

Homework is for Home: Attitudes and Practice

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Abstract

Homework is a traditionally entrenched but recently embattled and often poorly-implemented aspect of formal education (Alleman, Ley, Knighton, Botwinski, & Middlestead, 2010; 68, 1) (Cooper, Civey Robinson, & Patall, Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987-2003, Spring 2006; 76, 1) (Haddock, 2006). While much has been written about primary-level consideration, and less about secondary-level homework, almost no research is available regarding homework at the tertiary-level, and less on the contextual differences of homework in classrooms in which ESL and EFL are being taught. This paper reports the results of a survey given to 15 English teachers in Japan, six English teachers in the United States, 293 Japanese students of English in Japan, and 25 Japanese students of English in the United States. The survey results were subjected to a series of t-tests to better understand whether, and how, groups varied in their attitudes and practices regarding homework.

Keywords: Homework, Cultural differences, Study abroad, Japan

Homework is for Home: Attitudes and Practice

Homework is believed to be an integral part of education (Graham, 2015). Instructors at all levels of education assign homework to provide practice of skills or knowledge useful in class, as well as to aid in the development of independent learning skills (Why is homework important?, 2015). Typically, culture has influenced the institution of homework—mainly in the number of hours per week assigned—and factors such as the socio-economic level of the student are related to how much homework per week is done (Klein, 2014). One concern with homework is that it may actually further differentiate students' skill- and achievement levels (Cooper, Civey Robinson, & Patall, Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987-2003, Spring 2006; 76, 1). The current study is aimed at exploring both cultural- and role-specific attitudes and practices regarding homework at the tertiary level, particularly amongst Japanese students and their non-Japanese EFL instructors.

Review of Literature

The primary assumption of both students and teachers is that homework is an integral part of learning, though the assumption is nowadays considered controversial in many—primarily Western—societies and a distinction between good and bad homework is rising where good is “meaningful” and meaningful is relevant to the learning setting (Alleman, Ley, Knighton, Botwinski, & Middlestead, 2010; 68, 1). Although direct assaults and suggestions or movements to altogether do away with homework are more recent (Haddock, 2006), homework has been an arena of struggle for conscientious language teachers for at least half a century (Lange, Spring 1968; 2, 1), longer in more general education, and the reality is that the value of homework, generally, has never been adequately proved either way. In fact, the efficacy of homework is dependent on so many factors that a simple answer is unlikely to be forthcoming—factors such as type of homework, duration of homework, integration of homework outcomes to classroom

activities, and so on are all likely to be strong determiners in whether or not homework is actually worthwhile for either students or teachers (Cooper, Civey Robinson, & Patall, Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987-2003, Spring 2006; 76, 1). Furthermore, while some studies effectively challenge the validity of heavy homework loads or rote- or drill- focused exercises for primary students (Cooper, Synthesis of Research on Homework: Grade Level has a Dramatic Influence on Homework's Effectiveness, 1989), and some comment has been made about the validity and usefulness of homework in secondary language classes (Wallinger, September 2000; 33, 5), little comment has been made about tertiary level students.

Methods

This study was survey-based, using an instrument written by the researcher and administered to Asia University students enrolled in English courses on the Tokyo campus, as well as to Asia University students at the end of their 5-month study abroad on the Central Washington University campus.

The Sample

293 students on Asia University's Tokyo campus responded to the survey and were enrolled primarily in the Freshman English program, but other participating students were in Sophomore English or English Communications classes. 293 students represent 92.1% of the students included in this study. 25 (7.9%) students at the end of their 5-month study abroad at Central Washington University (CWU) participated in the study. 15 (71.4%) Natively-speaking English language visiting faculty members in the Center for English Language Education (CELE) participated in the survey, as did six (28.6%) of the instructors at CWU.

The Survey

The survey consisted of 15 items and varied slightly in teacher and student versions. The items of the instrument were aimed at gauging the value and engagement participants felt in relation to homework and how strongly they associated homework with their work, either as teachers or as students. Teachers were asked about the types of homework they assigned, while students were asked about the types of homework they prefer doing.

The desire to do homework among students. 33.4% (n=98) of students in Japan reported a desire to do homework, compared with 60% (n=15) of Japanese students on an American campus. In response to a question asking students how important doing homework is in student life versus their own lives, students in Japan and on the American campus also reported differently, as shown in Table 1 and Figures 1 and 2.

The desire among teachers for their students to do homework. All but one teacher (95.2%, n=21) reported that they wanted their students to do homework. Perceptions among teachers of the role of homework in student life as well as the importance they placed on giving homework is shown numerically in Table 2 (and Figures 3 and 4) and also seem to differ widely by context.

Analyses

Analyses consisted of a series of t-tests, represented throughout as boxplots, in an attempt to better understand differences and similarities between groups, if there were any. Effect sizes and powers were calculated and are provided along with the results. In all cases, Cohen's *d* (effect size) was derived with an average of standard deviations.

Results

As mentioned, the data gathered via the survey was processed statistically using a series of t-tests. The sorts of details sought through the research can be broadly divided into eight or so

areas of inquiry: desire, time requirements, types of activities assigned as homework, tools intended or preferred for use in completing homework, the frequency of homework assignments, the effort required to complete homework, the purpose of homework, and areas of possible miscommunication regarding homework. The results of each of these areas of inquiry are outlined below with the results concerning the teachers' responses preceding the results concerning the students' responses. The results will be synthesized and possible implications will be discussed later.

Teachers

Teachers are, in most cases, following tradition which is reinforced to some degree by research on the contribution of homework to both mastery (Cooper, Civey Robinson, & Patall, *Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987-2003*, Spring 2006; 76, 1) and motivation (Bernard, 2010). Homework is accepted as essentially a necessity — but what kind of homework and how much is still very much in debate (Alleman, Ley, Knighton, Botwinski, & Middlestead, 2010; 68, 1) (Lange, Spring 1968; 2, 1), particularly at the tertiary level.

Time. On the question of time, or duration, of homework, teachers were asked to select a value at intervals between 5 minutes and 2+ hours (choices were: 5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes, and 2+ hours). 66.6% (n=21) of teachers selected a duration of 15-30 minutes, with 19% (n=21) selecting 45 minutes, 9.5% (n=21) selecting 60 minutes, 4.8% (n=21) selecting 10 minutes, and no teachers selecting any of the remaining options.

For statistical analysis, these options were ordered by magnitude and each choice assigned a numerical value from 1-9; so lower numbers represented less time spent, a “4”, for example, corresponds to the duration “20 minutes”. When teachers were sorted by teaching

location, it became clear that teachers in the United States tended to expect that students spend more time on homework than teachers in Japan (refer to Table 3 and Figure 5).

Type. Teachers were asked what types of assignments they tended to assign (up to 5 from a list of 13); taken together, about 20% of the types of assignments were related specifically to developing vocabulary, followed by 16% each to project work and reading, 13% to writing, 11% each to grammar and “other”, 7% to speaking, 4% to listening, and 1% to creative work that would be presented or explained in class. When considered separately, however, differences emerge (refer to Figure 6 and Table 4).

Tools. Teachers were given a list of tools that might be required in order to complete their homework assignments and asked to select up to five that they favored (see Figure 7). When examining whether the source of homework tools came from the textbook, the teachers, or the students there were differences between English teachers in the United States and Japan (see Table 5). However, taken together, 29% of homework resources were text-based, 18% originated with the teacher, and 10% with the student.

Frequency. Teachers were asked to choose from a list of frequencies how often they aimed to assign homework. Their choices were: every class meeting, once every other day, twice a week, once a week, once every other week, once a month, once every two months, once a semester, and never. As in the time component, for statistical analysis, each of these responses was converted to a number, with the most frequent assigned a value of “1” and never assigned a value of “9”. As reflected in Table 6 and Figure 8, 61.9% of all teachers (n=21) tried to assign homework at least on a weekly basis (28.6% (n=21) assigned homework either at every class meeting or at every other), while another 28.6% (n=21) tried for once every other week.

Effort. Teachers were asked to estimate the effort a student should expend on homework in order to follow the course to the teacher’s satisfaction, they were then asked how they thought this ideal value compared to the effort they perceived their students were making.

47.6% of all teachers (n=21) thought the effort was “about right” for the course. 38.1% (n=21) thought their students needed to put in more effort, while 14.3% (n=21) thought less would be fine. To analyze these responses statistically and group teachers by their locations, these three choices were assigned numerical values. Sufficient effort was a “2”, insufficient effort was a “1” and excess effort was a “3” (see Table 7 and Figure 9).

Purpose. Teachers agreed that homework should both practice skills or material already studied in class as well as prepare for future skills or materials (see Table 8).

Communicating across the gulf. The survey included areas to collect qualitative data from instructors regarding their experience with students and homework and homework in general. In 22 comments about what teachers wished their students understood about homework, ten (45.4%) were associated with a desire for students to demonstrate their understanding of the role of homework in the learning process; another five (22.5%) concerned the earnestness with which students did their homework presumably because carrying out homework tasks are believed to be productive to the learning and recalling processes. Three (13.6%) comments were more functional, expressing a desire for students to connect the homework tasks to the classroom tasks and more productively demonstrate an understanding of that connection. Three (13.6%) comments mentioned homework as a means to enjoy English or to demonstrate independence in students’ learning. One comment expressed a desire for students to agree that homework is not punishment.

Students

While as a group, students tended not to want to do homework, students in Japan were more certain about this negative preference, as illustrated in Table 9 and Figure 10.

Time. When asked how long a homework assignment should take to complete to their teachers’ satisfactions, students replied similarly whether in Japan or the United States. Students were asked to select from a series of intervals ranging from 5 minutes to 2+ hours (choices were:

5 minutes, 10 minutes, 15 minutes, 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 45 minutes, 60 minutes, 90 minutes, and 2+ hours). Refer to Table 10 and Figure 11.

For statistical analysis, these options were ordered by magnitude and each choice assigned a numerical value from 1-9; so lower numbers represented less time spent, a “4”, for example, corresponds to the duration “20 minutes”. Students in the United States expected homework to take approximately 50% longer (30-45 minutes) than their counterparts in Japan (20-30 minutes).

