

# The Effect of Socio-Economic Status on Informal Mobile-Assisted Language Learning

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## 1. Abstract

For most outsiders, Japan is often seen as a highly technologically proficient country with a wealthy population. However, recession has been constant in the nation since the economic collapse of the 1990s. Now, one in six Japanese children are reported to live in poverty (CAO, 2015). The economic disparity is growing between citizens which affects their access to quality education and the technological tools needed to facilitate learning in the modern world. English language skills in particular are becoming increasingly important for future careers. Therefore, it is important to understand how factors such as socio-economic status can affect language learning. To this end, the researcher investigated the effect of socio-economic status on acceptance and usage of personal mobile devices by comparing usage of mobile devices among private and public university students. The results of this study showed that there was a significant difference in usage of informal mobile-assisted language learning between students who were economically advantaged and those who were not.

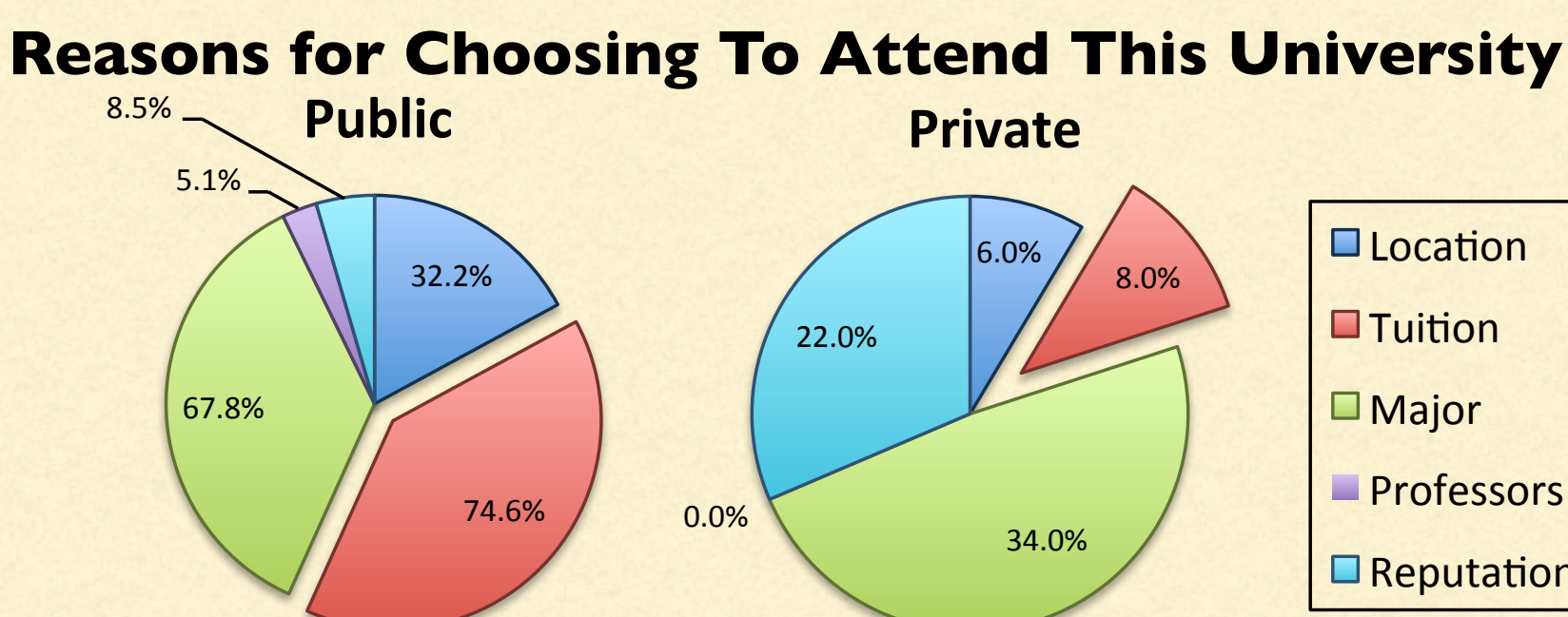
## 2. Participants

Setting	A public university and a private university in western Japan
Participant	112 (Public university 62, private university 50)
Gender	Male (52.6%) , Female (42.1%)
Age	18 to 20
Majors	Economics (44.6%) Environmental science (27.7%) Human cultures (27.7%)

## 3. Background

This research was conducted to investigate if socio-economic status affected acceptance and usage of mobile devices for learning English informally. However, identifying socio-economic status was difficult because administrators at the universities where data were collected prohibited directly asking students for this information. The researcher hypothesized that students attending a public university were more likely to be economically disadvantaged than students attending a private university. This is because the cost of tuition is 50% less at public universities than at private ones (MEXT, 2014; 2016). In order to investigate this hypothesis, the researcher surveyed students in both settings about why they chose to attend their respective universities.

