Outside Class Time Commitments of Japanese University EAP Students

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ABSTRACT

Homework is an important part of university, yet there is little data on how much time students spend doing academic work outside of class, particularly those learning English as a Foreign Language or studying English for Academic Purposes. This study attempts to address this gap by reporting on the academic and personal outside class time commitments of students in a university EAP setting in Japan. The students were asked to keep a journal of how much time they spend on homework and these entries, along with reported data about their university-related and other personal time commitments, were analysed. The results show that while participants in this study seem to have far higher time commitments than other Japanese university students, and, based on the results of some earlier studies, they study less than North American university learners. Furthermore, time spent working on tasks outside class varies greatly by week and declines throughout the academic year. The study ends with several modest recommendations and suggestions for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Homework is an integral part of university study. Most assignments and assessments- whether written work, presentations or tests and exams- are the result of work done or prepared for outside of class time, and it is generally accepted that university students should have a relatively high level of outside class work. However, that view is less common in Japan, where university is often seen as a break from the rigours of high school (including preparing for university entrance exams) and before the notoriously long hours of the working world in Japanese corporations. Joining a university club and having a part-time job are also seen as key elements of the overall university experience. However, just how much time students spend on outside class work is unclear.

In one university in Tokyo, the amount of outside work has been a topic of interest. While it is generally acknowledged that the students are expected to complete a large quantity of outside class work, understanding of how much time is spent on this work has largely been based

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on anecdotal reports from students. As the university has transitioned to 9-week terms (from the previous ten-week term), the amount of homework given to students has been a question of some importance in regards to curriculum revisions. While previous inter-departmental research has attempted to engage with the issue on an empirical basis, the data from these studies has relied on end-of-course surveys asking students to make broad estimates of the amount of time they spend working on academic tasks outside class, which may overlook fluctuations in how much time learners spend doing homework at different times of the course. This study seeks to further the ongoing discussion and understanding of the issue through a closer examination of student time commitments in the academic year.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While a substantial body of work exists on the general issue of homework and its impact on overall academic performance, previous research has largely focused on K-12 education and homework at university level has received far less attention from researchers. Little scholarly research seems to have been conducted on homework in higher education, even less on EFL university learners, and there are no peer-reviewed studies known to the author concerning the outside class time commitments of EAP learners. The largest study of homework and post-secondary student time commitments seems to be the National Survey of Student Engagement, which collected responses from 250,000 students in the United States and Canada from 1,700 institutions. The 2023 data revealed that the average university student spends 15.7 hours per week preparing for class, including 6.8 hours of reading. University-related activities, such as extracurricular activities (five hours per week) and commuting to and from the university (4.7), along with part-time jobs (8.3), were also substantial time commitments for students (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2023).

Post-secondary students in Japan, though, seem to spend far less time on homework than their counterparts in North America. Based on a survey of over 4,000 students conducted in 2021, data suggests that university students in Japan study outside class for just 3.5 hours per week (Benesse, 2022). This figure increases in more prestigious universities. Data from 2016 showed that students at higher-ranking universities study outside class for 5.8 hours a week. However, these figures were far below the amount reported for North American students (and indeed high school students in Japan, who study an average of just over 3 hours per day) (Kimura, 2019). In regards to other university time commitments, the same 2021 data (which was collected during the COVID pandemic) shows that students in Japan spend an average of 8.5 hours a week taking class (down from 11.7 in 2016), two hours doing club activities (down from 3.1 in 2016) and worked 6.9 hours a week at part-time jobs (down from 7.7 in 2016) (Benesse, 2018, 2022).

These figures would appear to be quite low compared to what might be expected of university students. A 1956 law states that to gain one credit, students at Japanese universities must study for a total of 45 hours, including both class time and outside class study (Government of Japan (n.d.)). In most Japanese universities, a class that meets once a week for 90 minutes in a 15-week semester is a one-credit course. This suggests that for each 90-minute class, students should do an additional 90 minutes of outside class work, such as preparing for class, assigned

readings and other homework tasks. When compared to the above figures, there seems to be a clear gap between expectations and reality in Japan.