Type. Students were asked about what types of homework assignments they wanted to do and could choose up to five from a list of 13. Taken together, students both in the United States and Japan selected those types according to the following proportions: 22% wanted to do some kind of writing, 20% wanted to do vocabulary work, 14% wanted to do project work, 11% wanted to do reading, 9% each wanted to do something creative to be explained in class and grammar drills, and 6% wanted to do listening assignments. Students did differ in the types of homework they preferred by location. Refer to Table 11 and Figure 12.

Tools. According to the data, Japanese students of English overwhelmingly prefer to use textbook-based tools in completing their homework assignments, to the exception of using other tools.

Frequency. Students were asked to choose from a list of frequencies how often they felt was best to receive homework in their language classes. Their choices were: every class meeting, once every other day, twice a week, once a week, once every other week, once a month, once every two months, once a semester, and never. As in the time component, for statistical analysis, each of these responses was converted to a number, with the most frequent assigned a value of “1” and never assigned a value of “9”. All student respondents in the United States (n=25) selected at least once a week, with the largest group (48%) selecting twice a week. Responses from students in Japan varied more, but 68.9% (n=293) still selected homework frequencies of at least

once a week. Combining groups in both contexts, 71.4% (n=318) would like homework at least once a week, with the largest group (31.8%, n=318) selecting once a week exactly. (refer to Table 13 and Figure 14).

Effort. Students were asked to estimate the effort they should expend on homework in order to follow the course to the teacher's satisfaction, they were then asked how they thought this ideal value compared to the effort they felt they were making. 54.7% (n=318) of students thought their effort was greater than the ideal. This varied somewhat by location. That is, 43.7% (n=293) of students in Japan felt their efforts were satisfactory, compared to 64% (n=25) of students in the United States. To analyze these responses statistically and group students by their locations, the two choices were assigned numerical values—more effort than the ideal (working too hard) was a “1” and less (not working hard enough) was “2”. This is in keeping with other recent research regarding student perception of effort in an internationally-comparative context (Kuchikomi, 2010) (see Table 14 and Figure 15).

Purpose. Students, like teachers, were asked about the purpose homework should serve relative to the learning occurring in class. Among Japanese students of English in the United States, 72% (n=25) thought homework should have both review and preparatory functions; while for their counterparts in Japan, only 38.6% (n=293) thought so, 50.2% thought homework should only be a review mechanism, and 11.3% thought it should only be preparatory. In Table 15 and Figure 16, it is clear that Japanese students of English in the United States were less flexible in their ideas of what that purpose should be.

Communicating across the gulf. Students contributed 172 comments they wish their teachers understood about homework. Of these comments, most (41%, n=172) mentioned general difficulty of English, a lack of understanding (whether concepts or vocabulary, specifically), and a desire for their teachers to understand their limited ability. Many comments about not understanding were phrased in a way to express a desire to understand (only implying

that they did not currently understand). Another common theme was that homework conflicts with other demands for their time, ranging from work to club activities to other classes and tests (25%, n=172). Many students (15%, n=172) also wished their teachers would understand that they are trying very hard to complete homework, they give it their all, and when it is not done it is because of a lack of understanding, not effort. A few students (4%, n=172) also expressed a desire for their teachers to use Japanese or demonstrate an understanding of Japanese in the homework context. One student specifically requested to “practice the things learned in one class in the homework of the next class,” indicating an appreciation of homework as one of many means of solidifying or automatizing learning. One helpful student commented that pictures helped her understand, while another suggested that an “impression” of his homework performance would be preferable to a formal grade for it (this comment was echoed in a few other remarks), and several others requested error correction. One student worried that homework grades were not fairly tracked and awarded in class since some students were serial “forgetters” of homework while others regularly completed assignments. Students seemed very concerned with extenuating circumstances to excuse or explain their homework failures and mainly begged for teachers to understand their individual situations.

Teachers should take heart that there were also several positive remarks in student responses — students celebrating that they felt more confident because of homework, noting that they enjoyed particular assignments, or thanking teachers for taking the time to review homework mistakes with them. Students are, at least paying attention to the assignments, even if teachers feel otherwise; a full 12% (n=172) of comments were specific feedback directed to teachers about assignments they had, apparently, been given or about the flow of homework in their particular class.

Discussion

In this part of the paper, I would like to compare and contrast the data collected from teachers and students and determine the matches and mismatches in attitudes and practices.

Towards a Coherent View

Each of the criteria will be considered separately.

Value. English teachers in the United States believe homework to be the largest part of a student's life (see Tables 1 and 2), followed by Japanese students of English in the United States, Japanese students of English in Japan, and finally by English teachers in Japan. The pattern is duplicated when it comes to the importance of giving or receiving homework. While student attitudes seem to roughly correlate to teacher attitudes (in the data presented here as well as in those cases when students could be matched to individual teachers in the data and their responses therefore compared), the range in value placed on homework—either as a part of student life or as a point of giving—was much wider among teachers in Japan than among teachers in the United States. This may be a reflection of the rigidity or flexibility available to them in their separate departments and likewise of the awareness of teachers of the role of homework (and the crafting of effective homework) in the learning process. It may be worth debating whether and to what extent department practices regarding homework might be brought to conform to some agreed-upon guidelines in one context and whether homework criterion might be made slightly more flexible in others.

Time. Students and teachers actually agree on the amount of time that homework is intended and expected to take up—but groups in the United States tend to both intend and expect about twice as much as their counterparts in Japan (see Tables 3 and 10).

Type. Types of homework was one area where teachers and students seem to need to understand one another better if they intend to experience increased satisfaction with homework in their classes. The tasks that students and teachers prefer are clearly different, with students

seeming to prefer work which requires negotiation of meaning (corresponding, using vocabulary, project work with a partner or group, creating something to explain in class, or conversation tasks with classmates) while teachers seem to prefer more drill-type practice (studying vocabulary lists and reading for understanding). This is clearly reflected in Tables 4 and 11 and Figures 6 and 12.

Tools. Japanese students of English generally prefer text-based homework activities over anything else whether they are in the United States or Japan. Teachers differ more in the tools they would like students to use in completing homework. Japan-based teachers, particularly, seem more interested in drawing in activities from a wider variety of sources than their counterparts in the United States (see Tables 5 and 12 and Figures 7 and 13).

Frequency. Generally speaking, homework is expected less frequently in Japan, both by teachers and by students; but most people, students and teachers, in Japan or in the United States, expect homework approximately weekly (refer to Tables 6 and 13 and Figures 8 and 14).

Effort. An area of potential difficulty is that of effort. Overall, teachers feel students should make more of an effort in their homework while students feel they are working harder than they ideally would. This could be due to a number of causes, but since teachers and students are in general accord on points of duration and frequency, teachers may want to look again at the difficulty of homework if they are receiving negative feedback from their students regarding homework (see Tables 7 and 14 and Figures 9 and 15).

On the subject of effort, responses were littered with students' comments about their lack of confidence in their proficiency when confronting homework assignments ("no matter what I do, some problems I just can't understand but I try anyway," or "I don't really understand the grammar/vocabulary in homework," for example). Whether or not the homework is actually too difficult for them, the takeaway message seems to be that students think it is and until they can

either be convinced otherwise or accommodated teachers who struggle with their classes over homework can probably expect to continue to do so.

Purpose. When taking into consideration the results in Tables 8 and 15, it seems that regardless of context, teachers tend to agree that the purpose of homework involved preparation and review—students’ ideas about the purpose and functions of homework are far less clear and less cohesive within the group, particularly about whether homework should include any preparatory work for future lessons.

Communicating across the gulf. In the qualitative data teachers’ main concerns they wished to communicate to students were the value of homework to the learning process and the value of properly working through the assignments. On the other hand, students wished their teachers would understand that they were doing their best on the homework but simply [felt they] were not able to do any better. There may be a number of responses to this which might help teachers and students work through the difficulty. For instance, teachers could make sure students understand the purpose and the procedure for homework by introducing models, or establishing norms. However it is resolved, this is clearly a sticking point in students’ and teachers’ communication about homework.

In conclusion, it seems that students understand, actually, the theory behind homework that teachers would like them to—teachers and students seem to be in agreement, quantitatively, about the duration and frequency of homework assignments. Arguably, there may be a mismatch between the level of difficulty of homework and the levels of difficulty students are confident in tackling. Individual differences will certainly influence preferences in giving and doing homework—some want more laid-back policies (“impressions” rather than scores), but not at the cost of fairness in keeping homework records. Generally, teachers seem to try to provide a variety of sources for students to do homework with and from when students would rather a more uncomplicated approach. Students seem as though they could use some confidence-

building insofar as how to complete the homework and how to handle inevitable complications; and teachers seem like they could perhaps explain the homework more clearly in some cases, assuming they want students to do it rather than struggle with it. All-in-all, homework is an area ripe for cooperation between teachers and students in the creation of learning communities.

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Tables

Table 1
Homework in “Student Life” and “Own Life”, according to students

	Students in Japan	Japanese Students in the United States
“How big a part of student life is doing homework?” (scale is 1-7)		
Mean	3.96	4.96
SD	1.51	1.27
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.723
Power		1
“How important for you is it to do your homework?” (scale is 1-5)		
Mean	3.50	3.88
SD	1.23	0.83
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.371
Power		0.999

Note: Japanese students in the United States appear to value homework as a greater part of student life than their peers in Japan. Japanese students in the United States also reported homework being more important to them than their Japanese counterparts did. In both items, the standard deviations for the values reported by Japanese students in the United States are narrower than those for their peers in Japan, indicating that the concept of homework in both “student” life and their own lives is more homogenous throughout the group on the United States’ campus than the group at home in Tokyo.

