Scrabble® Players as Model English Language Learners:

Exploring Autonomous Learning Behavior of Regular and Long-Term
Players at a Japanese University

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The following exploratory case study looks at a small group of *Scrabble*® gameplay enthusiasts at a Japanese university, whose regular and long-term engagement in the informal outside-of-class activity has demonstrated various ways the game can support their autonomous efforts to maintain and/or develop their English language skills after completing their compulsory English language courses. Much has been published on the importance of affective engagement and learner autonomy for the sustained interest and effort crucial for language learning, particularly in EFL contexts with limited contact opportunities with the target language outside of the classroom. Studies of English learners within their home countries or abroad in target language communities have revealed learners' self-directed action toward the perceived and actual limitations of their learning context to be another important difference between successful and unsuccessful learners. In this study, the regular and long-term players have over time revealed themselves to be successful and autonomous learners of English, who during their university years valued and proactively sought out outside-of-class English practice opportunities. Concrete examples of their self-directed actions, shown to be reliable indicators of second and foreign language learners' high level of achievement in their target languages, should serve as models for less experienced and/or effective learners within their learning context.

INTRODUCTION

Scrabble®, an interactional word-building game, has long been popular in among American educators who believe it to help students develop "language *and* social skills [original italics]" (*Scrabble Clubs Spell Learning, Fun*):

> Principals and teachers like that playing *Scrabble* builds spelling, vocabulary, and social skills, and can give students a chance to compete against other schools. And they love that students are learning without realizing it. (ibid.)

The "language *and* social skills" development potential of *Scrabble* play observed in American upper primary and lower secondary school students with their first language (L1) was also seen in the investigator's own teaching context among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners at a Japanese university where the game was introduced in 2010. Over the years, factors shown to be reliable indicators of second (L2) or foreign (FL) language learners' high level of achievement in their target languages, e.g., 'willingness to communicate' (WTC), and beliefs about and self-directed actions toward their language learning goals (Ellis, 2004), were regularly observed among the small number of long-term and regular players (Song, 2016).

These players tended to be successful and autonomous learners of English, who during their university years not only did exceptionally well in their classes but also valued and proactively sought outside-of-class English experiences, unlike most of their classmates who did considerably less beyond their compulsory English classes.

Similar correlations between self-directed actions and successful learners of English were found among Chinese and Korean university students studying within their home countries and abroad. Case studies of Chinese university students identified as 'unsuccessful' learners of English showed that while they were aware of the limitations of their Chinese EFL contexts, unlike their successful counterparts who sought out opportunities to supplement their classroom learning, they "experienced a noticeable sense of helplessness" when faced with the challenges of their learning context (Gan et. al., 2004, p. 240). Similarly, Yang and Kim's 2011 case study of two Korean adult learners' study abroad (SA) experiences in the US and the Philippines presents support for learner beliefs and agency as determining factors in how successful their English learning experiences were to turn out. The nine-month SA experience in the US ended up being 'unsatisfactory' for the 'Loner in Utah' who instead of taking advantage of his English-language-rich environment decided to spend his time abroad studying for the TOEIC test. In contrast, the five-month stay in the Philippines resulted in a more positive and successful ELL experience, despite less ideal conditions, due to the student's seeking out increased interactions with her teachers.

METHODS

Research Questions

Though *Scrabble* was initially started at the university in 2010 for the researcher's English Language Education (ELE) major students, the weekly games so far have been much more popular among students from other programs (e.g., economics, engineering, French, pedagogy, physics, psychology, etc.), for whom English language abilities are thought to be less important than with ELEs. This curious trend had the researcher looking for commonalities among the students who go out of their way to join the informal games, and how regular gameplay can benefit adult learners of English and their learning efforts in their EFL context.

The investigation into the potential of *Scrabble* gameplay to support autonomous English language learners (ELLs) in Japan sought to address the following research questions with the aid of a select group of third-and fourth-year students who have been coming to the weekly games for over a year:

1. What supplemental English language and interaction skills practice opportunities are available for ELLs in their Japanese EFL context?
2. What predictors of high attainment levels of language proficiency are possessed by those who voluntarily join the *Scrabble* games on a regular and long-term basis?
3. What aspects of *Scrabble* gameplay can help ELLs develop and maintain English language and interaction skills?