This gap is seen in and perhaps the partial result of the widespread belief that universities in Japan are difficult to enter but relatively easy to graduate from. University acceptance is generally dependent on passing entrance exams which require a great deal of study, often in private after-school cram schools. Once accepted, however, university study is seen as less challenging. Indeed, a Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) website lists the comment "I've heard that students can get class credits without attending class and can graduate from university without studying" on a webpage explaining educational reforms. The fact that MEXT feels the need to address the question, stating that it is the responsibility of the university to ensure that students meet the 45 hours of study per credit standard, suggests that this is a real concern (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, n.d.).

Within the institution in which the present study was conducted, previous attempts have been made to better understand the overall time students spend on homework. Three 2022 surveys conducted at the end of each term asked first-year students to estimate how much time they spent per week on their Academic Reading and Writing (ARW) course, Reading and Content Analysis course (RCA), an intensive academic reading class, and Academic Skills (AS) courses, a group of classes covering a range of EAP skills, (see below for more detail on these classes). The survey received 131 responses at the end of the spring term, 60 in autumn and 233 in winter. As seen in Table 1, students reported studying somewhere between 10 and 12 hours a week, with little change between the three terms, even though in winter, students take only two AS classes compared to three in the spring and autumn terms (Fukuda, 2022a; Fukuda, 2022b; Fukuda & Fukao, 2023). These figures are clearly much higher than the amount an average university student in Japan studies outside class per week as found in other reports (Benesse, 2018, 2022).

TABLE 1
Average Weekly Time Spent on Homework in Hours

Course	Spring	Autumn	Winter
ARW	3.8	3.4	3.5
RCA	3.6	3.5	3.2
Total AS	3.4	5.1	3.8
EAP Total	10.8	12	10.5

Note: Students enroll in 3 AS courses in the Spring and Autumn terms and 2 AS courses in the Winter term. Source: Fukuda, 2022a; Fukuda, 2022b; Fukuda & Fukao, 2023.

While these internal studies presented a broad overview of outside-class study time habits, there were limits to the validity of some of the data. Firstly, the data was collected in a single survey administered at the end of the term, which asked students to report the average time they spent doing homework throughout the term. As the end of the term is the time at which students have the greatest number of assignments due, there is a possibility that recency bias

resulted in some overinflation of perceived average study times throughout the term. Secondly, the question types and coding of the data may prevent accurate analysis. For example, studying two to three hours a week was treated as three hours in the analysis, three to four was converted to four hours and so on. This means that for each answer band, figures could have been overestimated, in some cases, by nearly one full hour. Finally, students could also respond, "It varied week to week", instead of choosing a specific amount of time. This option presents little in the way of relevant data as it is likely true of all students and, in effect, removes their data from the study. In both spring and autumn, 6% of students selected this response and 12% in winter.

Summary of Previous Findings and Rationale Current Study

Previous research has shown that while university students in foreign countries spend a relatively larger amount of time completing academic work outside class, that is not the case for students in Japanese universities. However, the finding that study time increases in more prestigious Japanese universities seems to be supported by previous research in the same institution in which the present study was conducted.

Thus, the goal of the present study is to gain a better understanding of the weekly time commitments of students in an EAP program and how those commitments change during the term by examining the following research questions:

RQ1) How much outside class time do students spend per week completing tasks and preparing for their EAP classes?

RQ2) Does the amount of outside class time spent completing tasks and preparing for their EAP classes change over the three terms of an academic year?

RQ3) How much outside class time do students spend completing ARW assignments?

RQ4) Does the amount of outside class time students spend completing similar ARW assignments in different terms change over the three terms of an academic year?

RQ5) How much time do students spend per week on their non-academic commitments?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Setting

