

How out-of-class activities can enhance Japanese language learning? An exploration of the relationship between out-of-class activities that use media and learners' motivation

Yiting LIN
LINE Corporation
yiting.linn@gmail.com

Kae NAKAYA
The University of Tokyo
knakaya@iii.u-tokyo.ac.jp

Yuhei YAMAUCHI
The University of Tokyo
yamauchi@iii.u-tokyo.ac.jp

Abstract: Out-of-class learning is one of the fundamental components of foreign language learning. Out-of-class activities have been argued to provide opportunities for enhancing authentic language use as well as autonomous learning, language, and communication skills. However, little research has determined what type of out-of-class activities can enhance language learning outcomes in terms of utilizing media, which is necessary for helping construct effective out-of-class activities. The purpose of this study is to discover the relationship between learners' autonomous out-of-class activities that use media and learners' motivation to learn Japanese. In this study, a questionnaire on motivation to learn Japanese was conducted in a university in Taiwan, and 253 responses were received. Based on the questionnaire, learners were divided into two groups: those with high motivation and those with low motivation. Afterwards, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 learners from both groups, and the data were analyzed by means of a modified grounded theory approach (M-GTA). The results showed two types of implications. First, while most learners watched Japanese animations, dramas, and movies as a hobby, learners with high motivation paid more attention to the Japanese that was used in the media content than learners with low motivation, which leads to Japanese language learning. Second, learners with high motivation conducted much more productive activities than learners with low motivation. Furthermore, learners with high motivation often experienced a sense of accomplishment and enjoyment through out-of-class activities. These findings also indicated that four significant elements of out-of-class activities exist that enhance language learning: 1) media content that learners are interested in, 2) real-time feedback, 3) opportunities to use language, and 4) cross-cultural communication.

Keywords: language learning, Japanese, out-of-class, media, motivation

INTRODUCTION

Out-of-class learning is one of the fundamental components of foreign language learning. Nunan (1991) suggested that learners who achieve high levels of foreign language proficiency often attribute their success to out-of-class learning. According to Nunan and Richards (2015), out-of-class activities can provide opportunities for addressing some of the limitations of classroom learning, because out-of-class learning provides authentic language experiences and opportunities for real communication. Out-of-class learning also provides an important context for developing learners' autonomy. As Littlewood (1996, p.430) argued, the process of increasing learners' autonomy in using and learning a language involves a stage in which "learners are able to use language (for communication and learning) independently in situations of their choice outside the classroom."

As Benson (2007) has argued, out-of-class learning should be theorized in the same way that classroom

learning has been theorized in recent years. Extant research has investigated the condition of out-of-class activities and the use of media in foreign language learning (e.g. Bailly, 2011; Doyle & Parrish, 2012; Inozu et al., 2010; Pearson, 2003). However, limited research exists on the type of out-of-class activities that can enhance language learning outcomes in terms of utilizing media, which are necessary for helping to construct effective out-of-class activities. Sundqvist (2011) has found that time spent on out-of-class activities predicted learners' oral proficiency level and vocabulary size. Lai et al. (2015) found that the number of out-of-class activities correlated with learners' learning outcomes, such as grades, confidence, and enjoyment of learning English. These previous studies investigated the relationship between time or volume of out-of-class activities and learning outcomes, but they did not observe how the content of out-of-class activities can affect learning outcomes. The relationship between the detailed content of out-of-

class activities and learning outcomes is yet to be studied.

