titled *English for Tourism Projects* and in these classes students worked in groups to create projects related to job application in the tourism industry. A total number of 45 students (11 male and 34 female) in two classes participated in the survey and the TOEIC scores for this group ranged from 350 to 415. The upper intermediate group also consisted of two mandatory English classes titled *English for Tourism*. This course followed a topic-based syllabus focusing on tourism topics. A total of 38 students (5 male and 33 female) in the two classes answered the questionnaire and the TOEIC scores of these students ranged from 500 to 650. Students from both groups were all Japanese nationals, and second year students were between the ages of 19 to 20.

During the first year, these students took English classes twice a week, comprising of a reading and communication class. As part of the communication class, use was made of the ECZ, and students recorded visits on a stamp card (Talandis, Taylor, Beck, Hardy, Murray, Omura & Stout, 2011) and in a diary once they had spent 30 minutes there for 10 times during the semester. Once these students became sophomores, they were still encouraged to find their own ways of learning out of class, and a stamp card system was not used.

3.3 Instrumentation

Items used in the survey for this study were either created, borrowed from other studies (Ming & Alias, 2007 ; Robson, 2016 ; Rose & Elliott, 2010) or revised to fit the situation in this paper. After creating a list of items, the authors and one Japanese teacher of English working at the same university translated the items from English to Japanese. A second Japanese teacher of English was shown the first draft and a check was made of the back translation. Where necessary, a few changes to the original were made.

There were five sections of the questionnaire with items and one section at the end inviting any opinions on how to improve the ECZ, for a total of 40 items. The first section contained fourteen items and dealt with how often students participated in a number of activities outside of class related to using English.

The next two sections dealt specifically with the ECZ. The first of these was three questions asking how many times students had attended the ECZ at specific times of last spring semester, last autumn semester and so far this semester. The other ECZ section had 11 items and asked for levels of agreement (disagree a lot, disagree a little, agree a little and agree a lot) covering students' general impression of the ECZ.

The next section had six items, again with a similar agreement structure seeking agreement of statements related to autonomous learning. In this section, the authors wanted to determine the students' feelings towards

out-of-class learning and how much personal responsibility they accept in creating their own learning opportunities.

The final section included five items developed by the authors seeking agreement on items related to students' perceived changes in their learning, motivation, and skills of English compared to the previous year. More specifically, agreement or disagreement to these statements set out to determine the students' attitudes towards changes in usage, awareness, follow-up, and general motivation to study English.

3.4 Procedure

The Japanese version of the questionnaire in Appendix A was presented to students during week seven of the spring 2016 semester, one of the co-authors asked for co-operation of the second year students in his English classes in filling out the questionnaire. The purposes were explained and it was further stated that the data were for research purposes and that students' decision to take the questionnaire was voluntary and would in no way affect students' grades. It took approximately ten minutes for the participating students to fill out the questionnaire at the end of their classes, at which point analysis began.

4.0 Results and Discussion

The data was analysed in two ways. First percentages were calculated in Excel, and data was analysed using Mann-Whitney U tests through PASW, Ver. 18.0 (SPSS Inc., 2009). The Mann-Whitney U tests are similar in the fact that they both measure differences between two independent groups on one target variable, but whereas the independent t-tests assume normal distribution, the Mann-Whitney tests are preferable when the variables are ordinal (as seen in the four agreement choices for most of the items). Employing Mann-Whitney u tests assumes that the data is not normal distributed, i.e. skewed or showing some degree of kurtosis. This analysis is reported with both an assigned p-value as well as a *U* value, indicating the strength of the differences in observation values between the two groups.

Table 1 shows that generally students did not engage in many ways to use or improve their English outside of the regular class or related homework time. Specific activities that are carried out at a level of "0 times" or "1-2 times" to the largest degree are, for instance, reading activities, in particular reading newspapers or books outside of class. The reading skill, at least on the TOEIC Test, has been consistently lower on average than the listening test. This may be as a result of the emphasis placed on generic communication skills. These skills could be viewed as more fun and sociable than reading, which most students, it could be argued, view as a solitary action. Another reason is also the mindset that reading is still an action associated with learning and taking tests, despite a growing body of evidence that has shown the benefits of graded reading for pleasure on both affect (Yamashita, 2013) and skills (Bell, 2001).