Participants and Their EFL Learning Context

The first research question addresses the EFL learning context of the *Scrabble* players who will be represented by the pseudonyms Mika, Aika, Satomi, Hitomi, and Yong, three third-year and one fourth-year Japanese female students and one fourth-year Korean male student (Table 1). Aika and Mika are third-year

(Y3) English language education (ELE) majors and former students of the teacher-researcher who were invited to join the game during their first year (2014). Though the invitation was extended to all ELE majors, Aika and Meika have been the most consistent and longest-term players of the game among their ELE classmates. A chance encounter on campus with Y3 linguistics major Satomi during her first year led to her being informed about the game. Yong, a fourth-year (Y4) physics major, at the start of his third year was invited to the games along with the rest of the students in the researcher's voluntary course, but was the only one to join the games. Hitomi came to know about the game in a car ride back to campus she shared with the researcher after they both volunteered at a local elementary school.

TABLE 1. Participant Data for Academic Year 2016

Pseudonyms	L1	Year, Gender	Major	Scrabble Start
Aika	Japanese	Y3, Female	English language education (ELE)	Y1, 2014
Mika	Japanese	Y3, Female	English language education (ELE)	Y1, 2014
Satomi	Japanese	Y3, Female	Linguistics	Y1, 2014
Hitomi	Japanese	Y4, Female	Educational psychology	Y3, 2015
Yong	Korean	Y4, Male	Physics	Y3, 2015

Data Types

Triangulation using multiple data sources (e.g., learner self-reports, teacher recollection, class records, conversations, and observation during gameplay) was attempted, but was not entirely successful as one of the participants (Hitomi) has not been a student of the researcher, two (Hitomi and Yong) were not able to complete the *English Language Background Survey*, and another two (Aika and Mika) were not able to join the games during the data collection period (April 2016).

Considerably more data from various sources (e.g., audio-recordings of unstructured initial and semi-structured follow-up interviews, written responses to structured surveys along with teacher recollection and class records) were initially collected for Satomi. The conversations during the first two *Scrabble* games (April 11th & 18th) were recorded. During the first game, the conversation was directed at Satomi and Yong's EFL learning background and how they supplemented their EFL classes in Japan and Korea. The third player was an international student from New Zealand learning Japanese at the university.

During the second game (April 18, 2016), Satomi was asked to elaborate on her previous week's mention of her childhood introduction to English and her parents' involvement in keeping up her interest in English with movies after their return to Japan from America. Though she was not a current student, she was also asked to complete the *English Language Background Survey*. The online structured survey of closed and open-ended items based on the *L2 Language History Questionnaire* (Version 3.0, 2015) asked learners about the start to their EFL experience, their estimation of their proficiency, and their belief about their future need for English (See Appendix). Most of the multiple-choice and Likert-scale items were followed by open-ended items asking them to elaborate on their choices. Though the survey questions were in English, the respondents were instructed in Japanese to as needed write or select the option: "I don't understand [the question]" (e.g., 質問をわからなかったら'I don't understand'を書いてください。). Aika and Mika also completed the survey in their Y3 writing class required for the English teaching license they were taking at the time with the researcher. Satomi completed the survey voluntarily in her own time, and Aika and Mika

as part of their class work alongside their fellow ELE majors during the first class of the term.

Data Analysis

The data for this exploratory case study consisted of written responses to an online survey, recorded group interviews of Satomi and Yong's gameplays, and follow-up emails in April 2016 as well as previous years' class performance and the researcher's recollection of Aika, Mika, and Satomi's gameplays since 2014, and Hitomi and Yong's since 2015. Participants' self-reports, gameplay interactions, and the teacher-researcher recollections based on class and gameplay records were reviewed for language and behavior which were then categorized using the list of *Factors responsible for individual differences in L2 learning* (Ellis, 2004, p. 530) shown below (Table 2).

