

若者の「趣味(Hobby)」に対する認識の日独比較

歌川 光一

聖路加国際大学大学院 看護学研究科 准教授

(共同研究者：Josecar Paja Jr, 株式会社ベネッセビースタジオ)

Comparison of Japanese and German perceptions of young people's 'hobbies'

Koichi Utagawa

Associate Professor, St. Luke's International University Graduate School of Nursing

(Co- researcher: Josecar Paja Jr, Benesse Be Studio inc)

Abstract

It is a common understanding within leisure studies research that 'hobby' is a subcategory of 'leisure' but the kind of leisure occupations are actually 'hobby-like' differs by country, generation, and gender. It is not difficult to imagine that there is a big difference. Similar issues apply to young people in Japan and Germany, and this study conducted a preliminary investigation into their perceptions of 'hobbies.' The interviews revealed that in both Japan and Germany, the term 'hobby' itself is mostly used in formal situations, such as when introducing oneself to someone you are meeting for the first time. On the other hand, there were some differences between young people in Japan and Germany regarding what kind of leisure occupations are considered to be 'hobbies.' Future research should also take into account the following points: It is not easy to categorize solely leisure occupations as 'hobbies,' and when people answer 'hobbies,' they are not only concerned about their own social class, but also emphasize deepening relationships with others.

1. Introduction

In leisure studies, the search for a definition of 'hobby' as a subordinate category of 'leisure' continues. The definition of a 'hobby' is an important issue that affects research fields and policies in areas such as Lifelong learning and welfare, especially when one finds meaning in life and well-being.

According to Gelber's prototypical definition, "A hobby involves voluntarily working alone at home with a few relatively simple tools to make an object(which in the case of collectors in the collection itself)that has economic value"(Gelber1999:29). However, this definition assumes that collecting and handicrafts are prototypical hobbies. Daily (2018) demonstrated that in the United States, four of the five elements defined by Gelber (1999) actually influence the perception of leisure activities as 'hobbies'. In addition to confirming the validity of Gelber's prototypical definition of hobbies, there is also a need to focus on the boundaries between hobbies and other leisure occupations (Daily 2018:375). The Figure below is a simplified illustration of his analysis.

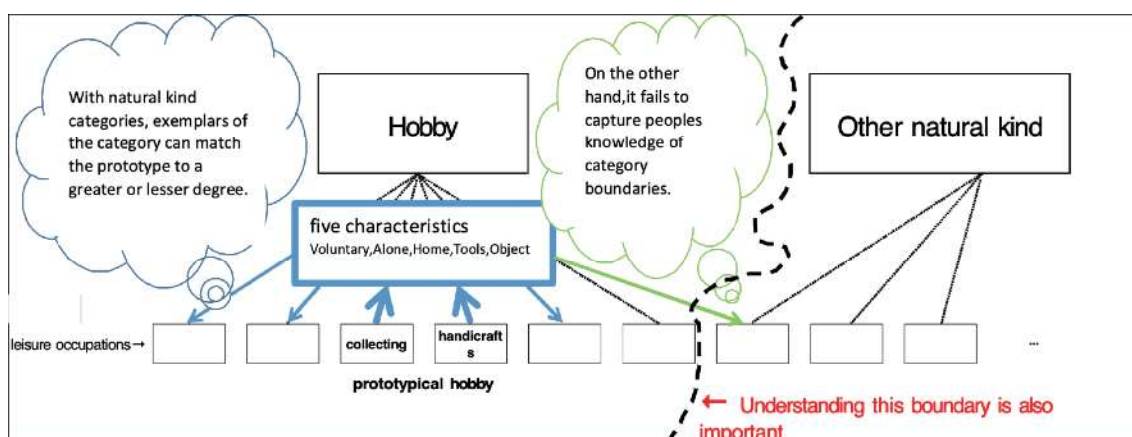


Fig1. Daily's discussion about hobby and other natural kind

While leisure occupations that involve making and collecting are easily recognized as ‘hobbies’, ‘participation’, ‘playing games’, ‘group membership’, ‘learning’, ‘volunteering’, and ‘non-serious leisure’ are considered “hobbies.” are difficult to be recognized as “hobbies”. True hobbies all have a work-like character (Daily 2018:375)

What about Japanese ‘shumi’ (hobbies)? By Sugiyama (2020) the ‘hobby’ item used in social surveys on leisure activities in Japan has the following characteristics: 1. Among the categories of “leisure activities enjoyed for fun rather than as a job or specialty,” the meaning tends to be leisure activities that do not fall under sports, learning, travel, entertainment, media use, or socializing. 2. Because the boundaries between ‘hobby’ and other natural kinds like making, entertainment, and self-cultivation are unclear, it is difficult to determine what kind of leisure activities fall under ‘hobbies.’