Table 2

Homework in “Student Life” and “Own Life”, according to teachers

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
“How big a part of student life is doing homework?” (scale is 1-7)		
Mean	3.667	5.667
SD	1.291	0.816
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		1.898
Power		1
“How important for you is it to give homework?” (scale is 1-5)		
Mean	3.2	4.333
SD	0.775	0.816
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		1.424
Power		0.999

Note: Again, we see that teachers in the United States, generally, value homework more highly than teachers in Japan. This may be in great part due to the fact that the program in which teachers are working in the United States specifies the weight of homework, whereas in Japan the program allows teachers to freely specify the weight of homework according to their own needs. In fact, in the United States the weight homework is set at 30-40% of students’ final grades while in Japan it averages 10-20% of students’ final grades. While there was little deviation, understandably, among teachers in the United States, and among teachers in Japan in regards to giving homework, teachers in Japan expressed wider variation in terms of how much weight they thought homework had in students’ lives.

Table 3
Time

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
“How long do you intend a homework assignment to take students to complete to your satisfaction?” (range is 1-7)		
Mean	4.467	5.333
SD	1.356	1.366
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.636
Power		0.792

Note: On average, English teachers in the United States intend a single homework assignment to take between 30 and 45 minutes, while their counterparts in Japan intend homework to take between 20 and 30 minutes. While the effect size is middling, the power of this statistic is high enough to be generalizable.

Table 4
Types of homework assigned (percentage)

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
Vocabulary-related assignments (studying lists of filling in worksheets)	21%	21%
Listening assignments	0%	11%
Speaking assignments (conversation tasks with classmates and non-classmates)	0%	18%
Grammar drills	12%	11%
Project work (group and individual)	16%	14%
Creative work (preparing something to be explained)	2%	0%
Reading	19%	11%
Writing (compositions, no teachers assigned correspondence)	16%	7%
“Other”	14%	7%

Note: For vocabulary-related assignments, English teachers in Japan reported that 14% of their assignment types were studying vocabulary lists and 7% were worksheet-based, while English teachers in the United States reported that 7% was list-based study and 14% was worksheet-based.

Table 5
Tools and materials used in completing homework

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
Text-based	30%	26%
Teacher-based	12%	27%
Student-based	16%	0%

Note: In choosing topics, sound or video files, games and other resources for completing homework, students in Japan are expected by their English teachers to bring more of their own preferences to the class than English teachers in the United States.

Table 6
Frequency

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
“How often do you generally try to assign homework in your classes?” (range is 1-9)		
Mean	4.267	1.833
SD	1.486	0.753
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		2.174
Power		1

Note: While it would seem, looking at the total responses, that teachers were in general agreement about the frequency of their homework assignments, when looking at responses grouped by location it becomes clear that practices differ widely. For instance, English teachers in Japan aim, on average, to assign homework about once every week or fortnight, and English teachers in the United States assign homework after every or every other class. Again, there was more variation among English teachers in Japan.

Table 7
Effort

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
“Is this (effort which should be expended as a portion of effort spent to satisfactorily complete a course) more or less than you expect your students currently expend?” (insufficient effort = 1 Sufficient effort = 2 Excess effort = 3)		
Mean	1.8	1.667
SD	0.676	0.816
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.178
Power		0.122

Note: English Teachers in both locations seem to agree that students should generally spare a bit more effort for their homework; however, the power is too low to generalize. English teachers in Japan seemed more satisfied with their students’ efforts than their counterparts in the United States.

Table 8
Purpose

	English Teachers in Japan	English Teachers in the United States
“Homework should review something students have already studied in class or prepare students for something they will study?” (review only = “1” Both = “2” Prepare only = “3”)		
Mean	1.867	1.833
SD	0.352	0.408
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.089
Power		0.067

Note: English teachers, whether in the United States or Japan, were in close agreement that homework should combine review and priming functions. Since responses were so similar to one another (in that there was not a normal distribution of answers), both effect size and power are miniscule. More research should be undertaken to better understand the beliefs of teachers on this point.

Table 9
Student desire to do homework

	Students in Japan	Students in the United States
“Do you ever want to do homework?” (Yes = “1”, No = “2”)		
Mean	1.665	1.4
SD	0.472	0.5
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.545
Power		1

Note: The Mean for students in Japan is closer to a “No” response than a “Yes” while the inverse is true for students in the United States. The effect size here is middling, but the power is absolute.

Table 10
Time

	Students in Japan	Students in the United States
“How long should a homework assignment take to complete to your teacher’s satisfaction?” (range is 1-9)		
Mean	4.406	5.2
SD	1.778	1.528
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.480
power		1

Note: On average, students in the United States expect a single homework assignment to take between 30 and 45 minutes, while their counterparts in Japan expect homework to take between 20 and 30 minutes. While the effect size is middling to low, the power of this statistic is high enough to be generalizable.

Table 11

Reported preferences in homework types of Japanese students of English

	Students in Japan	Students in the United States
Vocabulary-related assignments (studying lists or filling in worksheets)	22%	0%
Listening assignments	4%	24%
Speaking assignments (conversation tasks with classmates and non-classmates)	9%	0%
Grammar drills	7%	20%
Project work (group and individual)	14%	28%
Creative work (preparing something to be explained)	10%	0%
Reading	10%	20%
Writing (compositions and correspondence)	24%	8%
“Other”	0%	0%

Note: Students showed different preferences when grouped by location. Students in Japan seemed intent on focusing on vocabulary, and a striking 10% wanted to engage in correspondence with students in other countries whereas students in the United States seemed to want to focus on developing listening skills and doing project work.

Table 12

Tools Japanese students of English like to use in doing their homework.

	Japanese Students of English in Japan	Japanese Students of English in the United States
Text-based	66%	66%
Teacher-based	4%	4%
Student-based	2%	4%

Note: Students in either context frequently noted that their textbook is a tool they like to use while completing homework. Although students could choose up to five tools, the average respondent selected only one tool.

Table 13
Ideal frequency of homework for Japanese students of English.

	Japanese Students of English in Japan	Japanese Students of English in the United States
“If you have to do homework in our language class, how often is best?” (range is 1-9)		
Mean	4.184	2.52
SD	1.932	0.963
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		1.150
Power		1

Note: Japanese students of English in the United States seem more accepting of more frequent homework assignments than their counterparts in Japan. Not only is the mean frequency higher, but the standard deviation is smaller, indicating coherence in the group.

Table 14
Effort spent on homework.

	Japanese Students of English in Japan	Japanese Students of English in the United States
“Is this (proportion of effort spent on a class dedicated to homework for that class) more or less than your current class?” (more is “1”, less is “2”)		
Mean	1.563	1.36
SD	0.497	0.490
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.411
Power		1

Note: Students in Japan tended to feel that their effort was negligibly closer to “less” than it was to “more” in regard to what they felt was ideal to spend on homework for a class, whereas students in the United States tended to feel that their effort was closer to “more” than it was to “less”.

Table 15

The purpose of homework

	Japanese Students of English in Japan	Japanese Students of English in the United States
“Should homework review something you have already studied in class or prepare you for something that will be taught?” (Review is “1”, both is “2”, and prepare is “3”)		
Mean	1.611	1.72
SD	0.682	0.45
Effect Size - Cohen’s <i>d</i> (avg of SDs)		0.191
Power		0.924

Note: Most Japanese students of English agree that homework should have some review function (81.6%, n=318, combining “review” and “both” responses), while fewer (51.5%) believe homework should be preparatory; and only 41.2% feel homework should have both functions.

Figures

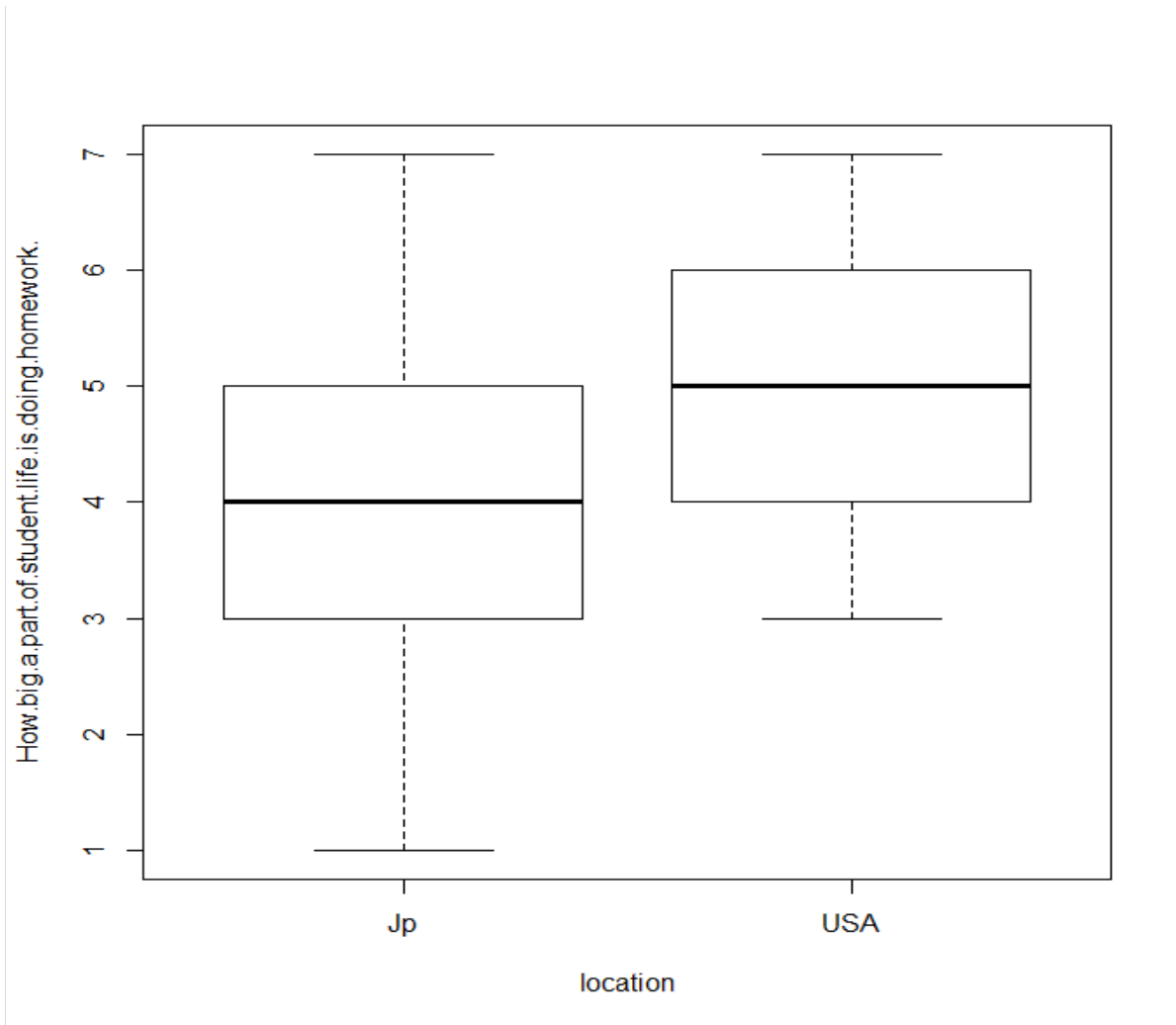


Figure 1. Boxplot of results to “How big a part of student life is doing homework?” grouped by students’ locations.