It appears that participation in activities that fall outside the traditional sphere of learning English such as

keeping an English diary and using English through social media were low. Diaries have been effectively used as a tool to raise students' awareness of finding preferences for effective and ineffective ways to learn out of class (Doyle & Parrish, 2012), but with the majority of these students this important process of self-evaluation was seemingly not taking place. Further, social media has really taken off in Japan, with many students having a Facebook account and when travelling abroad they tend to make new friends through social media. However, generally the students in this sample apparently either have limited awareness of or are simply inactive in using such social media for communicating in English or as an opportunity to use English for a purpose (as indicated by the low endorsement of the third item in this table).

Table 1. *Student Self-Reported Engagement in Out-of-class Activities*

Out-of-class activity	0 times	1-2 times a month	3-4 times a month	5+ times a month
Read newspapers or magazines in English	80%	13%	6%	1%
Look for opportunities to use English in my everyday life	26%	39%	28%	7%
Keep in contact with friends in English through social media	56%	19%	18%	7%
Watch TV / movies in English	18%	27%	36%	19%
Listen to music in English	6%	9%	44%	41%
Keep an English diary	77%	17%	5%	1%
Talk to foreign tourists in Japan	28%	39%	28%	5%
Practice using English with friends	52%	37%	6%	5%
Meet English teachers and chat in English	42%	31%	21%	6%
Read books in English	43%	37%	17%	3%
Visit the ECZ	51%	41%	7%	1%
Study textbooks (not from school)	52%	22%	22%	4%
Prepare for proficiency tests like TOEIC or Eiken	12%	29%	45%	14%
Visit a conversation school outside university	88%	7%	4%	1%

As well as reading and writing, many students are shying away from opportunities to communicate outside of class. Students are making little effort to talk to tourists, practice English with friends, seek out classes at a conversation school, meet and talk to their teachers in English, and use the resources on campus as a speaking opportunity, namely the ECZ. Further analysis of the students that had claimed to have visited the ECZ was difficult because of the small subset these students represented ($n = 6$). However, in comparing the two groups in this study, it was found that the higher level group ($n = 48$) agreed to a significantly statistically higher level to speaking to tourists and their teacher than the lower level ($n = 35$) group ($U = 130, p = .041$). Being willing to communicate in situations outside of school is considered a very important factor for second language development (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004), and it could be contingent on the student competence level.

Many students consider improved speaking skills as very important, but when it comes to seeking opportunities and taking them, these students could not be considered proactive, regardless of proficiency level.

Lastly, of the activities that students tend to engage in more, there are some promising results. A large percentage of students showed some agreement to both listening to music in English (82%) and watching movies or TV in English (55%). Some researchers have found that some Japanese students have an interest in listening to music and watching movies or TV in English, the last of which has been shown to improve listening skill (Hayati & Mohmedi, 2011). These activities are easily available through smart phone technology on the Internet. Having these interests and coming into contact with English through these activities can be intrinsically rewarding. There is no specific need to study per se and the content can be regularly changed if students watch dramas, or artist release new songs. Watching video has been found to improve retention of incidental vocabulary (Yüksel & Tanriverdi, 2009), so these activities and their benefits should be nurtured and shared with other students. Further, not such of a surprise, but activities like preparing to take proficiency tests like Eiken and TOEIC were cited as being undertaken by the students, especially the higher level group for TOEIC study (although not statistically significant, reached $p = .09$). It is certainly possible for students to strive for both intrinsically pleasing activities like listening to music and more extrinsically-based activities such as getting a qualification at the same time. These students, at least, have a realization that they need English for passing tests for activities like job-hunting or applying for scholarships to study abroad.