The purpose of this study is to discover the relationship between the detailed contents of learners' autonomous out-of-class activities that use media and learners' motivation to learn Japanese. In this study, out-of-class activities are defined as "informal activities that learners engage in outside of class using the target language" by the authors. Therefore, preparation for lessons, review of lessons, and tasks that were part of the curriculum were excluded.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To achieve the research objective, we attempted to observe differences between out-of-class activities conducted by learners with high motivation and activities conducted by learners with low motivation. Thus, this study used a mixed method research design, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell & Clark, 2007). First, a preliminary investigation was conducted in order to divide the learners into two groups: the "learners with high motivation" group and the "learners with low motivation" group. We conducted a questionnaire survey on learners' willingness and motivation to learn Japanese, which was based on Sakurai (2009) and Ushioda (2011). It was carried out at a national university in Taiwan in October, 2017. In total, 253 students (female n=123; male n=130) who enrolled in Japanese courses, including beginner, intermediate, and advanced courses, which are elective subjects, responded to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in Taiwanese Mandarin, which is the students' native language, and it used a 5-point Likert Scale. The students were divided into two groups by the mean value of the questionnaire items (based on their points). The mean value of all items was 3.99 (Table 1), and thus, students whose points were above the average were grouped into the high motivation group, and students whose points were below the average were grouped into the low motivation group.

Second, to investigate learners' out-of-class activities using the Japanese language and their perception about the activities, we conducted semi-structured interviews in Taiwanese Mandarin with 13 students (learners with high motivation n=9; learners with low motivation n=4) who volunteered to take part in the interviews (Table 2). The interview questions focused on the following issues:

- 1) learning Japanese (including motivation and attitude)
- 2) out-of-class activities using Japanese
- 3) perception about out-of-class activities using Japanese.

To explore the relationship between out-of-class activities and learning motivation, the interview data were analyzed through the following steps. First, the records of interviews were transcribed in Taiwanese

Mandarin by the author. Second, we extracted all out-of-class activities that were mentioned by learners, and classified the activities into receptive and productive activities (Pickard 1996; Hyland 2004). Receptive activities consisted of activities that were related to listening and reading skills, whereas productive activities consisted of activities that were related to writing and speaking skills. Third, a modified grounded theory approach (M-GTA) was adopted to analyze learners' experiences and perception about out-of-class activities. Finally, we compared the difference between learners with high motivation and learners with low motivation in regard to the types of out-of-class activities that learners engaged in and learners' approach to out-of-class activities.

Table 1. Results of the questionnaire survey

Items	Points
1) Cultural interest	4.35
2) Epistemic curiosity	4.06
3) Desire for efficacy	4.21
4) Fun and enjoyment	4.36
5) Efficacy	2.96
Learning motivation ¹	3.99

¹ Learning motivation is the average of the five items: 1) cultural interest, 2) epistemic curiosity, 3) desire for efficacy, 4) fun and enjoyment, and 5) efficacy.

Table 2. Interviewees

	Gender	Course	JLPT ¹	Group ²
A	Female	Advanced	N2	LHs
B	Male	Advanced	None	LHs
C	Male	Intermediate	None	LHs
D	Male	Advanced	N1	LHs
E	Female	Intermediate	None	LHs
F	Female	Beginner	None	LLs
G	Female	Intermediate	None	LHs
H	Female	Beginner	None	LLs
I	Male	Advanced	None	LHs
J	Female	Intermediate	N5	LHs
K	Male	Advanced	None	LHs

L	Female	Intermediate	None	LLs
M	Female	Intermediate	None	LLs

¹ JLPT stands for the Japanese-Language Proficiency Test.

² LHs means learners with high motivation, and LLs means learners with low motivation.

RESULTS

The results of our analysis indicated the following implications: (a) learners' out-of-class activities using Japanese, (b) learners' perception about out-of-class activities, and (c) the difference between learners with high motivation and learners with low motivation with regard to out-of-class activities.

Learners' out-of-class activities using Japanese

We extracted 17 different out-of-class activities related to Japanese language from the transcribed data in the interviews. In addition, out-of-class activities were classified into receptive and productive activities, which are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Receptive activities

Activities	LHs	LLs
Listening to Japanese songs	8 (88.9%)	3 (75%)
Watching Japanese movies and dramas	6 (66.7%)	4 (100%)
Watching Japanese animation	8 (88.9%)	2 (50%)
Following social networking service (SNS) accounts of Japanese celebrities / general people	4 (44.4%)	1 (25%)
Playing Japanese games	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)
Reading Japanese novels	1 (11.1%)	0 (0%)
Learning Japanese using online teaching materials	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)
Learning Japanese using books	5 (55.6%)	1 (25%)
Watching YouTube videos related to Japan or Japanese language learning	5 (55.6%)	0 (0%)
Reading Japanese newspaper articles	1 (11.1%)	0 (0%)
Following SNS accounts in Japanese learning	1 (11.1%)	0 (0%)