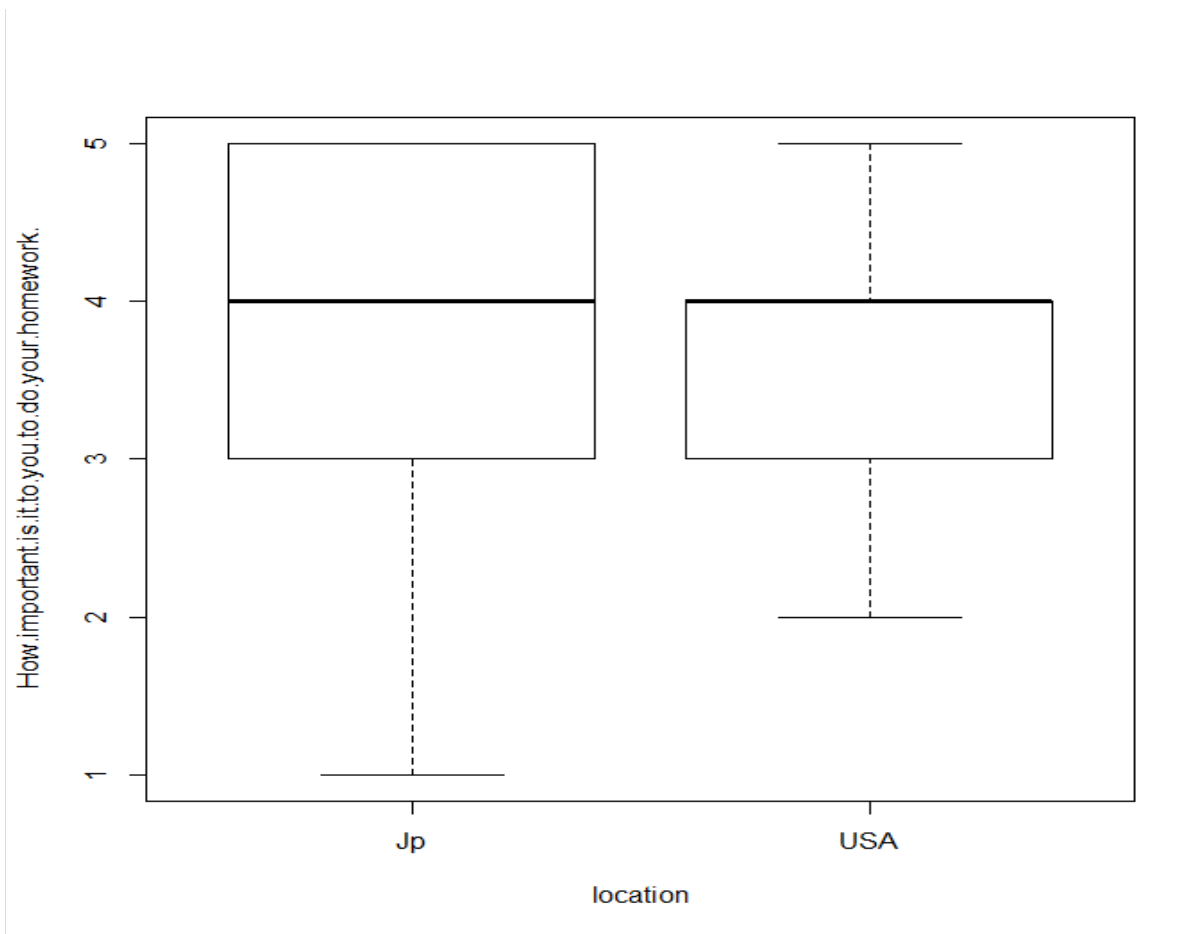


Figure 2. Boxplot of results to “How important is it to you to do your homework?” grouped by students’ locations.

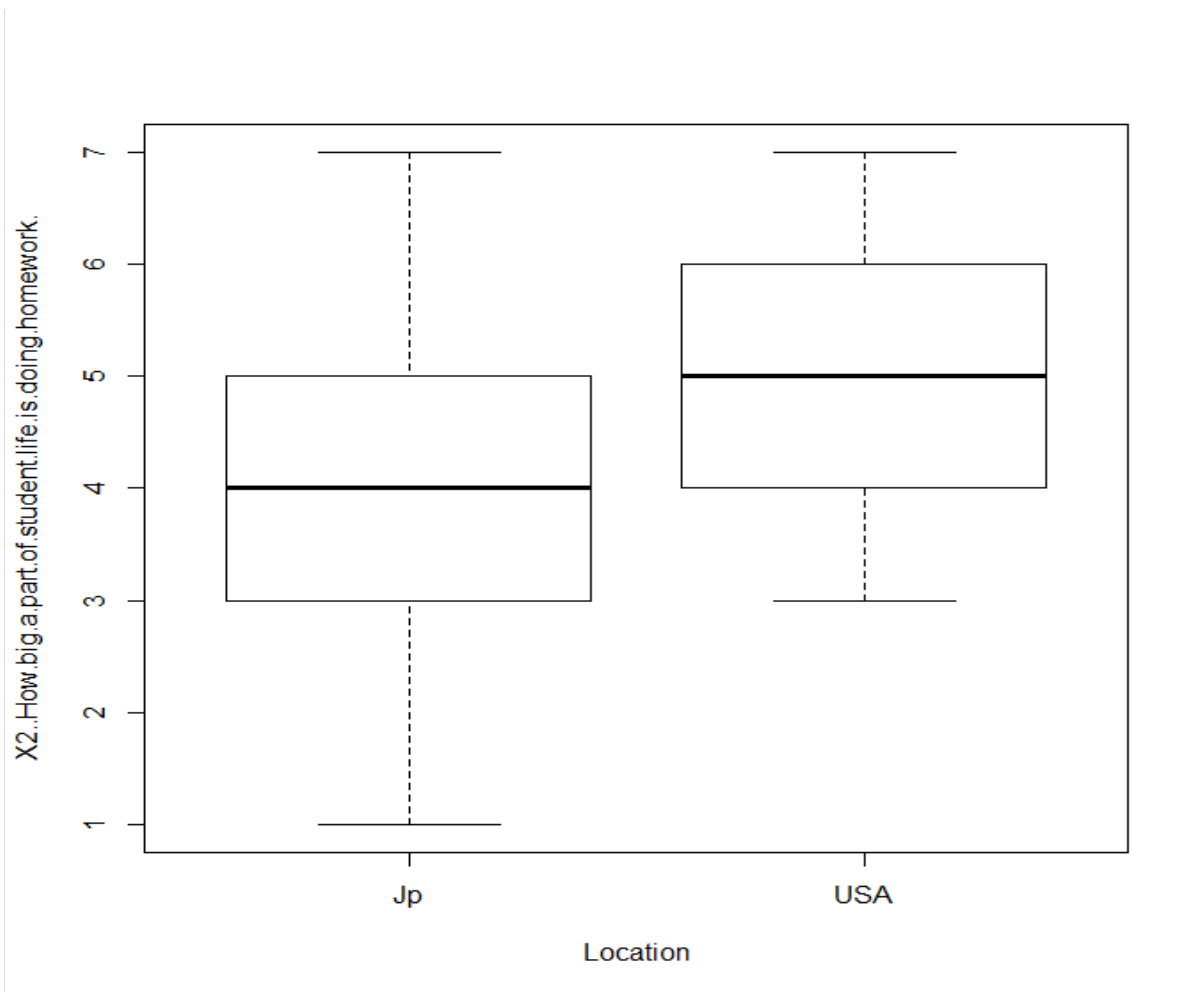


Figure 3. Boxplot of results for “How big a part of student life is homework?” by location of teacher.