This study was conducted in a prestigious, small, private bilingual liberal arts university in Tokyo, Japan. The English program is an in-sessional (i.e., taking place concurrently to normal university content classes) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course which seeks to give students the foundation skills needed to study in English-medium university courses. Upon matriculation, students take the TOEFL ITP test and are divided into four levels, known as "streams". As there are only 4 streams, there can be notable differences in student abilities

within one stream. This study was conducted in Stream 3 Academic Reading and Writing (ARW) classes in each of the three terms, with two sections in spring and autumn and one in winter. Stream 3 students are considered to be intermediate and have TOEFL ITP scores of 450 and 580 or IELTS test results of 4.0- 5.5. Stream 3 is the largest of the four streams in the EAP program and, therefore, may provide the best overall view of an average student in the program. Participation rates were very high; in spring, 29 of 37 students participated in the study, 30 of 35 in autumn and 14 of 17 in winter, for a total of 73 out of 89 (82%). The program (see Table 2) is divided into two main groups of classes: core classes and Academic Skills (AS) classes. The core classes are Academic Reading and Writing (ARW), which meets for three 70-minute classes a week, and Reading and Content Analysis (RCA), which meets for two 70-minute sessions. AS classes meet once a week (with the exception of one twice-a-week class in spring), and students in Stream 3 take three mandatory classes a week in spring and autumn and select two electives from a possible four in winter. Core and AS courses are treated differently in terms of the number of credits students receive for completing them and the expected amount of outside class work students are expected to complete (see Table 1), though it should be noted that the guidelines for outside class work are not strictly enforced or monitored. In addition to EAP classes, students also take regular university courses totaling seven to eight periods a week. The main assignments students are required to complete in the ARW class are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 2
Classes per Week, Credits and Expected Outside Class Work

Course	Spring			Autumn			Winter		
	Classes	Credits	Outside Class	Classes	Credits	Outside Class	Classes	Credits	Outside Class
ARW	3	3	6	3	3	6	3	3	6
RCA	2	2	4	2	2	4	2	2	4
AS	3	1	<3	3	1.5	3	2	1	2
EAP Total	8	6	<13	8	6.5	13	7	6	12

Note: Each class = 70 minutes

TABLE 3
ARW Course Wide Assignments

Course	CWA 1	CWA 2	CWA 3
Spring	Paragraph (no sources, 200 words, draft/final draft)	Summary and Critical Reaction of textbook article (400 words, draft/final draft)	Essay (at least three sources, 900 words, outline/draft/final draft)

Autumn	Summary and Critical Reaction of textbook article (400 words, draft/final draft)	In class Essay	Essay (at least five sources, 1000 words, outline/draft/final draft)
Winter	In class Essay	Annotated Bibliography (300 words)	Essay (at least six sources, 1200 words, outline/draft/final draft

Prior to the collection of data, an application was made to the university research ethics board, and permission to complete this study was granted. All participation was voluntary, and there were no inducements for participation.

Data Collection

Each week, as part of an assignment, students were asked to record how much time they spent working on all EAP assignments outside of class. This information was collected in a spreadsheet at the end of each week, starting at the end of week 2 and ending at the end of week 10. As the data was collected in the ARW class, students were asked to be more specific about their outside class time use for that course and report separately on how much time was spent reading and preparing for the mandatory written assignments. Each weekly submission was graded based on completion and represented one per cent of the total course grade. At the end of the term, students were asked to share this data with the instructor and to complete a short survey which collected other data about their academic (other university classes), university (time spent commuting and participating in club activities) and any part-time job time commitments. The data was collected using a Google Form and then analysed.

RESULTS

Research questions 1 and 2 deal with the amount of time spent outside class completing tasks and preparing for EAP classes and any changes in those times when comparing terms. The average weekly study times for each course and term are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
**Courses and Weekly Study Times by Term in Hours**

Course	Spring	Autumn	Winter	Average	Per class hour
ARW	5.1 (1.7)	3.7 (1.2)	3.3 (2.1)	4	1.3
RCA	1.6 (0.5)	2.2 (0.7)	1.6 (0.4)	1.8	0.9
Total AS	1.9 (0.9)	1.4 (0.4)	1.2 (0.3)	1.5	0.3
EAP Total	8.6 (2.7)	7.3 (2.7)	6.1 (2.2)	7.3	0.6

Note: Standard deviations are reported in the parentheses

Several trends are immediately apparent. Firstly, there is a general decline in time spent working outside of class between each term, both by class and in cumulative time. Total study time per week changed from 8.6 hours in spring to 7.3 hours in autumn and 6.1 hours in winter. The largest change was found in the ARW class, where time spent on homework dropped from 5.1 hours per week in spring to 3.7 in autumn and 3.3 in winter. AS study time also declined from 1.9 to 1.4 to 1.2, though the winter course load for AS is two classes compared to three for both spring and autumn. The only exception to this trend is RCA, which saw a rise between spring and autumn, before winter, when the amount of homework time was similar to the spring term.