Table 4. Productive activities

Productive Activities	LHs	LLs
-----------------------	-----	-----

Participating in events to meet Japanese people or for language exchange (language purpose)	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)
Participating in events to meet Japanese people (non-language purpose)	3 (33.3%)	1 (25%)
Interacting with Japanese people by SNS	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)
Participating in a translation circle of Japanese content or translating contents by oneself	3 (33.3%)	0 (0%)
Speaking Japanese with friends who are also Japanese language learners	2 (22.2%)	0 (0%)
Learning the Japanese language in Japan	1 (11.1%)	0 (0%)

In terms of receptive activities, both learners with high motivation and learners with low motivation showed a tendency to view Japanese songs and video content, such as animation, drama, and movies, as leisure activities. Furthermore, learners with high motivation were found to engage in more types of leisure activities for learning Japanese, than learners with low motivation. Learners with high motivation tended to utilize resources, such as websites, content, or teaching materials on the Internet, for leisure activities, or for learning Japanese than learners with low motivation.

Regarding productive activities in which speaking and writing skills are required, activities such as "participating in events to meet Japanese people or for language exchange (language purpose)"; "interacting with Japanese people by SNS"; "participating in a translation circle of Japanese content or translating contents by oneself"; and "speaking Japanese with friends who are also Japanese language learners" were mentioned by learners. Compared to learners with high motivation, learners with low motivation were found to have lower participation in productive activities. This finding demonstrates that learners with high motivation were actively creating opportunities to practice Japanese in an authentic context more than learners with low motivation.

Learners' perception about learning Japanese and out-of-class activities

From the interview data, 18 concepts and eight categories concerning the relationship between out-of-class activities and Japanese language learning were generated using the M-GTA method. The eight categories are as follows:

- 1) awareness of Japanese used in content
- 2) indifference to Japanese used in content
- 3) opportunities to use Japanese in authentic contexts

- 4) lack of opportunity to use Japanese in authentic contexts
- 5) events that create opportunities to provide feedback on Japanese language ability
- 6) pursuit of Japanese language ability
- 7) cross-cultural understanding
- 8) Japanese and one's career.

The concepts that compose each category are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Learners' perception about learning Japanese and out-of-class activities

Categories	Concepts
Awareness of Japanese used in content	Interest in Japanese used in content
	Awareness of various language forms
	Thinking content is useful for improving Japanese language skills
Indifference to Japanese used in content	Indifference to Japanese used in content
Opportunities to use Japanese in authentic contexts	Opportunities to use Japanese in communities
	Opportunities to interact with Japanese people using Japanese
	Participation in translation activities
Lack of opportunity to use Japanese in authentic contexts	Having less opportunity to use Japanese in daily life
Events that create opportunities for receiving feedback on Japanese language ability	Pronunciation of Japanese is praised
	Improvement in understanding of Japanese used in content
	Found mistakes in translated content
Pursuit of Japanese language ability	Desire to understand or translate independently
	Pursuit of accuracy while engaging in translation activities
	Taking the Japanese Language Proficiency Test
Cross-cultural understanding	Feeling a sense of affinity through communication in Japanese
	Understanding the cultural aspects of content
Japanese and one's career	Thinking that Japanese proficiency affects one's career

Thinking that the usefulness of Japanese is low in one's career

The difference between out-of-class activities in the group with high motivation and the group with low motivation with regard to out-of-class activities

We compared the narratives of learners with high motivation to learn Japanese and learners with low motivation to learn Japanese based on the out-of-class activities extracted from the interview data and the concepts generated by the M-GTA which are shown in Table 5. The relationship among the concepts are shown in Figure 1 to Figure 4. As a result, we discovered the following three differences between learners with high motivation and learners with low motivation:

- 1) differences in the type of activities undertaken
- 2) differences in the perception and approach to receptive activities
- 3) differences in the perception and approach to productive activities.