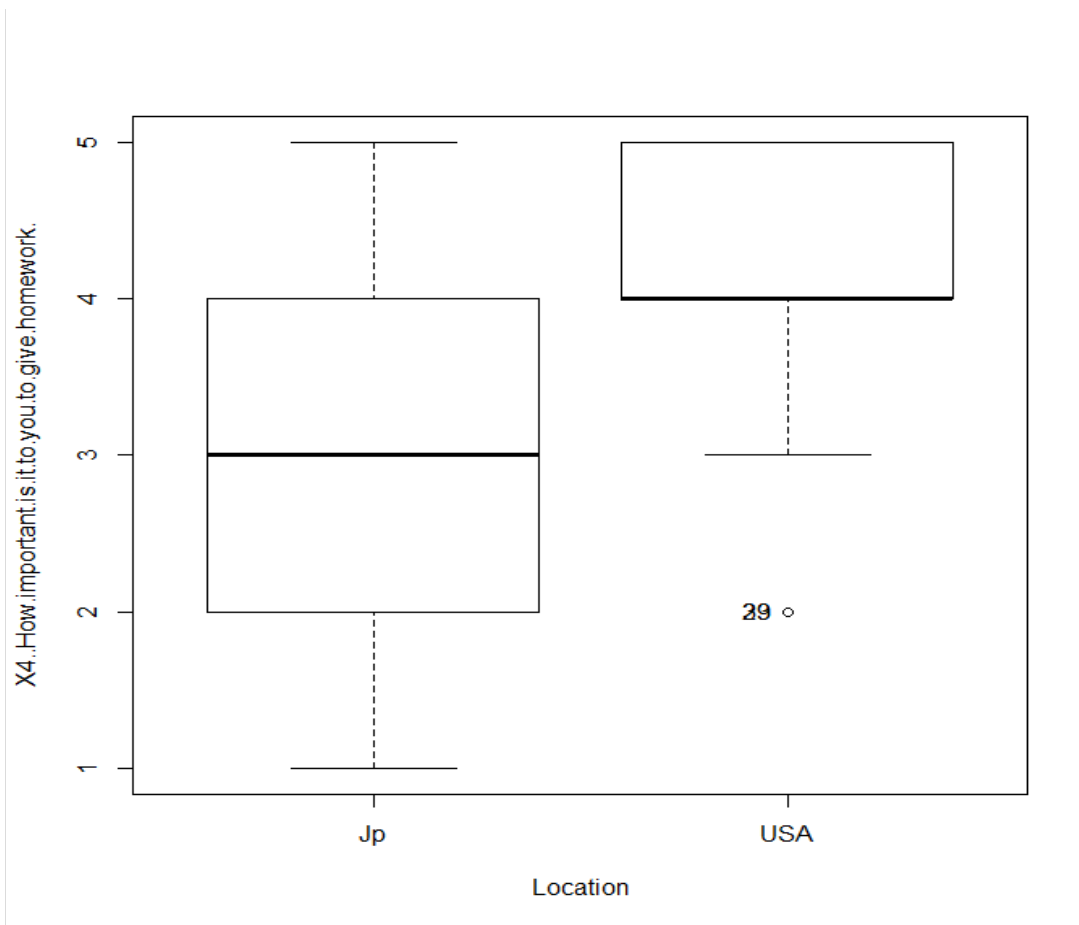


Figure 4. Boxplot of results to “How important is it to you to give homework?” by location of teacher.

3. How long do you intend a homework assignment to take students to complete to your satisfa

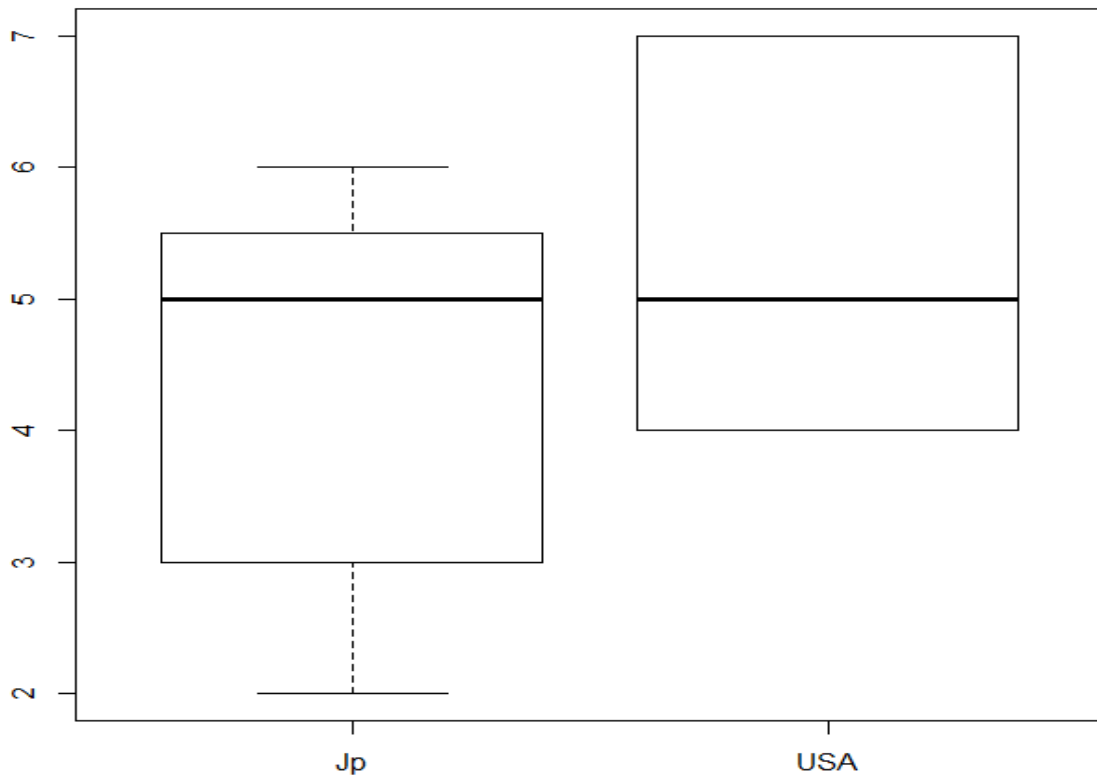
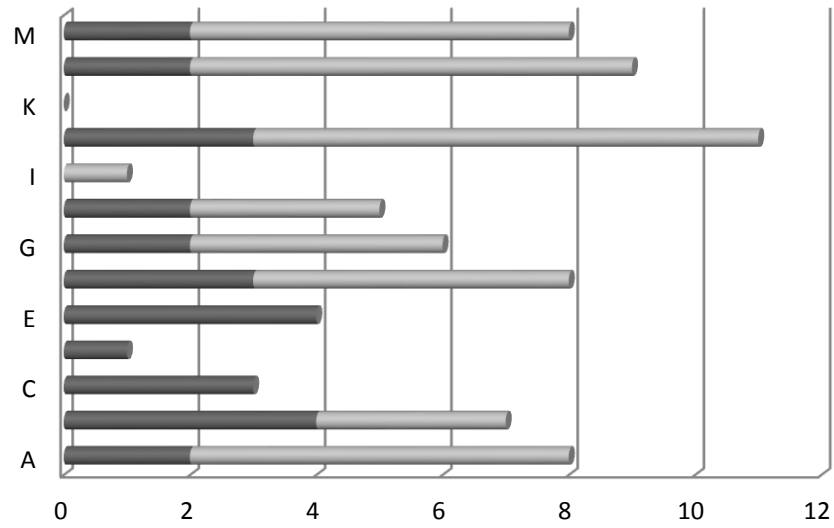


Figure 5. Boxplot of results of t-test on responses to length of time intended for students to complete a homework assignment by location of teacher.

Types of Homework Assigned by English Teachers in Japan and the United States



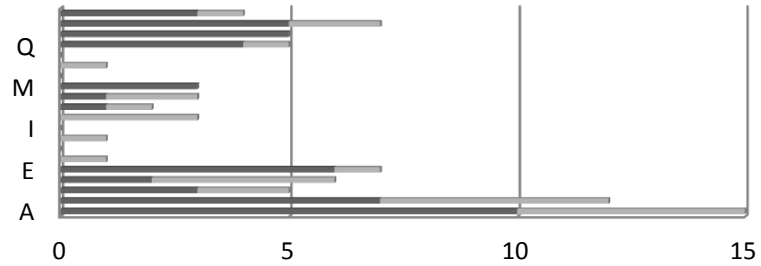
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
■ English Teachers in America	2	4	3	1	4	3	2	2	0	3	0	2	2
■ English Teachers in Japan	6	3	0	0	0	5	4	3	1	8	0	7	6

Figure 6. Types of homework teachers reported assigning.

In the chart above, refer to the following key:

Homework Type	Total
A	8
B	7
C	3
D	1
E	4
F	8
G	6
H	5
I	1
J	11
K	0
L	9
M	8

Tools English Teachers in Japan and the United States like students to use in completing homework



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
■ English Teachers in Japan	10	7	3	2	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	4	5	5	3
■ English Teachers in America	5	5	2	4	1	1	0	1	0	3	1	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	2	1

Figure 7. Tools teachers reported were needed to complete their homework assignments.

In the chart above, refer to the following key:

Tool	Total	
A	textbook	15
B	notebook dedicated to class	12
C	loose-leaf or free-use notebook	5
D	word processor (creating a Word Document or sending Email)	6
E	the open Internet	7
F	a shared online space for your class (such as Manaba)	1
G	reference books other than your textbook	0
H	videos or sound files on your textbook CD-ROM	1
I	videos or sound files the student must choose	0
J	videos or sound files provided or chosen by the teacher	3
K	articles from the text	2
L	books or articles provided or chosen by the teacher outside the text	3
M	books or articles the student must choose	3
N	games on your textbook CD-ROM	0
O	games provided or chosen by the teacher	1
P	games the student must choose	0
Q	topics from your textbook	5
R	topics the student must choose	5
S	topics provided or chosen by the teacher	7
T	other	4