In addition, perhaps unsurprisingly, as seen in Figure 1, study times during each term vary greatly, though all three terms see a similar pattern. Workload tended to decrease after the first 2-3 weeks of the term and rose around Weeks 5-6 before again dropping slightly. There was a notable peak around Week 8 of each term, then another decline as the terms near their end. The exception was the winter term, during which the highest workload was seen in Week 10 when students completed the final draft of an ARW essay and prepared for a group presentation.

FIGURE 1
Weekly EAP Study Times by Term
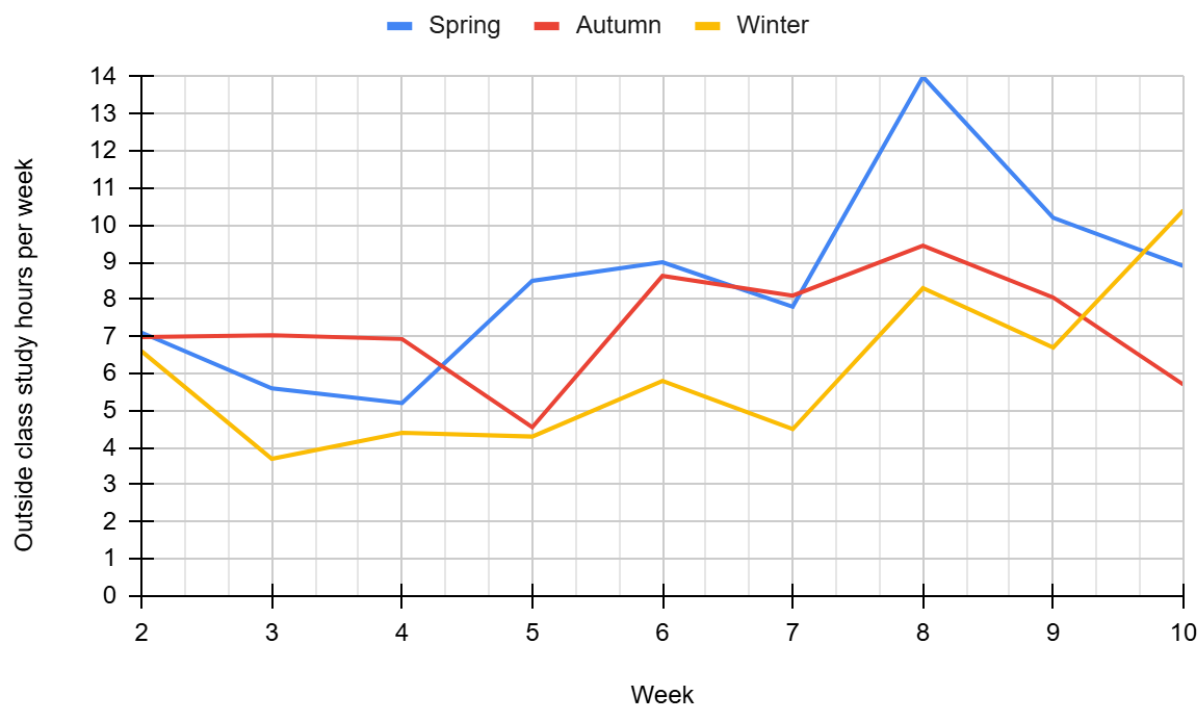
The final trend can be seen in the standard deviation measures, which showed a great deal of variation in reported outside class study times. As perhaps would be expected from a group of students with different abilities and working habits, the standard deviations were quite high, with EAP weekly totals of 2.7 in spring and autumn and 2.1 in winter, suggesting that different learners spend notably different amounts of time to complete the same tasks in the same courses.