Differences in the type of activities undertaken

Learners with high motivation and learners with low motivation were both engaged in receptive activities, but learners with high motivation engaged in more types of receptive activities than learners with low motivation, as shown in Table 3 and Table 4. Furthermore, learners with low motivation seldom engaged in productive activities compared to learners with high motivation.

Differences in the perception and approach to receptive activities

Many learners with high motivation showed interest in Japanese used in the content while engaging in receptive activities. On the other hand, many learners with low motivation showed indifference to Japanese used in the content. In other words, although most of the learners were enjoying the Japanese content in the same way, learners with high motivation were more interested in the Japanese used in the content than learners with low motivation.

Learners with high motivation showed interest in Japanese used in the content, and this was found to be related to awareness of various language forms. Interest in Japanese used in the content was also found to lead to events that create opportunities for the learners to receive feedback on their Japanese language ability, and such interest supports the learner's pursuit of Japanese language ability, as shown in Figure 1. On the other hand, learners with low motivation showed indifference to the Japanese content, and pursuit of Japanese language ability was not seen (Figure 2).

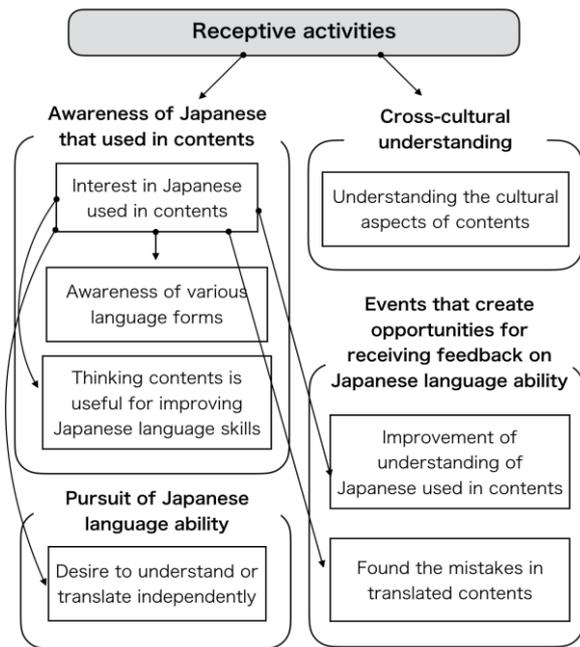


Figure 1. Learners with high motivation and receptive activities

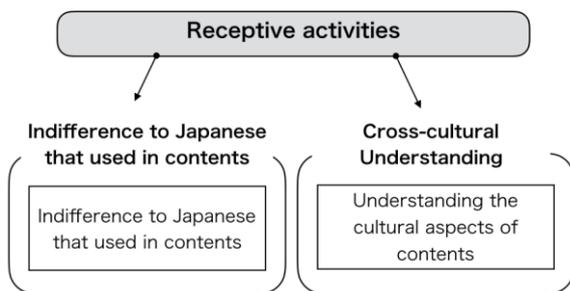


Figure 2. Learners with low motivation and receptive activities

On the other hand, most learners with low motivation did not participate in productive activities, as shown in Table 4. Furthermore, they often stated that they perceived a lack of sufficient opportunities to use Japanese in daily life. Thus, learners with low motivation experienced a lack of opportunity to use Japanese in authentic contexts. In addition, although one of the learners with low motivation mentioned that she has engaged in productive out-of-class activities, such as participating in events to meet Japanese people, and she has gained a cross-cultural understanding through the activities, this did not lead to events that created opportunities to receive feedback on her Japanese language ability and pursuit of Japanese, as it did for learners with high motivation. The approach of learners with low motivation in productive activities is shown in Figure 4.