TABLE 2. **Factors Responsible for Individual Differences in L2 Learning (Ellis, 2004, p. 530)**

Category	Factors
1 Abilities	(a) Intelligence
	(b) Language aptitude
	(c) Memory
2 Propensities	(a) Learning style
	(b) Motivation
	(c) Anxiety
	(d) Personality
	(e) Willingness to communicate
3 Learner cognition about L2 learning	(a) Learner beliefs
4 Learner actions	(a) Learner strategies

At the time of writing, all five participants had completed the required EFL courses at the university which were the final two years of their eight years of compulsory EFL education that started at their junior high schools in Japan and Korea. However, unlike most of their university classmates, they were continuing to pursue opportunities to 'use' English in their EFL context. Hitomi makes a point that, though she frequently gets English language input from listening to music and watching videos online, *Scrabble* is the only time she gets to actively 'use' the language in gameplay and surrounding chats. Hitomi's distinction between passive reception and active use is shared by the other players.

Satomi's eight years or so of compulsory English language education in Japan had led to substantial English language knowledge demonstrable in her EFL class grades and TOEIC scores (730 (2014), 850 (2016)). However, Satomi's accounts of her English language learning history reveal the necessity of considerable self-directed actions in and outside of her compulsory classes in order to achieve "above average" or "better than most" levels of English. Satomi shared in a survey (Appendix A), and during *Scrabble* gameplay conversations, how she "met" English at a kindergarten in the US while she was there with her family for six months for her father's work. However, she didn't start studying it formally until junior high school, six years after her return to Japan, in a less-than-ideal context:

My teacher at junior high doesn't teach grammar and words well, also my school was [too] small to accept [native-speaker teachers] for years. In class we followed textbooks very slowly so that I didn't

know the term "for example" until the end of second grade. I had to go to cram school for entrance exam. (April 18, 2016)

Her efforts were supported by her affective engagement with the target language media which started during her childhood in Japan, as her parents were fans of American movies and TV programs, and she grew up watching them with her family at home. With such family-supported interest in the target language, Satomi compensated for her junior high school's limitations with additional English study at a cram school to gain acceptance into a "unique" high school with an international track. In her high school with "university-like classes" and six native speaker teachers, she not only took more EFL classes than average Japanese high school students, her classes were taught by teachers using mostly or only English. Her high school EFL experience led to a smooth transition and success at the university where she feels her English language learning abilities are "better than most" of her university friends or "above average" compared to her classmates.

Yong, a Korean student, is in his fourth year studying in Japanese in the university's science faculty and plans to stay on in Japan to pursue a masters in physics here. He talks about how his interest in English language is sustained by his interest in music. An avid guitar player, he shares how he first started playing the American singer Taylor Swift's songs as a child. His social circle includes not only Japanese and Korean students, but English speaking international students from various countries. Including the weekly *Scrabble* games, his interests have led him to plentiful enjoyable opportunities to use English during his years of study within Japan.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. What supplemental English language and interaction skills practice opportunities are available for ELLs in their Japanese EFL context?

According to Hitomi, Satomi, and Yong's accounts, for those who seek them, there are plenty of opportunities to practice both passive and active and receptive and productive skills within their university (Research Questions 1-2). However, the results of a 2016 class survey, *English Language Background Survey* (Song, 2016; Appendix), revealed it is far from common practice for the *Scrabble* players' classmates


FIGURE 1. Screenshot of Survey Item on Outside-of-class English Use (Song, 2016)

to pursue out-of-class opportunities to 'use' the English. In a survey item using a 7-point Likert scale of frequency options ranging from 'never' to 'always' (Figure 1), students were asked about the frequency of use for listening, speaking, reading, writing, and other skills.

Figure 2 and Tables 3 and 4 show the trend of outside-of-class English language (passive/receptive) contact and (active/productive) usage among the 203 respondents: 197 undergraduate and 6 graduate students enrolled in compulsory (n=133, 65.5%), elective (n=60, 29.6%), and voluntary (n=9, 4.4%) courses and/or in *Scrabble* games (n=4). Among the 203 respondents, all four listed skills, listening, reading, speaking, and writing, were practiced less than 'regularly' (i.e., 'sometimes' or 'rarely') or 'never' by 70.1% to 88.7% respondents (Figure 2).