Table 2 makes it clear that the use of the ECZ has declined since students' first semester. In the spring semester of the previous year (as first years), students were using the ECZ to a high degree, with 93% reporting visiting there at least four times during that semester. In the autumn semester of the first year, visitations to the ECZ dropped by approximately 33%. Students were still graded for this at the time, so some students clearly felt a need to attend. However, as students became sophomores their use of the ECZ dropped to almost nothing. As seen, 92% have not visited at all by week 10 in the semester this year. These results are disappointing if we consider that the point of the ECZ was to help students improve their communication skills, something they themselves profess a desire to do.

Table 2. *Number of Times Students Reported Visiting the ECZ over a 3-semester Period*

Semester	0	1-3 times	4-6 times	7+ times
Last year Spring	1%	6%	18%	75%
Last year Autumn	4%	27%	24%	45%
This year Spring	92%	5%	1%	2%

In the next section in Table 3, respondents were asked about their general thoughts and impression of their time spent in the ECZ. Table 3 shows a variety of different degrees of agreement to the various responses. Looking first at items related to the system of using the ECZ. It was found that 70% of students understood the com-

municative purpose for visiting the ECZ, which was backed up by a large number of students who disagreed that they only read books there (94%). Further, just over half of the respondents disagreed with the statement relating to ECZ visits in the first year being enough. This possibly indicates they see the necessity of continuing to visit the ECZ in higher academic years. However, these results do not translate into actual visits in the second year as the section above indicates. This result mirrors the testimony given by Rose and Elliott (2010) who found some students will only visit an SAC if they are required to. It appears that use of extrinsically-motivating activities like the stamp card in this study or the diary used in the Rose (2007) study are sufficient to get students through the door, but there is no guarantee that those students will be intrinsically motivated to be there, or that the activity is likely to continue when the reward is removed.

Table 3. *General Impressions of the ECZ by the Student Informants (n = 83)*

Statement	disagree a lot	disagree a little	agree a little	agree a lot
It was always crowded there	5%	35%	53%	7%
I spoke a lot of English there	5%	30%	54%	11%
It had a fun atmosphere	7%	29%	53%	11%
I often heard Japanese language spoken	7%	48%	40%	5%
It was a good place to experience "real" English	3%	22%	52%	23%
Visiting in the first year is enough	5%	49%	37%	9%
I spoke to a lot native English speakers there	5%	41%	41%	13%
I understood the purpose for visiting the ECZ	2%	28%	59%	11%
I mainly just read books while there	63%	31%	3%	3%
I was satisfied with the overall ECZ experience	8%	30%	58%	4%
I did a wide range of activities there	16%	47%	31%	6%

It was recorded that 62% of respondents expressed some form of agreement with being satisfied with the attending the ECZ, but this seems little low. Looking at some reasons for a possible lower evaluation, scores below 50% agreement were seen for doing a wide range of activities, speaking to foreign students, hearing Japanese there, and the ECZ being crowded. Many students visit the ECZ during lunchtime and this creates a certain amount of crowding, which also has an impact on how much supervision is provided by staff for visiting students. For those who go to the ECZ during a busy period expecting to speak to a foreign student, there will be some disappointment as there are simply not enough foreign students and staff there at such times. The higher group in the study had a much higher level of agreement that the ECZ was busy than the lower level group, (however, in Mann-Whitney *U* test it was non-significant, $p = .08$) so may have tended to go more at these busier times. Oftentimes when students can not have access to a foreign student, they are very much in the mindset of giving up and speaking in Japanese, instead of communicating with other people in the ECZ in English.

Therefore, understanding the purpose of going there might be related to an expectation they will only engage with foreign students if they go there. If students can readjust their schedules to go at quieter, less crowded times, many of the above objections might be weakened.

Lastly, when addressing the positive appraisals of visiting the ECZ, there are some promising results. A high percentage agree that the ECZ is fun, a good place to listen to English and that they speak a lot of English there. The first of these related to being fun, was agreed by a significantly larger number of the higher level ($n = 53$) than lower level students ($n = 30$) ($U = 163, p = .033$). Clearly then for some students there is a positive perception that the ECZ is a useful opportunity for students to communicate. These results mirror previous studies that have shown that students perceive positive benefits from visiting conversation lounges (Hughes, Krug & Vye, 2011 ; Rose & Elliott, 2010). However, again, the problem of having them come to the ECZ when it is not required as part of their grade is problematic.