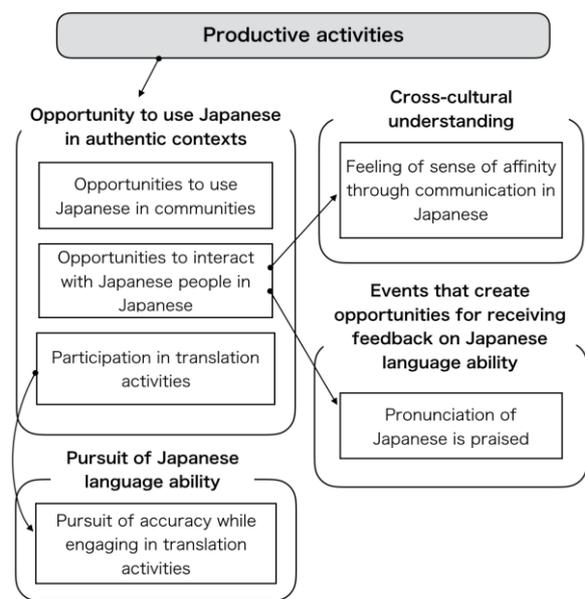


Figure 3. Learners with high motivation and productive activities

Differences in the perception and approach to productive activities

Learners with high motivation tended to create opportunities to use Japanese in authentic contexts compared to learners with low motivation. Many learners with high motivation stated that they experienced opportunities to interact with Japanese people in Japanese, and the experience made them feel a sense of affinity with Japanese people. Additionally, learners with high motivation showed they experience opportunities to use Japanese in daily life. For example, their friends often ask them questions about Japanese. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3, they have experienced a cross-cultural understanding, events that create opportunities for the learners to receive feedback on their Japanese language ability, and pursuit of Japanese through productive out-of-class activities.

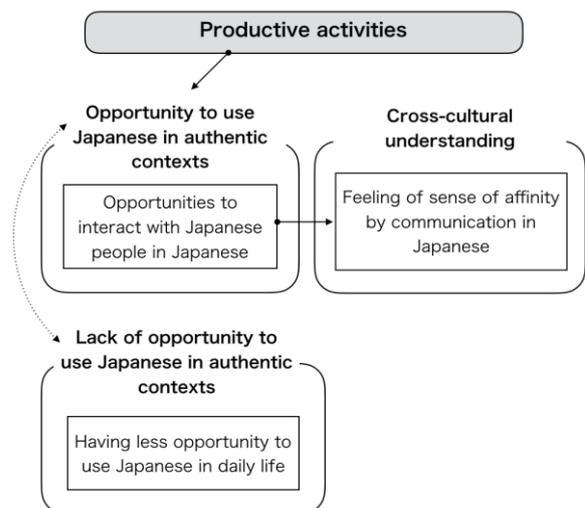


Figure 4. Learners with low motivation and productive activities

DISCUSSION

Relationship between out-of-class activities and motivation for learning Japanese

Learners can gain enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment through out-of-class activities. According to analysis of the interview data, several learners with high motivation often experience events that created opportunities for the learners to receive feedback on their Japanese language ability through out-of-class activities. They have an interest in the Japanese used in content, so they tend to pay more attention to Japanese used in Japanese dramas, songs, or animations. Additionally, several learners with high motivation stated that they gained cross-cultural understanding, such as an understanding of the cultural aspects of content and a sense of affinity, by communicating in Japanese through out-of-class activities. This shows that learners can experience enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment through both receptive and productive activities. On the other hand, many learners with low motivation feel that there are few opportunities to use Japanese in daily life. The following four elements shown in Figure 5 are considered reasons that out-of-class activities can bring learners enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment:

- 1) media content learners are interested in
- 2) real-time feedback
- 3) opportunities to use language
- 4) cross-cultural communication.

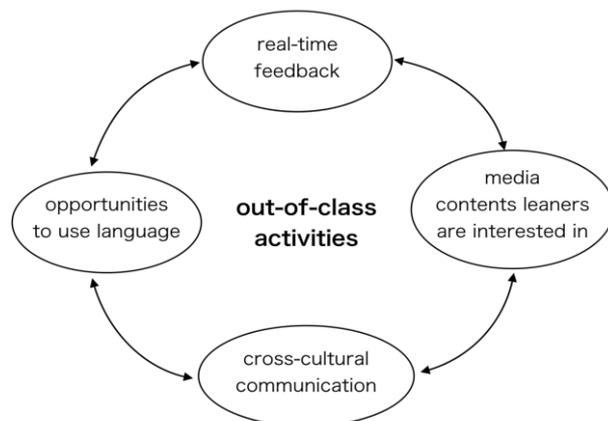


Figure 5. Four elements of out-of-class activities that bring learners enjoyment and a sense of accomplishment

These elements might provide implications for designing out-of-class activities or in-class activities that support out-of-class activities. The effects of these elements and examples of activities that include a combination of elements are as follows.