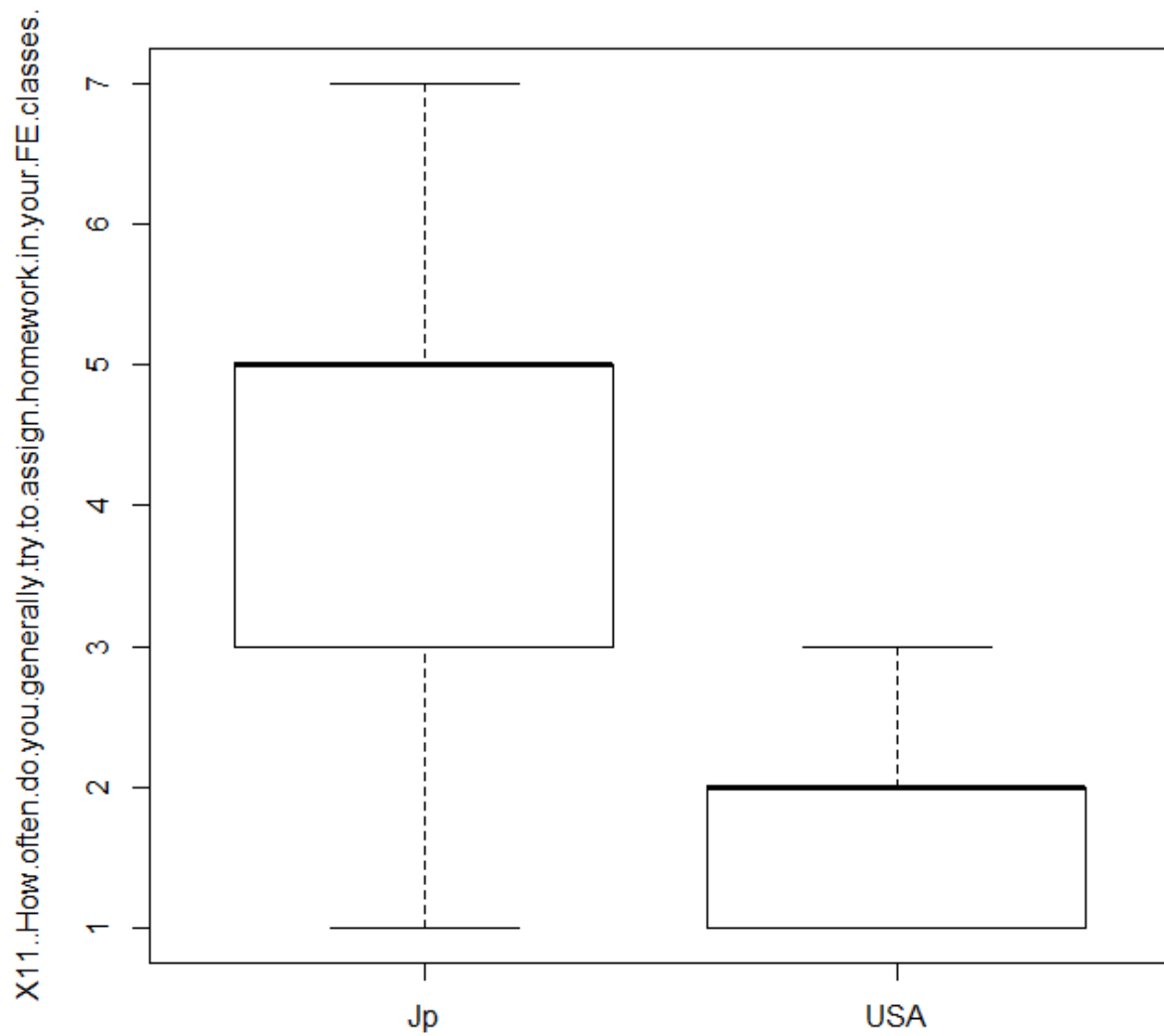


Figure 8. Boxplot of responses by teachers to frequency of assignments, grouped by teaching location.

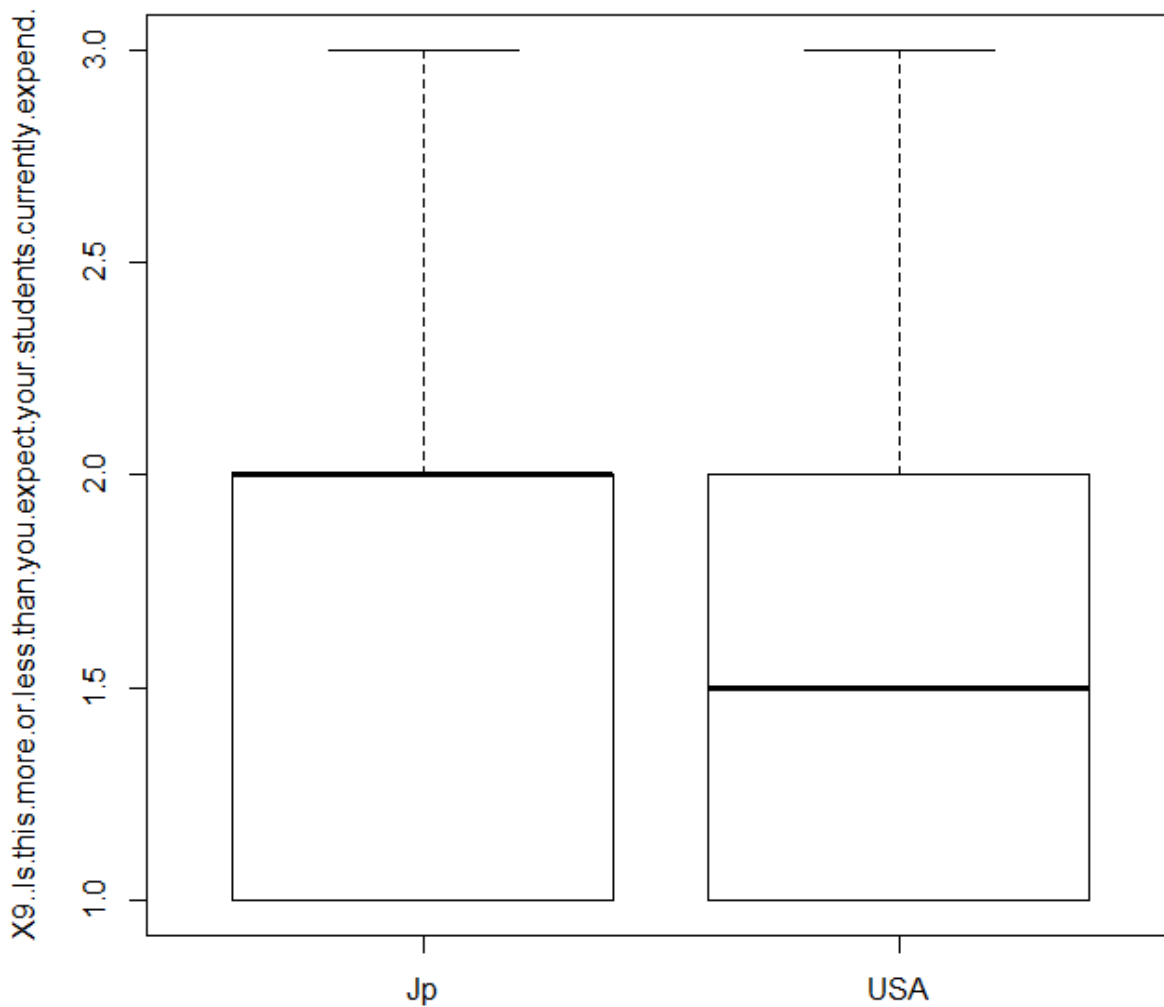


Figure 9. Boxplot of results to a question about student effort on homework grouped by teacher location.

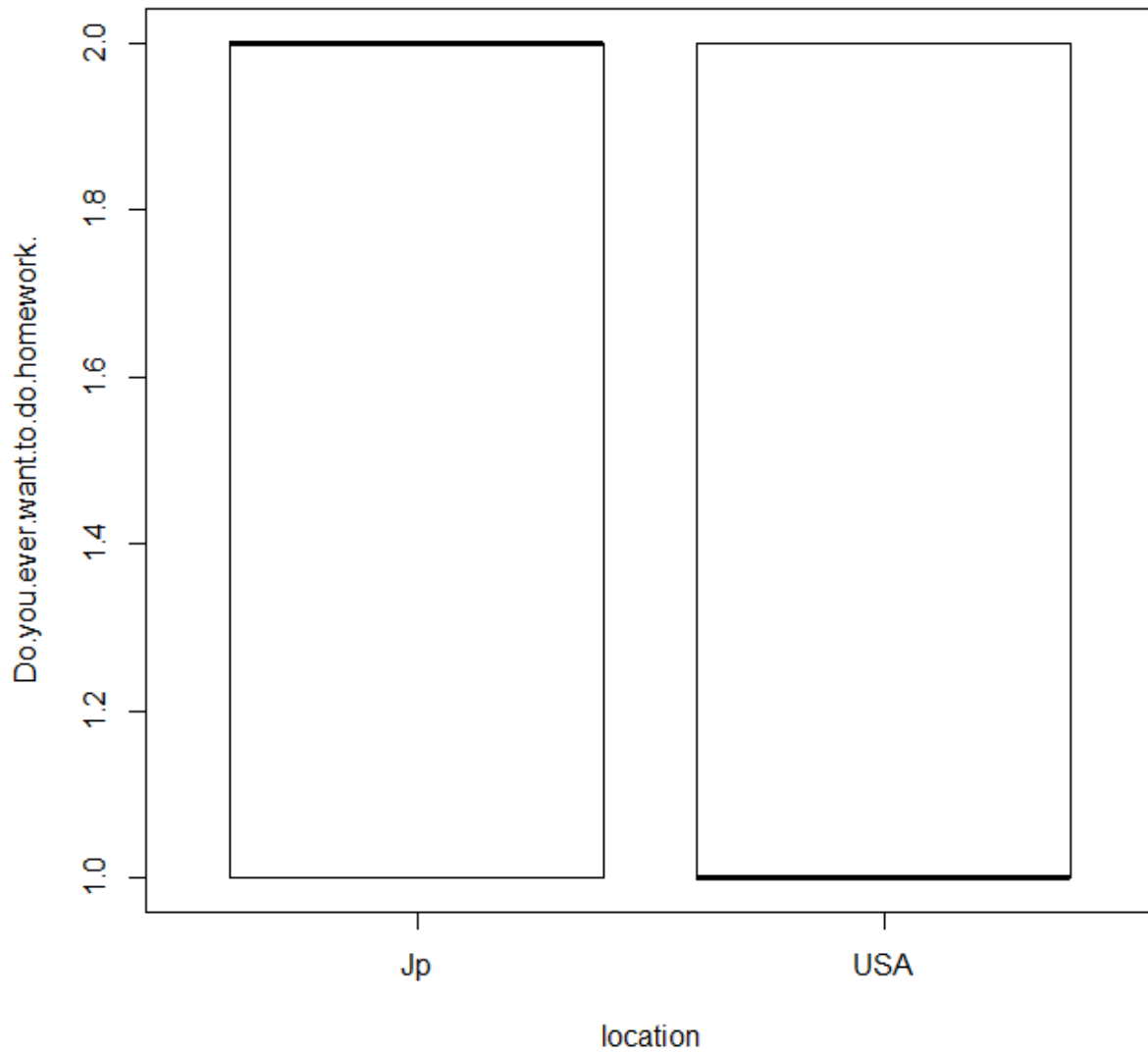


Figure 10. Boxplot showing student responses to the question of ever wanting to do homework.