Thus, there are issues in research trends surrounding the definition of ‘hobby’. Firstly, examination of each country's view of ‘hobby’. It seems that there is a situation similar to Daily's point regarding Japan's view of ‘hobby’ but there has been no progress in research examining the general public's view of ‘hobby’. Secondly, examination of differences in views on ‘hobby’ depending on generation and gender.

In light of the fact that the definition of ‘hobby’ is being reconsidered in the research community, comparisons between Japanese and German young people's views on hobbies and their perceptions of leisure activities that fall under ‘hobby’.

2. Surveys and Method

For our research aim, we conducted preliminary survey (Collection of literature in Japan and Germany, brief interview in Germany, inspection of Hobbyroom), research review and interview survey. In this short paper, we report about qualitative semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were chosen based on four criteria: 1) ages 20-39 with work experience, 2) lived in Japan, or Germany from birth to attainment of final educational attainment, 3) be able to converse in Japanese or English, and 4) online interviews are possible. We used snowball sampling (Table 1) and interviews were conducted in Japanese or English.

Table1. Interview Data-General information of the interviewees

Name (Code)	Age	Sex	Current occupation	Origin
A	29	male	self-employed	Aichi, Japan
B	24	male	company employee	Tokyo, Japan
C	28	female	company employee	Aichi, Japan
D	30	female	teacher	Osaka, Japan
E	27	male	graduate student	Osnabrück, Germany
F	28	male	company employee	Wissenbach, Germany
G	34	female	company manager	Baden-Württemberg, Germany
H	34	female	teacher	Baden-Württemberg, Germany

The document requesting for research cooperation included the research objectives, research content, ethical considerations, and a statement that research cooperation was voluntary and that no disadvantages would arise if participants did not wish to cooperate in the research or declined to cooperate midway through. This research was conducted with the approval of the St. Luke's International University Research Ethics Committee (No. 23-A112).

The length of interviews varied from 60 to 90 minutes. The questions are the following:

- 1) What comes to your mind when you hear the word 'hobby'?
- 2) In what specific situation do you use and hear the word 'hobby'?
- 3) Tell us about your hobbies, what are they? When and how do you do them?
- 4) Tell us about the hobbies of the people around you. What are their typical hobbies? (family, friends, loves and etc.)
- 5) Tell us about your hobbies before, during and after COVID 19. Were there any changes in your hobbies and/or the way you engaged in them?
- 6) Which one is closest to the image of a 'hobby room'? (Semi-outdoor space, Workshop, Man's hideout)
- 7) Please rate on a 6-point scale whether you think the following activities¹ in your free time are appropriate to be called 'hobbies'. (A. Strongly agree B. agree C. somewhat agree D. somewhat disagree E. disagree F. strongly disagree)
- 8) Tell us the reasons for items you did not consider appropriate as 'hobbies' (those rated D, E, or F) in 7).

In this paper, we will discuss answers related to questions 1, 2, 7, and 8, and obtain suggestions for future quantitative researches.

3. Results and Discussion

3 – 1 . Meaning and Usage of Hobby

About the meaning of 'hobby' there are certain criterias considered as basis for an activity to be considered as hobby/ies. Primary factor considered is the time when the activity is done. It must be done outside work/ job. Secondly, the activity must provide a feeling of enjoyment and relaxation as an effect. The hobby must be spontaneous and requires a certain level of commitment that includes actions that go beyond just seeing and hearing. As a result, continuity was created.

A : Hobby is “activities you do in your free time” , “favorite time other than housework”

H : Hobby is “a kind of free time activities, so that means things you normally do when you don't go to work or university or school . Basically something you like to make in your free time , activity that you like.”

It is assumed that the perception of hobby is almost the same in Japan and Germany, and there is no big difference. Furthermore, Japanese interviewees said that it is different from 'stress relief' and 'habits' and German interviewees said that it is different from 'self-care.'

¹ The selection was based on prior research, Japan's Leisure White Paper, and Statista's 'Most popular hobbies & activities in Germany as of December 2023'. We created it by mixing typical 'hobbies' and non-typical 'hobbies'. As a result, the following activities are listed.