The next section of the questionnaire investigated student opinions on autonomous learning. As indicated in Table 4, students claim to carry out actions and hold attitudes consistent with supporting autonomous learning. According to the survey, almost all students agree that learning is their responsibility with 60% choosing 'agree a lot'. This has to be considered a positive result since for learner autonomy to take place, students must view learning as their own responsibility. Scharle and Szabó (2000) define responsibility in a language learning context as "...learners who accept the idea that their own efforts are crucial to progress in learning, and behave accordingly." (p. 3). This point is supported by the fact that students overwhelmingly disagree with the statement that learning opportunities should be entirely up to the teacher.

Table 4. *Student Opinions on Autonomous Learning*

Statement	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot
I take responsibility for my learning experience	0%	3%	37%	60%
I wish we had more choices of how and where I can learn	3%	27%	43%	27%
Teachers should encourage us to learn by ourselves	3%	41%	46%	10%
I would like more opportunities to learn on my own	5%	23%	42%	30%
I want to find learning situations that suit me	0%	10%	44%	46%
It is the teacher's job (not my own) to provide me with learning experiences	30%	64%	5%	1%

As mentioned earlier in the literature review, several researchers in the field believe that the passiveness of Japanese (and other Asian) students can be attributed to social hierarchy, collectivism, and other cultural factors. The results of this survey seem to debunk this idea as students have clearly indicated that learning is their own

responsibility, though it is up to the teacher to provide more opportunities for self-study. Therefore, we could say that the students are acting reactively, rather than proactively to autonomous opportunities (Littlewood, 1999).

Students' desire for more learning opportunities, possibly at the SAC or the introduction of other out-of-class activities has a number of important considerations. This could suggest that if a greater variety of tasks were available, students would be more engaged in out-of-class activities. Therefore, there is a possibility to expand on such a program with the potential to obtain more student involvement. Also, a greater variety of tasks could allow students to develop their own learning styles and cater to individual preferences. The development of personal learning strategies is an important step to becoming an autonomous learner according to Dörnyei (2001).

The final section of the questionnaire, seen in Table 5, asked the respondents to compare their current feelings towards studying and using English as compared to the previous year. Most students expressed being more motivated to learn English this year. Moreover, more students in the upper intermediate group answered to a more positive degree in response to perceived increases in motivation and having more a proactive attitude to learning English than the lower intermediate level. The source of this difference is unclear, though generally students who are further along the path of development tend to be more motivated. Also, the development of other psychological constructs, especially 'reflection' as applied to language learning, may explain some of the differences between the two groups.

Table 5. *Students' Perceived Change in English Level*

Statement	Disagree a lot	Disagree a little	Agree a little	Agree a lot
I feel more confident about studying English compared to last year	13	47	34	6
I feel less apprehensive about talking to unknown foreigners compared to last year	12	29	43	16
I notice more English in my life compared to last year	10	31	49	10
If I find words I don't know out of class I have become more likely to look them up compared to last year	13	48	32	7
I feel more motivated to learn English compared to last year	10	29	45	16

Reflection is the process of introspective analysis of past events and defined by Benson (2013) as a "cycle of learning involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation leading to further reflection on experience" (p. 105). This is considered important in the development of learner autonomy because it allows the learner to contemplate the learning process and develop strategies to progress. Reflection raises learner awareness and contributes to 'deconditioning' which Benson (2013) describes

is the process in which learners reassess learning habits or preconceptions about language. This could provide a link to the previous section of the survey where the students acknowledged the importance of personal responsibility for one's own learning as opposed to the dependency of teacher led classroom learning.

In contrast, the results also showed that the majority of students also do not feel more confident in using English after more than one year of studying English twice a week at university. This is a curious result given that the students indicated they are more motivated to study English. This could reflect the general insecurity students have when using English as it is common knowledge that Japanese students tend to be shy and hesitate to use English for fear of making mistakes. It could also indicate a desire to learn English and students are so far discouraged with their progress. In other words, their expectations are higher than their current ability suggests and this indicates that they are open to the idea of out-of-class learning and goal setting which are important for enhancing motivation and developing autonomous learning.