How long should a homework assignment take to complete to your teacher's satisfaction.

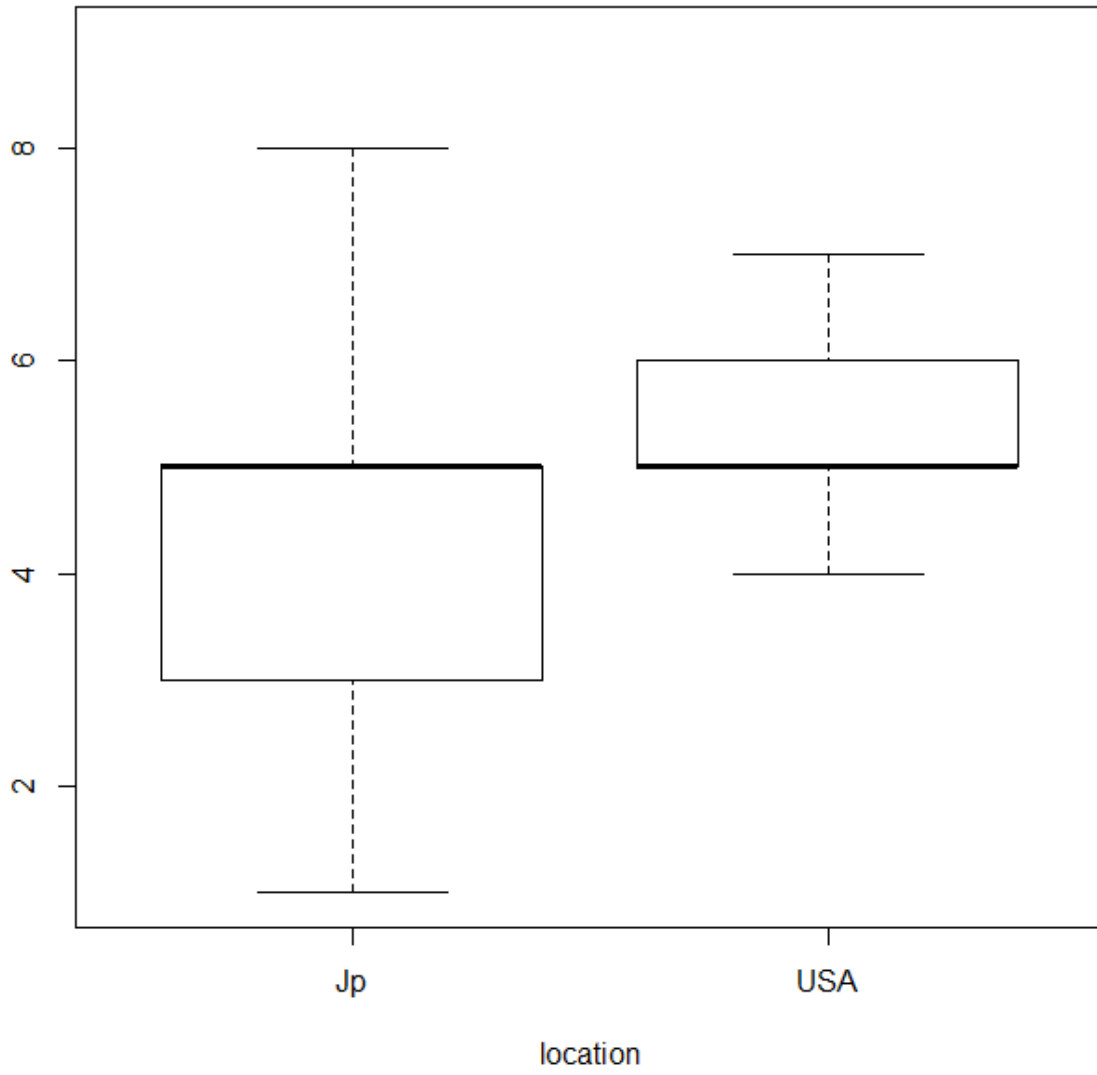
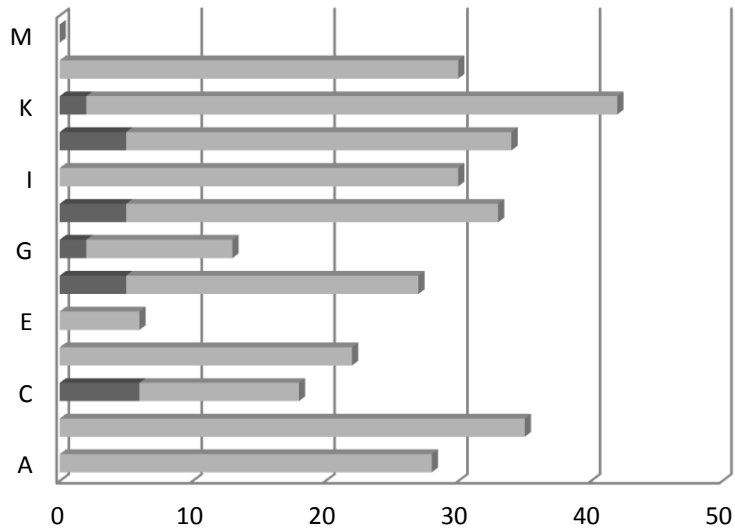


Figure 11. Boxplot showing student responses to the time question, grouped by location.

Types of Homework Students Enjoy



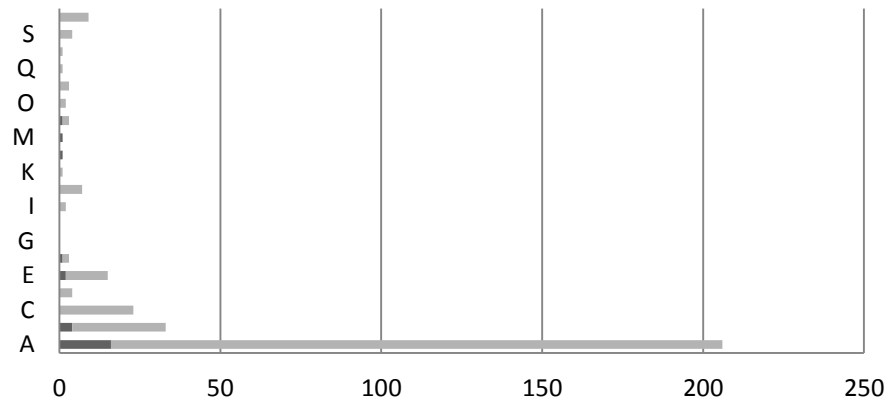
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
■ Japanese Students of English in America	0	0	6	0	0	5	2	5	0	5	2	0	0
■ Japanese Students of English in Japan	28	35	12	22	6	22	11	28	30	29	40	30	0

Figure 12. Types of homework students enjoy.

In the figure above, refer to the following key:

Type	Total
A	28
B	35
C	18
D	22
E	6
F	27
G	13
H	32
I	30
J	34
K	42
L	30
M	0

Tools Students Like to Use in Doing Homework



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
■ Japanese Students of English in America	16	4	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
■ Japanese Students of English in Japan	190	29	23	4	13	2	0	0	2	7	1	0	0	2	2	3	1	1	4	9

Figure 13. Tools Japanese students of English like to use in doing their homework.

In the figure above, reference the following key:

Tool	Total
A textbook	206
B notebook dedicated to class	33
C loose-leaf or free-use notebook	23
D word processor (creating a Word Document or sending Email)	4
E the open Internet	15
F a shared online space for your class (such as Manaba)	3
G reference books other than your textbook	0
H videos or sound files on your textbook CD-ROM	0
I videos or sound files the student must choose	2
J videos or sound files provided or chosen by the teacher	7
K articles from the text	1
L books or articles provided or chosen by the teacher outside the text	1
M books or articles the student must choose	1
N games on your textbook CD-ROM	3
O games provided or chosen by the teacher	2
P games the student must choose	3
Q topics from your textbook	1
R topics the student must choose	1
S topics provided or chosen by the teacher	4
T other	9