TABLE 3. How Often Do You Use English Outside Your English Language Classes? (N=203)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly	Often	Usually	Always	Did not understand
Listening	17 (8.4%)	52 (25.6%)	**85 (41.9%)**	30 (14.8%)	14 (6.9%)	2 (1.0%)	3 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Speaking	37 (18.2%)	**79 (38.9%)**	64 (31.5%)	11 (5.4%)	10 (4.9%)	1 (0.5%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Reading	20 (9.9%)	40 (19.7%)	**84 (41.4%)**	33 (16.3%)	17 (8.4%)	6 (3.0%)	3 (1.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Writing	35 (17.2%)	**84 (40.9%)**	61 (30.0%)	18 (8.9%)	3 (1.5%)	2 (1.0%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Other	58 (28.6%)	**59 (29.1%)**	52 (25.6%)	10 (4.9%)	2 (1.0%)	4 (2.0%)	1 (0.5%)	17 (8.4%)
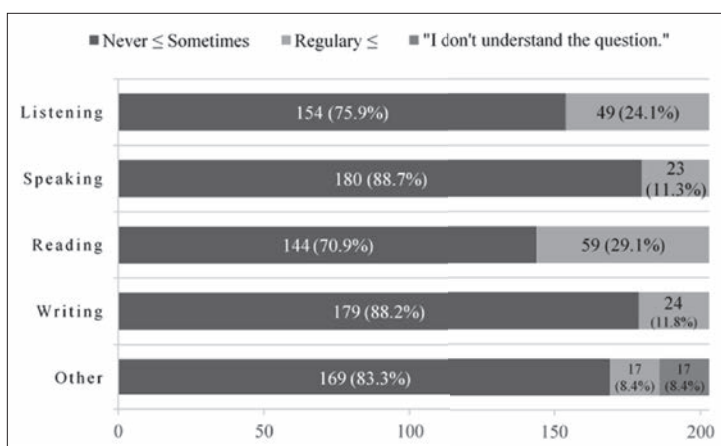
FIGURE 2. How Often Do You Use English Outside Your English Language Classes? (N=203)

Of the outside-of-class activities done on a regular basis, 'Reading' (n=59, 29%) and 'Listening' (n=49, 24%) were most common (Figure 2). However, as shown in Table 4, 'Reading for School' (n=111, 55%) was the reason for the high rate for reading, with 'Reading for fun' (n=30, 15%) being less common. A much smaller number of students reported engaging in more active use of the language, 'Speaking' (n=23, 11.3%) and 'Writing' (n=24, 11.8%).
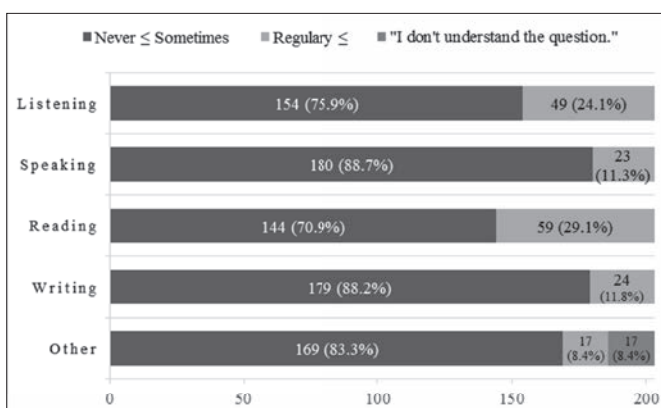
FIGURE 3. How Often Do You Use English Outside Your English Language Classes? (N=203)

TABLE 4. How Do You Use English Outside Your English Language Classes? (N=203)