The result shows that 74.6% of students chose public university because of the lower tuition, on the other hand, only 8% chose this answer in private universities. The factors that both groups had in common were major (34%) and reputation (22%).



Moreover, many studies have been conducted to examine the relationship between social-economics and university choice. For example, research conducted by Japan Student Services Organization (2014) shows that average family income among public university students is lower than private and national universities.

Average of Annual income of parents

National	¥8,390,000
Public	¥7,330,000
Private	¥8,260,000

## 4. Research Questions

- (1) What is Japanese university students' overall acceptance of the use of mobile devices for informal English-language learning as measured by a quantitative scale based on the TAM?
- (2) What is their actual use of mobile devices for informal English-language learning?
- (3) Are there differences in usage and acceptance due to socio-economic status?

TAM = Technology Acceptance Model



## 5. Data Collection

### Survey Instrument

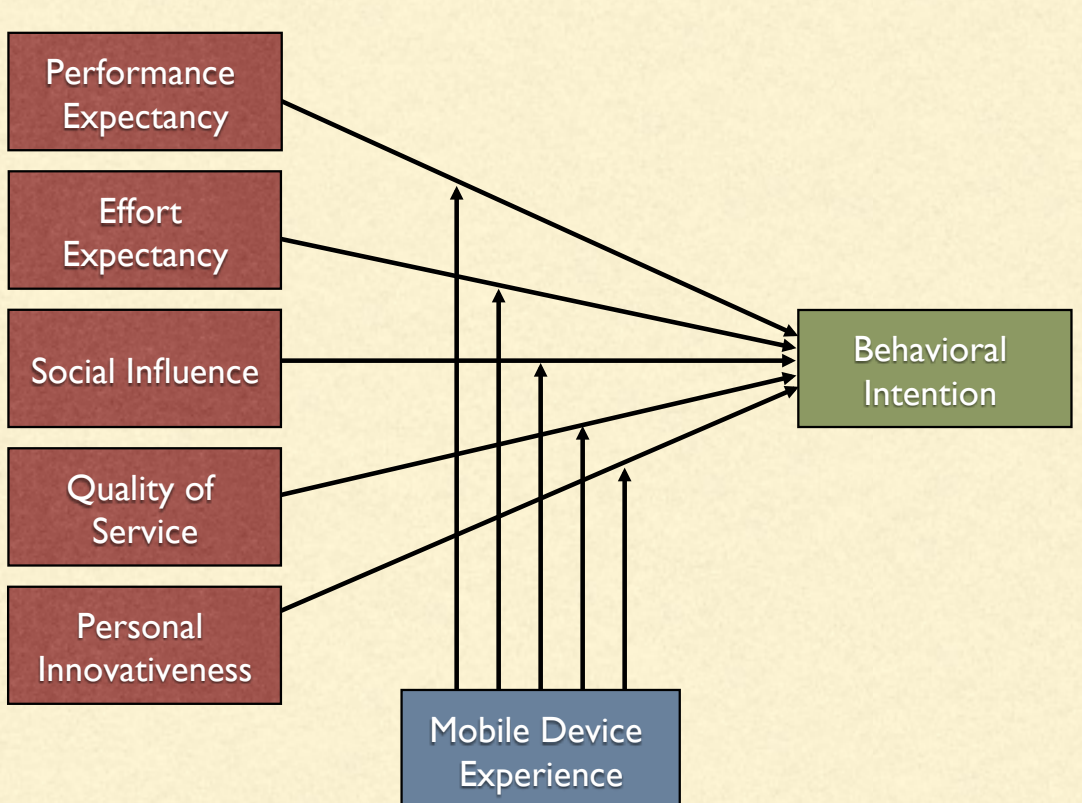
The survey instrument is based on "M-learning Acceptance Model" by Abu Al-Aish & Love (2013). A modified and translated version created by Mills (2016) was used for this study. That version was modified to focus on informal mobile-assisted language learning. In addition, it was translated into Japanese.