Media content learners are interested in and real-time feedback

Japanese media content, especially video content, such as drama, animation, and movies, are multi-modal so that learners can obtain real-time feedback from the audio or subtitles of the content. Using real-time feedback of content, learners can experience their own improvement in Japanese language skills.

Opportunities to use language and real-time feedback

Opportunities to use Japanese, such as interacting with Japanese people using Japanese or participation in translation activities, can also serve to provide real-time feedback to learners. For example, one of the learners mentioned that he talked with Japanese tourists and this was “appreciated greatly.”

Opportunities to use language and cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural communication occurs when learners use Japanese to interact with Japanese people. Learners stated that when they use the Japanese language to communicate with local people in Japan, they feel a greater affinity with the local culture and people.

Media content learners are interested in and cross-cultural communication

Cross-cultural communication does not occur only on a face-to-face basis. It can happen through media content. One of the learners mentioned that even when the Japanese media content was translated, he could acquire a greater understanding of the “cultural aspect” of the content than those who did not understand Japanese.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORKS

In this study, we presented four elements of out-of-class activities that contribute to motivation for learning: media content learners are interested in, real-time feedback, opportunities to use language, and cross-cultural communication.

However, research has not confirmed whether out-of-class activities comprising these four elements will affect learning motivation. In addition, learning motivation is not the only indicator of learning outcomes in language learning. For example, there are various indicators such as vocabulary size and conversation skills. The four elements mentioned in this study must be examined in future studies, to determine how they can affect various language learning outcomes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Ms. Chang and the students at National Cheng Kung University for their assistance in conducting the survey and interviews.

REFERENCES

- Bailly, S. (2011). Teenagers learning languages out of school: What, why and how do they learn? How can school help them? In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.) *Beyond the language classroom*. pp. 119–131. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Benson, P. (2007). Autonomy in language teaching and learning. *Language teaching*, 40(1), 21–40.
- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage publications.
- Doyle, H., & Parrish, M. (2012). Investigating students' ways to learn English outside of class: A researchers' narrative. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 3(2), 196–203.
- Hyland, F. (2004). Learning autonomously: Contextualising out-of-class English language learning. *Language Awareness*, 13(3), 180–202.
- Inozu, J., Sahinkarakas, S., & Yumru, H. (2010). The nature of language learning experiences beyond the classroom and its learning outcomes. *US-China Foreign Language*, 8(1), 14–21.
- Lai, C., Zhu, W., & Gong, G. (2015). Understanding the quality of out-of-class English learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 49(2), 278–308.
- Littlewood, W. (1996). "Autonomy": An anatomy and a framework. *System*, 24(4), 427–435.
- Nunan, D. (1991). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Tokyo: Prentice Hall.
- Nunan, D., & Richards, J. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Language learning beyond the classroom*. Routledge.
- Pearson, N. (2003). The idiosyncrasies of out-of-class language learning: A study of mainland Chinese students studying English at tertiary level in New Zealand. In Proceedings of the Independent Learning Conference 2003.
- Pickard, N. (1996). Out-of-class language learning strategies. *ELT journal*, 50(2), 150–159.
- Sakurai, S. (2009) *Psychology of Voluntary Motive for Learning*. Tokyo: Yuhikaku Publishing (in Japanese).
- Sundqvist, P. (2011). A possible path to progress: Out-of-school English language learners in Sweden. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom: The theory and practice of informal language learning and teaching*. pp. 106–118. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ushioda, E. (2011). Language learning motivation, self and identity: Current theoretical perspectives. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24(3), 199–210.