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly	Often	Usually	Always
Listening to radio	109	56	25	8	2	2	1
	(53.7%)	(27.6%)	(12.3%)	(3.9%)	(1.0%)	(1.0%)	(0.5%)
Reading for fun	56	76	45	15	6	4	1
	(27.6%)	(37.4%)	(22.2%)	(7.4%)	(3.0%)	(2.0%)	(0.5%)
Reading for School/Work	12	18	73	59	24	13	4
	(5.9%)	(8.9%)	(36.0%)	(29.1%)	(11.8%)	(6.4%)	(2.0%)
Writing (emails) to friends	99	50	40	6	4	3	1
	(48.8%)	(24.6%)	(19.7%)	(3.0%)	(2.0%)	(1.5%)	(0.5%)
Writing for school/work	32	51	69	30	12	8	1
	(15.8%)	(25.1%)	(34.0%)	(14.8%)	(5.9%)	(3.9%)	(0.5%)
Watching TV	56	72	54	8	12	0	1
	(27.6%)	(35.5%)	(26.6%)	(3.9%)	(5.9%)	(0.0%)	(0.5%)

Though findings represented in Tables 3 and 4 are not unexpected in an EFL setting and among average Japanese university students, or those new to the university (i.e., first years), it was surprising to find similarly low rates among third-and fourth-year English language education majors (N=37) in their last year or two at the university, preparing to become English language teachers. The second year students' data were not analyzed separately due to insufficient data and to focus on the comparison of Mika and Aika's data with their classmates and seniors, third (n=28) and fourth (n=9) year ELE majors, respectively (Table 5 & Figure 4).

TABLE 5. How Often Do You Use English Outside Your English Language Classes? (N=37)

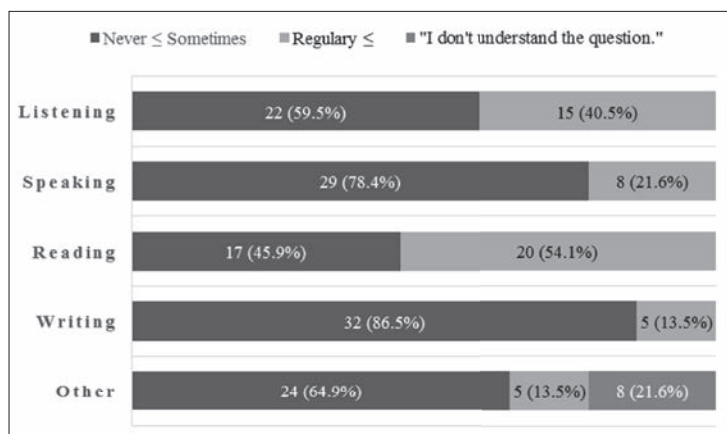|	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Regularly	Often	Usually	Always	"I don't understand"
Listening	0	7	15	11	2	1	1	0
	(0.0%)	(18.9%)	(40.5%)	(29.7%)	(5.4%	(2.7%)	(2.7%)	(0.0%)
Speaking	1	10	18	3	5	0	0	0
	(2.7%)	(27.0%)	(48.6%)	(8.1%)	(13.5%	(0.0%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Reading	0	5	12	12	5	2	1	0
	(0.0%)	(13.5%)	(32.4%)	(32.4%)	(13.5%	(5.4%)	(2.7%)	(0.0%)
Writing	0	15	17	2	2	1	0	0
	(0.0%)	(40.5%)	(45.9%)	(5.4%)	(5.4%	(2.7%)	(0.0%)	(0.0%)
Other	7	7	10	3	0	1	1	8
	(18.9%)	(18.9%)	(27.0%)	(8.1%)	(0.0%	(2.7%)	(2.7%)	(21.6%)

FIGURE 4. How Often Do You Use English Outside Your English Language Classes? (N=37)

Except for the small majority (n=20, 54.1%) of students who reportedly practice 'reading' on a regular or more frequent basis, the other skills were practiced with less frequency (13.5-40.5%).

2. What predictors of high attainment levels of language proficiency are possessed by those who voluntarily join the *Scrabble* games on a regular and long-term basis?

Much has been published on the importance of affective engagement and learner autonomy for the sustained interest and effort crucial for language learning, particularly in EFL contexts with limited contact opportunities with the target language outside of the classroom (Ellis, 2004; Tomlinson, 2011, 2014). Studies of ELLs studying within their home countries or abroad in target language communities have revealed learners' self-directed actions toward the perceived and actual limitations of their learning context to be an important individual difference (ID) factor between successful and unsuccessful learners (Gan, et. al., 2004; Yang & Kim, 2001).