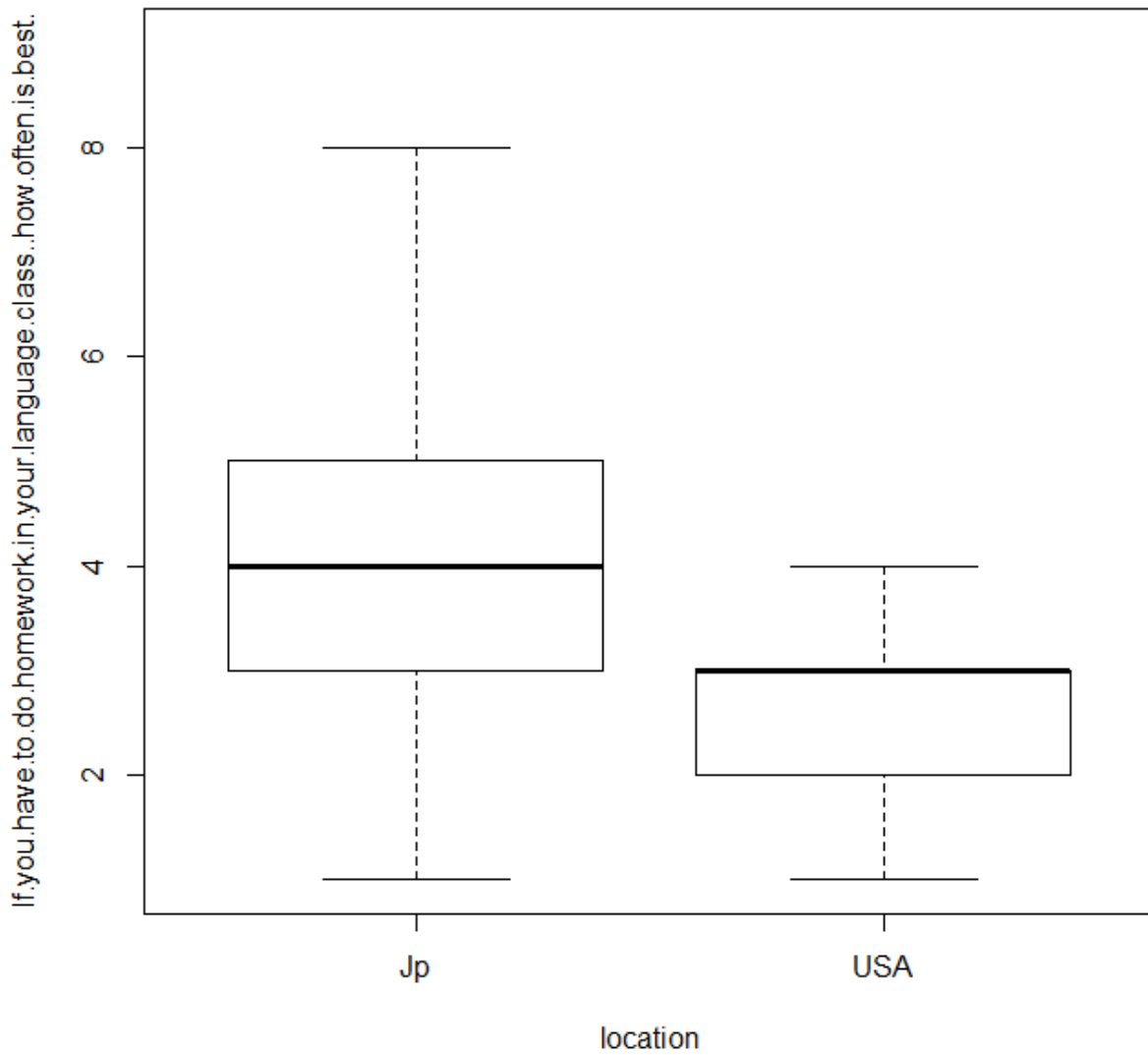


Figure 14. Boxplot showing responses to the frequency question with students grouped by location. The group in Japan included 6.1% (n=293) of respondents who selected “never” as the ideal frequency for receiving homework assignments.

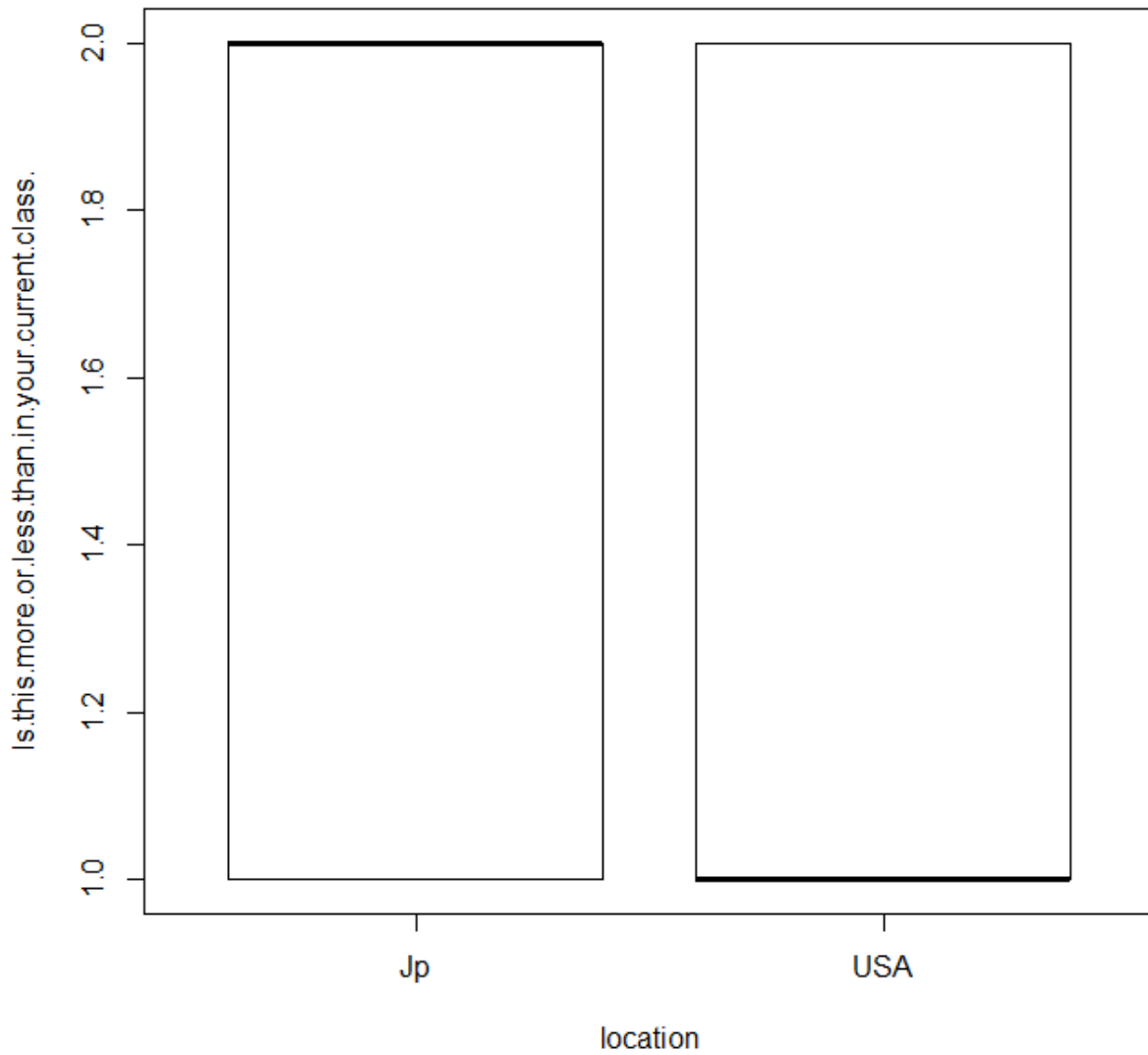


Figure 15. Boxplot of student responses to a question gauging effort relative to the ideal to be spent on homework for a class, with respondents grouped by location. Though the range of responses covers the whole area between integers 1 and 2, the means are polarized by location—in the United States, it is 1.0 while in Japan it is 2.0 indicating opposing views in these locations of student effort relative to the ideal.

should review something you have already studied in class or prepare you for something that.w

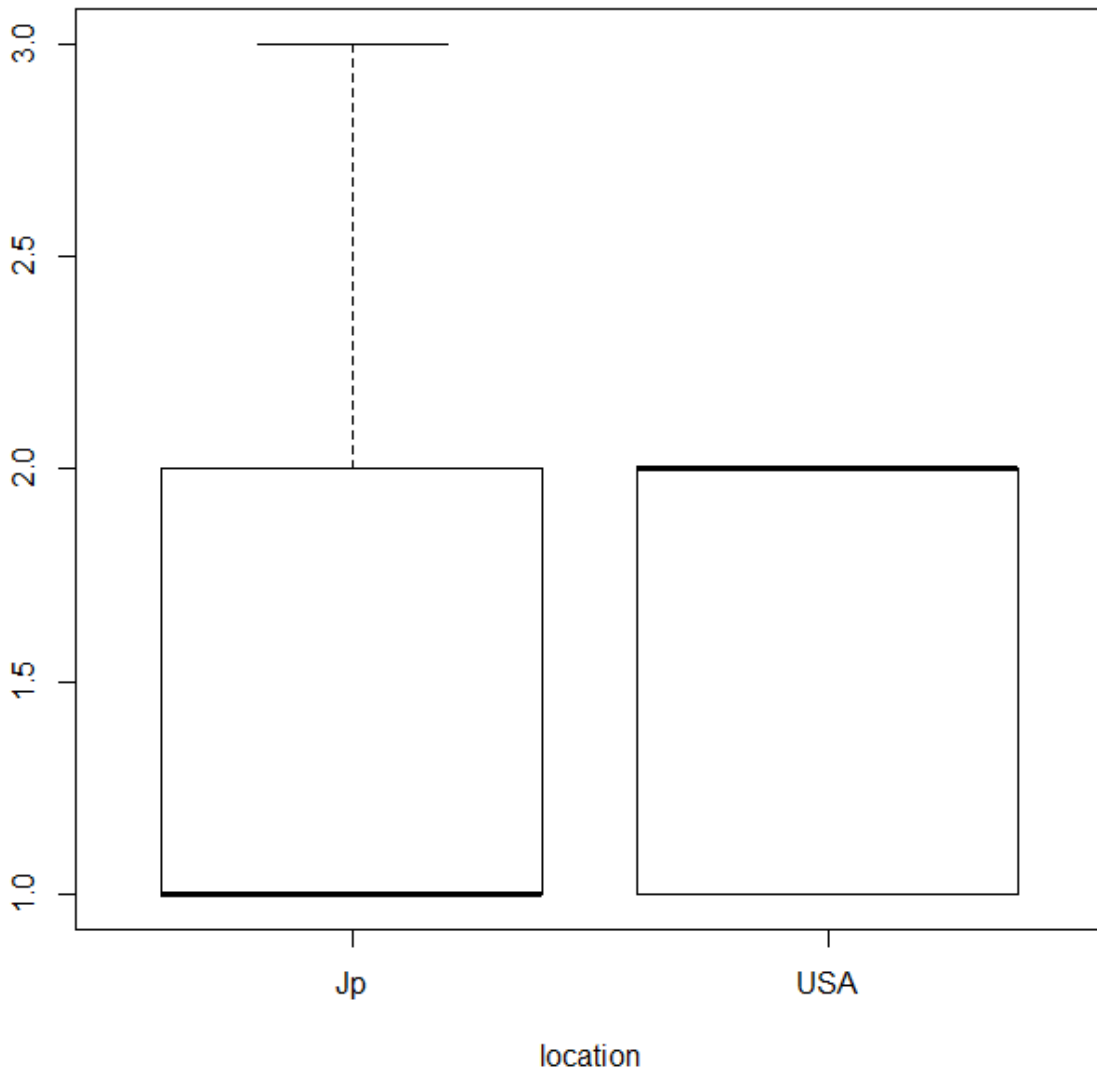


Figure 16. Boxplot of location-grouped student responses to a question about the purpose of homework.