The third and fourth research questions examine how much time students spend completing the major assignments in the ARW class and whether the amount of time needed to complete similar tasks in different terms changes. These figures largely mirror the broad trend of declining outside-class study time throughout the academic year. Table 5 below lists the major course-wide assignments and the amount of time students spent working on them outside of class. While the amount of time spent completing the summary and critical reaction paper are similar, there is a clear decline in the amount of time spent on essay writing. Students in the autumn and winter terms report spending nearly 8-9 fewer hours completing the essays compared to spring, even though the requirements for word length and number of required sources increase with each term. It should be noted that the winter times were heavily skewed by four entries which appear to be outliers. There were two entries of 13 hours in week eight, one entry of 10 hours in week nine and one entry of 24 hours in week 10, with each of these figures being more than two times as high as the next highest figure. Removing these entries from the data results in an overall class average of 4.6 hours spent on the winter essay, representing a nearly 50% drop between autumn and winter. While very low compared to the spring and autumn tasks, the figure for winter may be low as previous to the essay, students are asked to complete an annotated bibliography of sources they planned to use in the essay, a task on which they spent an average of 2.5 hours. While that task included several components not directly related to the essay (including comments on the reliability of sources), it nonetheless contributed to the essay by having the students begin collecting and reading possible essay sources.

TABLE 5
Hours Spent Completing Course-Wide Assignments

Task Details	Spring	Autumn	Winter
Summary and Critical Reaction (draft and final draft)	6.6	6.4	-
In-class essay	-	3.9	0.37
Essay (outline, draft, and final draft)	20.4	11.6	12.8

Considering the in-class essays, the drop between autumn and winter is precipitous. Students in both terms were given one full class period (70 minutes) to prepare for the essay by discussing, brainstorming and planning with classmates. In autumn, students spent nearly four hours outside class in preparing to write the essay; however, in winter students spent less than 10% of the time taken in autumn (less than half an hour) preparing for the task, with eight students reporting that they spent no outside class time preparing for the test whatsoever.

The survey further collected information about non-academic time commitments (research question 5). 50 of the 73 students reported having a part-time job with a mean working time of 8.7 hours per week. Sixty-two participants reported being a member of a school club or team and spent an average of 7.1 hours per week doing club activities. As many students do not

live on campus, commuting is another activity that occupies an average of 103 minutes a day. The study did not collect data on other time commitments such as caring for family members, volunteer work or other such duties.

Including EAP classes, the average student has 15 70-minute periods of class per week, totalling 17.5 hours. On average, outside class work totalled 7.3 hours a week for EAP classes. As students take an average of eight non-EAP classes a semester, 30 minutes per class period of outside class study time would add a minimum of four additional hours per week, for a total of 28.7 hours of class time and outside time class work, though this is likely a conservative estimate. The average commuting time (based on five return trips to campus per week) is 8.6 hours per week, which again may represent an underestimate as some students have classes six days a week. Therefore, students spend an average of 37.4 hours a week on non-optional university work and commuting.

In total, the 56% of students who have a part-time job and are a member of a university club and commute to university five times a week have an average of 53.5 hours in total weekly time commitments. This time does fluctuate throughout the term and could vary widely for other reasons, as students who live on or near campus have no meaningful commute, those without a part-time job or who do not participate in a club activity would have far lower weekly time commitments. Conversely, those with a longer commute time, who work more in a part-time job or have other personal time commitments, may have higher time use. Therefore, an overall range of between 50-60 hours a week seems reasonable.

DISCUSSION

The main finding of this study suggests that students in this cohort spend a considerable amount of time on university work. When data for part-time job work is included, a 50–60-hour commitment for university and related commitments leaves little time for additional leisure time, necessities, or other tasks (i.e., spending time with family, and housework). In comparison with other studies (see Table 6), the participants in this study spend more time on homework than the students examined in studies examining time commitments in Japan. The overall 8.5 hours of outside class work is far more than the national average of 3.5 hours per week, even when comparing students at highly-ranked universities. It is possible that the additional burden of EAP classes accounts for some of this difference. It can further be said that this group is also busier in general than other learners in Japanese universities, spending twice as much time in class (17.5 compared to 8.5 hours a week), far more in club activities (9.1 compared to 2 hours a week), and notably more time working (10.6 compared to 6.9). Though the 2021 figures were almost surely impacted by changes and restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, a comparison to 2016 data still shows significantly larger time use by the participants in this study. Compared to data from studies on North American students, the learners in this study spend almost half as much time doing outside class work. They nonetheless seem to have similar overall academic time commitments if class time, which was not collected in the North American study, is at a roughly equivalent level and when commuting is included.