Though the *Scrabble* players tended to do exceptionally well in their EFL courses and proficiency tests, they felt they needed additional practice opportunities to develop their communicative and interactional competencies outside their EFL classrooms, and valued the weekly *Scrabble* games as a way to address the self-perceived limitations of their learning context.

Aika, Mika, and Satomi were all top students in their respective classes with the researcher, and their TOEIC scores from their first year (2014), ranging from 730 to 840, are well over class (M=715.5) and national averages (M=454) for first year examinees in the same year for first year 'Language/Literature (English major)'. According to the Institute for International Business Communication (IIBC), the 2014 national average for the 53,953 first-year 'Language/Literature (English major)' was 454. Having done exceedingly well by institutional standards, they believe themselves to be successful learners on the basis of their positive feelings toward the language. In the following Likert Scale item, they chose '4' and gave as reasons their positive feelings about using the language.

FIGURE 5. Screenshot of Survey Items on English language Learning Success

The following are the 'successful' ('4' according to Figure 5) learners' elaboration on their self-assessed level (a) and their beliefs about the difference between successful and unsuccessful English language learners (b):

Aika, Successful 4

a. **I like English** and I feel less scared **when using English**. What is the [sic] more, I want to explore the language. Those are reason why I [chose] the level above **[4]**

b. I think the most important differences between successful and unsuccessful English learners is the different confidence in using English. I think successful learners can think in English while unsuccessful learners cannot. Another difference may be their motivation in using English.

Mika, Successful 4

a. "**I like English** and I can **enjoy using English**" (Mika).

b. "amount of practice by [oneself]"

Satomi, Successful 4

a. I scored 4, because I think my English is enough [functional] and **I enjoy** my life by using English.

b. Successful learners don't hesitate to speak to foreigners. Successful learners have strong interests to different cultures. However unsuccessful learners don't have a courage to make some actions to improve their skills and try to believe themselves as poor at English.

Of the factors indicative of high levels of language proficiency among English language learners, the three 'successful' learners above reported confidence in their abilities, affective engagement, and belief in and self-directed actions toward use as their reasons for believing themselves to be 'successful'.

3. What aspects of *Scrabble* gameplay can help ELLs develop and maintain English language and interaction skills?

As an example of a highly interactive task-oriented activity involving multiple players, *Scrabble*

gameplay has shown the potential to help its players develop interactional skills within a context that also naturally encourages attention to vocabulary and grammar. Long-term regular players have been observed over time developing exceptionally high communicative competence and interactional skills. From the first month or so of gameplay with players silently concentrating on their tiles unmindful of the time-limit, they develop the confidence and communicative abilities to teach the game in the target language to newer players, many of whom are brought along by the experienced players.

Chen (2005) has noted that competitive atmosphere gameplay provides meaningful context for purposeful use of the target language, and first-year Taiwanese college students were observed to be more attentive to instruction and committed to using the target language than within their language classes. In addition to target language listening, *Scrabble* gameplay also encourages creativity and experimentation with the target language which is a condition shared with the first language (L1) acquisition process and likely to be beneficial with second and foreign language (L2 and FL) learners as well. More L1-like naturalistic approaches call for regular meaningful interactional opportunities for L2 and FL learners, and enjoyable and challenging gameplay can support ELLs' autonomous learning efforts beyond their compulsory classes.

Furthermore, as the games are made up of students from various faculties and frequently joined by guest players, regular attendees can practice interacting with players of varying degrees of social distance (e.g., from close friends to strangers) and status (e.g., from younger students to professors), and even differing native languages. *Scrabble*'s long-established popularity around the world has led to the games at the university being joined by a series of international guest players from various foreign countries, e.g., visiting professors and researchers and local teachers from Canada, New Zealand, the UK, and the US, and highly motivated learners and proficient users of English from China, Korea, Germany, Rwanda, and Thailand. Consequently, the student players have been provided with valuable opportunities to interact in authentic and meaningful ways with various English language speakers.