### Questionnaire

- The questionnaire included the following sections:
- (1) Acceptance of mobile devices for informal English learning
  - (2) Usage of mobile devices for informal English learning
  - (3) Demographics

### M-learning Acceptance Model

Abu Al-Aish & Love (2013)



### Data collection

- 3 classes
- Paper-based instrument
- Letter (Rights and Explanation)
- Response rate (89%)
- Reliability
  - Acceptance ( $\alpha = .88$ )
  - Usage ( $\alpha = .81$ )

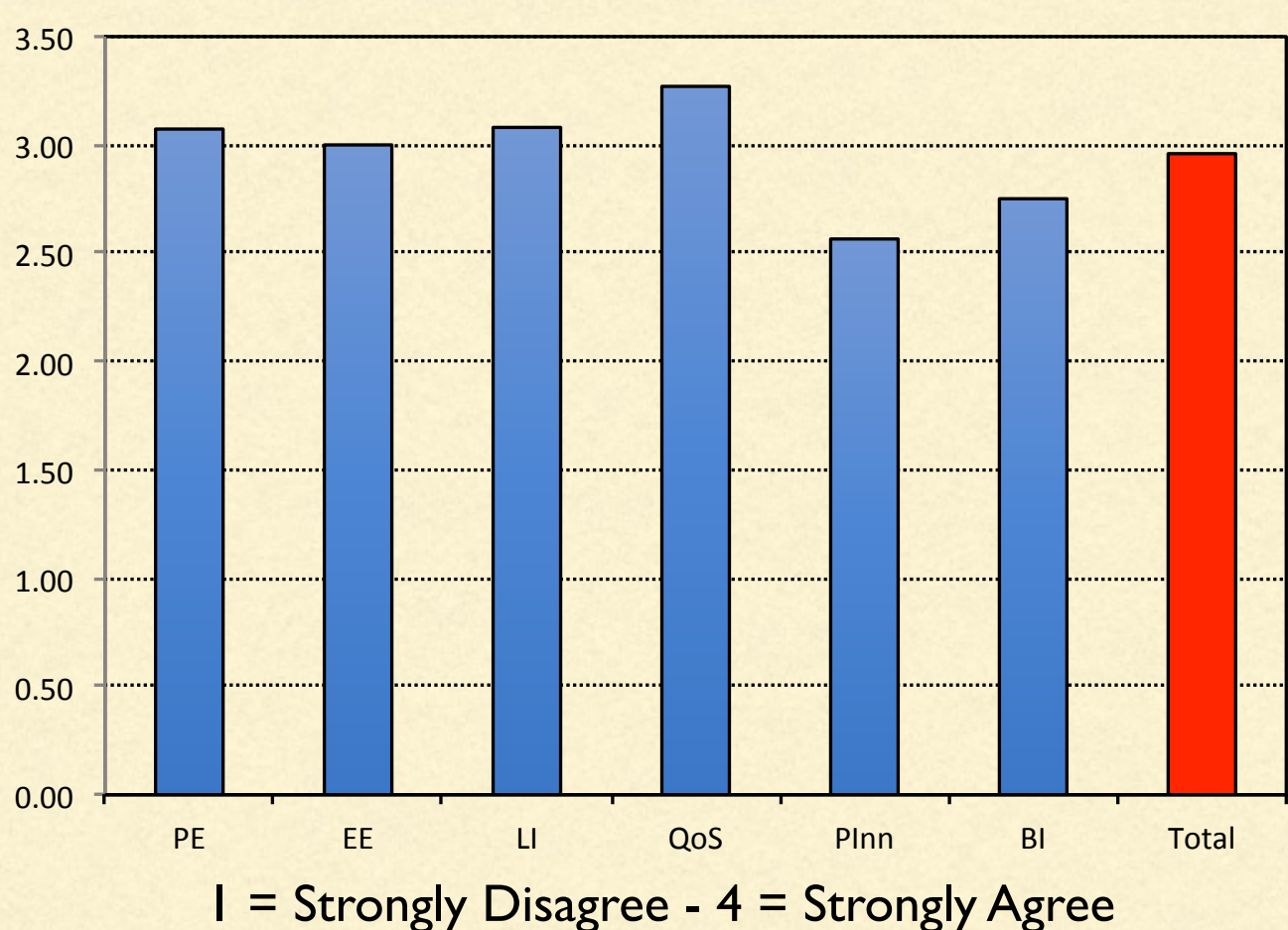
### Analysis

- Data clean up
- Frequencies and descriptives
- Independent ttest

## 6. Result

There was not a significant difference between public and private university students regarding acceptance of mobile devices for informal mobile-assisted language. This indicated that both groups of students were generally accepting of the use of mobile devices for informal English-language learning.