TABLE 6
Comparison of Study Times from Various Surveys

Category	Current Study	Japan 2021	Japan 2016	North America
Classes	17.5	8.5	11.7	-
Outside class work	8.5	3.5	2.7	15.7
Club	9.1	2	3.1	5
Commute	8.6	-	-	4.7
Part-time job	10.6	6.9	7.7	8.3

Sources: Benesse, 2018; Benesse, 2022; National Survey on Student Engagement, 2023

The participants in this study fail to meet either national or university guidelines for outside class study time, though it should be repeated that the internal university guidelines are not monitored. To meet the Ministry of Education criteria, overall outside class work would have to be doubled. The question of what constitutes an appropriate amount of time spent studying outside of class is beyond the scope of this study, though it is difficult to conceive of a way to increase homework time to the extent seemingly required by the national guidelines without having a substantial impact on students.

The results in this study are notably different from those found in the previous studies in the same institution, with students reporting in this study that they spent much less time studying outside of class. In the spring term, reported outside class work was lower by 2.3 hours a week in the spring term, 4.7 hours a week in the autumn term, and 4.4 hours a week in the winter term. While the outside class time commitments for the ARW class are similar, the times for RCA and AS differ substantially. For instance, in the current study, the maximum time spent on all AS classes was 1.9 hours a week in spring, while the previous study returned figures between 3.4 (spring term) and 5.1 (autumn term) hours a week. Similarly, the study times for RCA were 1.5-2 hours per week higher in each term in the previous report. Though the previous study had the advantage of having more respondents, it only collected data at the end of the course, meaning there is a possibility that students overreported their figures based on their recent end-of-term experience. This is particularly relevant for AS classes that have little homework during the main part of the course but tend to have an end-of-class presentation or project due in Week 10 (the last week of the term), directly before students were asked to report their average study times. Combined with the previously mentioned issues in data coding, which meant that all figures were likely inflated to some degree, there is a strong possibility that the data from the previous study was somewhat higher than the actual figures. However, given the relatively few respondents in the current study (especially in the winter term), no firm conclusions should be drawn.

A second notable aspect of the data was the general decline in time spent completing tasks outside the classroom as the academic year progressed. Total EAP study time dropped by 1.4 hours a week between spring and fall and 1.2 hours a week between fall and winter, though again, it should be recalled that students have two AS classes a week in winter compared to three in the previous two terms. Most of this decline took place in the ARW classes, while the amount of outside class work times in the other classes remained relatively consistent. RCA outside class

study time increased in fall before returning to spring levels in winter, and outside class work in AS classes slowly declined from spring to winter, which is somewhat counter to expectations. Students receive more credits for the AS classes taken in autumn and winter terms based on the expectation that more outside class work is required. The autumn AS classes are particularly worthy of note as students spend 26 fewer minutes a week on outside class work yet receive more credits than in the spring term.

   The most convincing reason for the decline in outside class work throughout the three terms is the change in ARW assignment types. The spring semester assignments all require multiple steps; students are required to submit drafts for all three written assignments, effectively resulting in five separate submissions in that term. The use of an in-class writing task in the autumn semester means that there are only two multi-draft assignments in that term and one in winter. Furthermore, the in-class essay task in winter is comparatively easy to prepare for. The autumn task requires knowledge of three separate texts and analysis of an 840-word scenario. In contrast, the winter task relies on only one reading which students then apply to one of two scenarios, each about 230 words. That notwithstanding, the winter average of 22 minutes of outside class preparation does seem low. This decline in winter outside class work is somewhat mitigated by a fourth common assignment (group presentation), which took students an average of just under 2.5 hours to prepare.

   The exception to the overall decline in outside class study time on ARW assignments is the time spent on the Academic Reaction Paper. The figures for the ARP show little change between terms, with students accomplishing the task in 16 fewer minutes in autumn compared to spring. There is a possibility that students felt more comfortable with the task type, having completed a similar assignment in spring. The fact that the text used in autumn was slightly longer (four pages in autumn compared to three in spring) and students had approximately one extra week to complete the task may account for the similar length of time required to complete the assignment.