A close look into the five *Scrabble* players revealed how their affective engagement and self-directed actions to counter limitations of their EFL context are not common among their classmates. Unlike most ELLs in their EFL context, they sought out and partook regularly in opportunities to use English beyond their EFL classrooms. Though *Scrabble* is only one of a variety of ways they sought to practice English use, their behavior during years of gameplay has led to the following conclusions about the experience: winning plays require, among other valuable skills, strategy use, attention to other players, quick thinking, and flexibility. In addition, frequent use of a monolingual target-language paper dictionary and queries about word forms and meaning can be observed during gameplay as learners compete for higher scoring words. Sometimes, words played can be dated (e.g., 'ye' for 'you'), far down on the frequency lists (e.g., doe), not commonly used (e.g., 'ta'), and/or already known by the learner (e.g., brain). However, such seemingly unimportant word encounters have led to tangential conversations about a Christmas song ('Oh Come All Ye Faithful'), *Sound of Music Do-Re-Mi* lyrics ("Doe, a deer, a female deer"), a BBC Drama *Sherlock* (where Dr. Watson says 'ta' to thank a barkeep), and laughter over the example sentence provided by the researcher for the verb form of 'brain' which allowed for −ed/-ing endings ([A Scrabble player's name] was brained by his girlfriend with a frying pan).

CONCLUSION

The self-report and direct observation data of long-term regular *Scrabble* players revealed the rarity of their goal-oriented attitudes and autonomous behavior toward supplemental target language practice. The successful learners' interest in and efforts to learn and use the language for the practical purpose of communication were helped by valued and enjoyable outside-of-class English experiences. In contrast, their peers, who on average did not find ways to complement their compulsory EFL classes, were more likely to find their enthusiasm for the language waning.

Further research directions will include efforts to document the other language contact and use activities enjoyed by the *Scrabble* players in their daily lives, by inviting them to take part in the data collection and analysis process to help identify whether and how their beneficial behavior can be passed on to less experienced and/or effective learners of English.

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APPENDIX

Key Questions Asked in English Language Background Survey

1. What is your major? (If you haven't decided yet, what do you plan to choose? 質問をわからなかったったら 'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

2. What are your future (career) goals? (What would you like to become, e.g., a high school English teacher? Where would you like to work, e.g., researcher at an American university? 質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

3. English needs for your future * (How important do you think English will be in your future life and career? 質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

English in personal life	English for job
* Definitely will not	* Definitely will not
* Probably will not	* Probably will not
* Probably will	* Probably will
* Definitely will	* Definitely will
* I don't understand the question.	* I don't understand the question.

4. How old were you when you started learning English? (Please include details about where (e.g., at juku) and with whom (e.g., parents, teachers) you started learning English. 質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

5. Current (April 2016) motivation for learning English (What are your goals for our class / this term?　質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

6. Enjoyable & useful English activities (Have you tried the following activities and have you enjoyed and/or found them useful? 質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand'を書いてください。)

   a. Discussion in pairs (2 people)
   b. Discussions in small groups (3-5 people)
   c. Discussions in large groups (5+ people)
   d. Discussions as a whole class
   e. Pair speeches/presentations
   f. Speeches/presentations to small groups
   g. Speeches/presentations to large groups
   h. Speeches/presentations to the whole class
   i. Giving comments to classmates about their speeches/presentations
   j. Getting classmates' comments about your own speeches/presentations

   * No experience with the activity
   * Mostly fun
   * Both fun and useful
   * Mostly useful
   * Neither fun or useful
   * I don't understand

7. Favorite English class activities (What kinds of activities have you enjoyed and would like for us to do in our class? Please give details, e.g., Watching TV , Watching Japanese anime in English.　質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

8. Current English skill (Rate your current ability in English terms of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. 質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)
   Very poor - Poor - Limited - Functional - Good - Very good - Native-like - I don't understand the question.