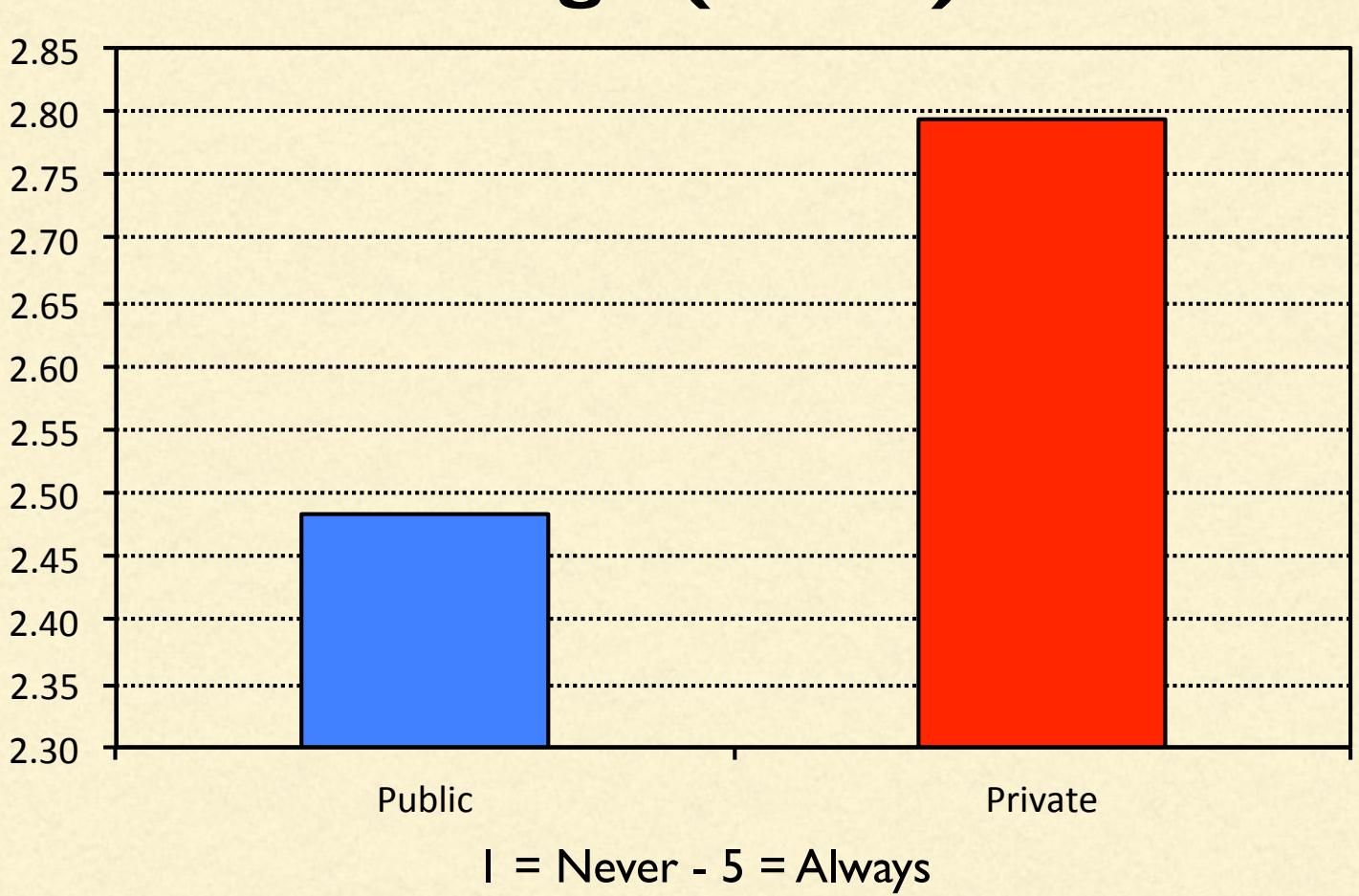
Acceptance (Mean)



1 = Strongly Disagree - 4 = Strongly Agree

However, there was a significant difference in usage of mobile devices. Private university students used mobile devices more than public university students. In addition, there was a difference regarding informal MALL activities. The most common activities among public university students were using dictionary and translation applications. In contrast, private university students' used their devices to listen to music and watch TV shows/movies in English. These results seem to indicate that students in public universities are more likely to use their devices for self-directed study rather than unconscious informal learning.

Usage (Mean)



1 = Never - 5 = Always

### Most used

	Public	Private
1	Dictionary Application	Music
2	Translation Application	Dictionary Application
3	Dictionary	Dictionary / TV show, Movie

### Least used

	Public	Private
1	SNS / News	News
2	-	Game
3	Game	SNS

## 7. Discussion

- Both groups of participants were **generally positive** in their acceptance of mobile devices for informal English-language learning.
- No significant difference between the groups in regards to acceptance.
- There was a significant difference between groups in usage. This may be because students with higher socio-economic status have **greater access to technology** or possess increased **"international posture"** due to **more opportunities to travel and study abroad**.
- Students with higher economic status were more likely to use their mobile devices for English-language **entertainment** than those with lower socio-economic status. This could be explained by **more opportunities to interact with international culture** as well as **more leisure time** among higher socio-economic status students.

## 8. Reference

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Thank you!