5.0 Conclusion

This study had a number of limitations such as its small sample size and over-use of percentages for statistics. A larger sample size may have revealed different and more valuable results. Moreover the questionnaire of second year students revealed mixed results.

On one hand, with out-of-class activities, there was a significant drop in visits to the ECZ after the credit obligation was completed. However, respondents attested to undertaking out-of-class activities such as listening to music and watching movies in English. Therefore, it appears that forcing students to do one particular kind of activity such as visiting the ECZ, may not be as preferable as having exercise autonomy in the kind of activities they want to do out of class. Further, despite the ECZ not being visited much in the second year, students who completed the questionnaire generally stated being more motivated to study English than the previous year.

Perhaps the best way to explain this paradox is by applying Littlewood's (1999) concept of reactive autonomy in which the guidelines for out-of-class learning must be set before students take action. Although students expressed a willingness to act independently, the results of the questionnaire seem to tell a different story. Parallels can be drawn to a similar study in which Hardy (2017) surveyed two similar out-of-class study programs with one major difference: in one program, students were encouraged to complete out-of-class activities; and in the second program, students were more actively monitored and were required to meet a number of check points. In both cases, the out-of-class study component accounted for 10% of the course grade. In the second program, most students completed the required number of out-of-class activities as required by the check points, yet few students completed any extra. The result of the survey indicated that students in the second program were generally more motivated to study English and had a more positive view on the out-of-class learning. It seems that even though students were forced to complete out-of-class activities, there was no adverse effect on attitude. In fact, the opposite was true. Taylor, Beck, Hardy, Omura, Stout and Talandis (2012) came to similar

result in that perhaps a gentle “push” is needed to set students down the path to become autonomous learners.

There have been studies that have looked at how changes in factors like operation or room layout have affected student numbers of SACs (Bibby, Jolley & Shiobara, 2016 ; Cooker & Torpey, 2004). On the whole these studies have found that as more care is given to the needs of students, they tend to come in higher numbers. Further research should address more qualitative studies issues surrounding the individual factors that enhance or impede participation in SACs. Such research currently exists (Hughes, Krug, & Vye, 2011), but more is needed to add to the body of work.

Note

An English version of the questionnaire is available by request from the authors.

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APPENDIX A

英語のクラス外の活動について

このアンケートの結果は、授業を向上させるのに役立つよう、研究目的に使用させていただきます。それ以外の目的では一切使用いたしません。ご協力をよろしくお願いいたします。このアンケートの提出をもって、結果の研究使用に同意していただいたものとさせていただきます。成績には一切関係いたしませんので安心して全ての項目に正直にお答えください。

クラス外の活動について

	0回	月1, 2 回程度	月3, 4 回程度	月5回 以上
1. 英字の新聞や雑誌を読む				
2. 日常生活に英語を利用する機会を設ける				
3. ソーシャルメディア通して英語で友達同士とやり取りをする				
4. 英語の映画やテレビ番組を見る				
5. 英語の音楽を聴く				
6. 英語で日記を書く				
7. 外国人観光客と話そうとする				
8. 友達同士で英会話の練習をする				
9. 英語の先生と英語でお喋りをする				
10. 英語の本を読む				
11. ECZ (イングリッシュ・コミュニティ・ゾーン) に行く				
12. クラスで使用していない別の教科書で勉強する				
13. TOEIC、Eiken などの英語公式テストの勉強する				
14. 大学以外の英会話学校に通う				

APPENDIX A (continued)

ECZ (イングリッシュ・コミュニティ・ゾーン) について

15. 去年の春学期において ECZ は何回行きましたか

0回 1回～3回 4回～6回 7+回

16. 去年の秋学期において ECZ は何回行きましたか

0回 1回～3回 4回～6回 7+回

17. 今年に入って今学期において ECZ は今まで何回行きましたか

0回 1回～3回 4回～6回 7+回

ECZ についてあなたの印象は何ですか

下記の活動に対してチェックしてください

	全く思わ ない	あまり思 わない	多少そう 思う	よく思う
18. 人が多すぎた				
19. 英語をたくさん話した				
20. 雰囲気は楽しかった				
21. ほかに利用者は日本語をよく使った				
22. “生” な英語に触れ合う場所として良い				
23. 一年生のときだけ通えば良い				
24. 英語ネイティブの人々とよく話した				
25. 自分が ECZ に行く理由はちゃんと理解した				
26. 本を読むのが中心だった				
27. ECZ に行って満足した				
28. ECZ の中で色々な活動をした				