9. English proficiency test scores (If you have taken standardized language proficiency tests (e.g., EIKEN, TOEIC, etc.), write down the score(s) and when you took the test(s). If you don't remember the exact score write '(Approximate score)' next to your answer, e.g., "500 (Approximate score)")

10. How often do you do use English outside your English language classes? 質問をわからなかったたら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

a. Listening
b. Speaking
c. Reading
d. Writing
e. Other

* Never	* Often
* Rarely	* Usually
* Sometimes	* Always
* Regularly	* I don't understand the question

11. How do you do use English outside your English language classes? (質問をわからなかったら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

a. Watching TV
b. Listening to radio
c. Reading for fun
d. Reading for school
   (e.g., homework)
e. Writing emails to friends
f. Writing for school/work

* Never	* Often
* Rarely	* Usually
* Sometimes	* Always
* Regularly	* I don't understand the question

12. Other outside-of-English class examples (In addition to above activities, e.g., watching TV, etc., how else do you use English outside of your classes?　質問をわからなかったら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

13. Language LEARNING skill (How good do you feel you are at learning English compared to your friends, classmates, or other people you know?質問をわからなかったら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

a. Your high school friends
b. Your high school classmates
c. Your university friends
d. Your university classmates

* Poorer than most	* Above average
* Below average	* Better than most Best
* Average	* I don't understand the question

14. Have you been abroad? (Where did you go? How long were you there? What language(s) did you use? 質問をわからなかったら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

15. Are you a successful (English Language) learner?　　**1**　　　　2　　　　3　　　　4　　　　**5**
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(No, not at all)　　　　　　　　　　　　**(Yes, very)**

16. Explain how / why you are or are not a successful learner. (Explain what it means to be successful and the reason why you are or are not. Please include information about your level, abilities, behavior, etc.　質問をわからなかったら'I don't understand' を書いてください。)

Scrabble® Players as Model English Language Learners:
Exploring Autonomous Learning Behavior of Regular and Long-Term Players at a Japanese University

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This exploratory case study looks at a small group of *Scrabble*® gameplay enthusiasts at a Japanese university, whose regular and long-term engagement in the informal outside-of-class activity has demonstrated various ways the game can support their autonomous efforts to maintain and/or develop their English language skills beyond their compulsory English language courses. Much has been published on the importance of affective engagement and learner autonomy for the sustained interest and effort crucial for language learning, particularly in EFL contexts with limited contact opportunities with the target language outside of the classroom. Studies of English learners within their home countries or abroad in target language communities have revealed learners' self-directed action toward the perceived and actual limitations of their learning context to be another important difference between successful and unsuccessful learners. In this study, the regular and long-term players have over time have revealed themselves to be successful and autonomous learners of English, who during their university years valued and proactively sought out outside-of-class English practice opportunities. Concrete examples of their self-directed actions, shown to be reliable indicators of second and foreign language learners' high level of achievement in their target languages, should serve as models for less experienced and/or effective learners within their learning context.

要 約

英語学習者モデルとしての *Scrabble*® 競技者
−日本の大学における定期・長期競技者の自立した学習習慣に関する考察−

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　本論文は，日本の大学における英語教室外の自主的な定期的・長期的競技者グループが示した *Scrabble*® の有用性について報告するものである。この語彙ゲームは必須の正規英語授業科目に加えて，学生の英語能力を維持・伸長するための自立的な努力を促す多くの可能性を有している。言語学習に必要な持続可能な関心と努力のために内面点的関与や学習者の自立性についての重要性は多くの報告がなされている。これらの重要性は，とりわけ教室外での目標言語との接触が限られている EFL（English as a foreign language）の状況下においては言うまでもない。これまでの自国及び外国での目標言語使用のコミュニティにおける英語学習者に関する研究では，学習環境に対する現実的な制限に関して自律した行動をとることが，学習者としての成功の可否を左右すると報告されている。本調査において，定期的・長期的競技者は徐々に「成功する」また「自立した」英語学習者となる姿を示した。彼らは大学在学中に教室外での英語能力を磨く機会を有益だと捉え，前向きにそのような機会を求めたのである。第二言語あるいは外国語学習の高い目標を達成しようとする際に確かな拠り所となる考えられ，自律した学習行動のこのような具体的事例は，経験が少なくまだ成果の出ていない学習者にとって良きロールモデルとなり得ると考える。