   Much of the change in overall ARW study times can be accounted for by examining time spent completing the major essay writing assignments due at the end of each term. Respondents reported an average of more than 20 hours to complete the spring term essay but under 12 for the autumn task, and, when outliers are removed, 4.6 hours in winter (though completion of that task was aided by a previous assignment). One possible interpretation of these results is that students became more familiar and adept in academic writing during the academic year, particularly as the task requirements (length and number of sources) increased in each term. Very few students come into the program with experience in academic writing beyond tasks for proficiency exams. Therefore, the task of finding sources which are then incorporated into an essay written in a formal academic style with in-text citations and a list of works cited is a new and substantial challenge for them. However, as they become more comfortable with this new style of writing, each subsequent task is less challenging.

   One other possible issue resulting in lower study times during the winter term is burnout. As found, students in this institution can be extremely busy, and after two terms, it is possible that they lose motivation and spend less time on tasks than they normally would. As ARW is the course that meets most often (three times a week) and has the longest and possibly most difficult written assignments (tasks in other courses vary from short presentations to shorter written tasks), it seems logical that the effects of accumulated fatigue and lack of motivation would manifest in the winter term.

Unsurprisingly, study time throughout each term varied greatly. Depending on the week of the term, outside-class study time for EAP classes can double in some weeks, particularly the peaks seen in Week 8 of the spring and autumn terms (see Figure 1). To some degree, this is unavoidable as most classes feature some kind of cumulative assignments such as a presentation, an essay or another written task, though the effect of this on students needs to be taken into account for course planning purposes.

CONCLUSION

Several aspects of the study have potentially constraining factors. First, as it relies on self-reported data collected by students and submitted to a teacher, there is the possibility of inaccurate information. Students were asked to note their time spent studying on a daily basis, though as the data was only collected weekly, it is probable that some learners simply made an estimate at the end of the week. Further, though the graded aspect of the data collection (weekly spreadsheets) was relatively low stakes (10% of final grade) and graded solely on completion, it nonetheless remains possible that students consciously or unconsciously inflated their reported study times thinking that an increased amount of outside class work would earn them a better grade, particularly as attitude and participation also comprise 10% of the final course grade.

In addition, the results for ARW in this study represent the outside class work of students in only one teacher's ARW class. Though there are a set of mandatory readings and written course-wide assignments (CWA), staff within the EAP program have considerable latitude in assigning additional readings and tasks, setting deadlines, deciding how many drafts can or need to be submitted for a CWA, and how much in-class time students are given to work towards completion of those assignments. Thus, the results for one teacher's ARW in particular may not be representative of the EAP program as a whole.

Finally, data from only one section was collected during the winter term, meaning conclusions from those figures should be made with care, particularly as several students are clearly outliers, reporting spending up to 10 or 24 hours on homework tasks in some weeks. Whether accurate or not, these figures skew the results, particularly in a small sample.

Universities are, of course, complex organisations and enacting change, even on a departmental level, can be difficult. Therefore, recommendations based on the findings of this study are limited to relatively simple suggestions. First, the large amount of time required to complete outside-class EAP work together with other academic and non-academic activities highlights the crucial importance of time management for this group of students. While time management skills are part of a spring term AS class, the lesson content is quite broad and does not include data on how much time the average student spends completing tasks outside of class or the fluctuations within the term. As planning is an important element of time management, providing students with information on how much time they will need to devote to outside class work could help them understand what those class time commitments will be and plan and prepare to deal with the workload they will face. In addition, teachers should be aware of the increased workload that students are subject to at the end of each term and possibly coordinate with each other to mitigate the stress on their learners by attempting to avoid having deadlines for major assignments on the same day. Furthermore, making reasonable efforts to limit

discretionary homework tasks during the busiest times of the term would seem to be another efficacious approach.

As noted, the general area of homework and EFL seems to be under-researched, particularly in EAP settings. This leaves a variety of possible study directions for researchers. As the institution in this study is somewhat unique, more work establishing the general outside-class time commitments of EAP students in Japan and other countries would be of benefit to the field. Additionally, more rigorous examinations assessing any relationship between time spent on homework and academic achievement or language proficiency would similarly provide administrators and instructors with valuable information.

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