APPENDIX A (continued)

自習学習と自分の英語力変化について意見を述べてください

自習学習について	全く思わない	あまり思わない	多少そう思う	よく思う
29. 自分の学習について自分の責任だと思う				
30. どの場所・どの方法であれ学習するか選択肢がもっとあれば良いと思う				
31. 先生は学生に自分で学習する力を与えるべきだ				
32. 独学する機会を増やしたい				
33. 自分に合う学習スタイルを見つけたい				
34. 自分の学習については先生に責任がある				
自分の英語力変化について				
35. 去年と比べて今年は英語に自身がある				
36. 去年と比べて今年は初対面の外国人と話すときの不安が減った				
37. 去年と比べて今年は自分の身近にある英語にもっと気づくようになった				
38. 去年と比べて今年は授業外で知らない単語に出会うときより早く調べるようになった				
39. 去年と比べて今年は英語学習に対してもっと動機を持っている				

40. 最後に ECZ の改善点について何か意見・アイデアがありましたらお知らせください

【Abstract】

授業外の自律的学習に関する研究： 授業外の自己学習は学習の管理能力を発達させるのか

ロブソン・グライアム*、ハーディ・ダレル**

English as a Foreign Language (外国語としての英語)の授業を補うことを目的として、日本の大学ではSAC(自己学習施設)の数が増加している。それともなると、学生たちは、よりいっそう彼ら自身の学習に責任を持つことを求められている。学生たちがよりいっそう自己学習に従事するようになり、学習者オートノミー(自主性)に関わるいくつかの心理的な諸要因を発達させることが望まれている。近年、SACや、学生たちが言語学習においてよりいっそう自主的になるよう促進する目的を持った様々なプログラムに関する、数多くの研究が報告されている。しかしながら、次に言及する論文によると、かかる自己学習の行動の継続は難しいらしく、したがってそれがかかる努力を無効にしてしまう可能性がある。この研究論文は、前学年度に、大学のSACに通うことを基本とした授業外の学習プログラムに参加した大学二年生を調査し、その結果を報告している。この調査の目的は、そのプログラムおよびSACに対する学生たちの態度、そして言語学習一般に対する彼らの感情を評価し、彼らがこれからもSACや他の授業外の活動に通うことを継続するかどうかを調べることであった。調査の諸結果は複合的であったが、いくつかの重大な推測がなされ得る。

キーワード：学習に対する自律性、授業外の英語学習活動、self-access centres(自己学習施設)、外国語学習調査、日本の大学生

With the increase in the number of self-access centres (SACs) in Japanese universities to supplement English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, there has been a greater push for students to take on more responsibility for their own learning. It is hoped that students will become more involved in self-directed learning and develop some of the psychological factors associated with learner autonomy. A number of studies have been reported in recent years about SACs and various programs with the intention of encouraging students to become more independent in language learning. However, there seems to be very little in terms of follow-up research addressing the continuation of such behaviour, which is important to add depth to this body of research. This paper reports the results of a survey of second year university students ($n = 83$) who participated in an out-of-class learning program the previous academic year based on visits to the university's SAC. The purpose of the survey was to assess student attitudes toward the SAC as well as language learning in general, and to inquire about continuing visits to the SAC and other out-of-class activities. The results of the survey show that second year students generally did not follow up on visits to the SAC that were required during first year classes. The survey also revealed that students were more motivated to study English as second year students than in their first year. These actions suggest the possibility of further out-of-class activities that could be used to foster autonomy in language learning in the second year.

Key words : learner autonomy, out-of-class English learning activities, self-access centres (SAC), foreign language learning surveys, Japanese university students

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