Amateur baseball, Attending concerts, Do-it-yourself carpentry, Domestic travel, Drawing, Games (computers and home game consoles), Gardening, Jigsaw puzzle, Karate, Knitting, Literary creation (novels, poems, etc.), Making sweets, Meeting and chatting with friends and lovers, Model making (building) , Overseas travel, Pets (play with/take care of), Participation in liberal arts courses (literature, history, language, etc.), Photography, Piano practice, Reading, SNS viewing, SNS post, Stamp collection, Surfing, Video viewing (including rental/subscription services), Visiting beauty salons, Volunteering at an art museum, Walking, Watch a movie at a movie theater, Watching rugby at the venue, Watching soccer on TV, Watching TV, Window shopping, Yoga, Pilates.

The word 'hobby' is mainly associated to introduction of one-self, resume and first meeting. It is considered as a formal word to ask someone's profile. On the other hand, majority of the people with established relationships (friends, family and etc.) rarely use the word . The activities that are being shared as 'hobby' are constantly changed depending on the situation and the person involve in the conversation. Some people use the phrase 'as a hobby' for modesty, in situations that the ability and enthusiasm of certain activities are enough to turn into a job.

B : I use the word 'hobby' when introducing myself at work. After name, school name, affiliation, aspirations at work, etc., I mention my hobby to let people know about my private life. In addition, when I want to convey that "I don't take this seriously" at work, I may use "It's just a hobby."

C : I am sometimes asked about my 'hobby' in surveys, etc., but I never use it myself. I say things like "I like ××." I've never heard of it in conversation recently.

H : when I'm at work, talk to my colleagues includes hobbies just conversation, I would say or usually use the word is commonly used in formal situation. They use what do you like to do in your free time/ activity. Conversation is not often using hobby, we also use the word hobbie. there's no English translation but we use the phrase what do you do in free time.

The usage of the word 'hobby' is roughly the same in Japan and Germany, and there is no significant difference in the usage of the word 'hobby', with the understanding that it is a word used in a formal atmosphere when meeting someone for the first time. Assuming that 'hobby' itself is not often used in daily life, and that the content is also situation-dependent, it is necessary to focus on the relationship between the subject who is trying to obtain information about 'hobby' and the object being asked. There are anecdotes (such as when someone asked me about my hobbies at work). In this sense, the results of 'hobby' obtained in social surveys are asking people about 'hobby' in a flat state, and we may need to be careful in how we read the results.

A : When I mention something that looks like a hobby, I answer what suits the person at the time.

Also, when I look at other people's hobbies as a profile, I sometimes associate other hobbies with that combination of hobbies.

B : When I was job-hunting, I had the experience of not being able to get a conversation going based on the hobbies I listed, so I spent about six months adjusting the content of my self-introduction until about the time I joined the company. Specifically, instead of saying "games," I answered something like "mahjong," which would be something I would have in common with my boss at work (I don't really like it that much). I once saw a co-worker who said, "My hobby is golf," talking to his boss, and I felt like "I don't want to make a difference because of the way I introduced myself."

D : "There was a time when I was addicted to online games, but I didn't say anything because I didn't think people thought of me as someone who was into online games, and I didn't want to play with them (I didn't say it because my self-image I didn't want to make any bumps.)"

G : "I usually talk about my cosplay hobby, but if people get confused about it, I would just change it to other hobbies that I do. Like arts and crafts, board games, and walking. Basically, the most common hobbies."

3 – 2. Hobby and other leisure occupations

About both countries, leisure activities, such as going to concerts and traveling (domestic and overseas), which in previous studies were thought to be difficult to recognize as hobbies because they involved ‘participation in an occupation’ were also recognized as hobbies. Is it due to the fact that people are becoming more independent in how they participate in these activities? In an interview with Japanese hobby Life, he also talked about ‘*Oshikatsu*,’ a way to enjoy the live performance itself even if you are not a fan of a particular artist. And changes in the way of travel, diversification of tourism, might progress in communication technology.

A German interviewee mentioned DIY carpentry, jigsaw puzzles, knitting, and stamp collecting as leisure activities that ‘older generations do’ (None of the Japanese interviewees rated it as “not like a hobby”). As mentioned in introduction, previous research has cited production and collecting as *hobby-like* activities. It is necessary to carefully observe the number of people who are active in their leisure time, but is there any kind of media influence in Japan that will make young people think that this is a hobby? (e.g. B mentioned the name of the TV program)

Some leisure activities that are controversial as to whether they are appropriate to be called hobbies in Japan are as follows:

- Socializing

Is it because you don't have the impression that 'meeting people/ engaging in the same leisure activities' or 'it doesn't seem like a hobby'? (It was evaluated as a hobby even if 'Socializing' was not used for German people)

- Lessons

It is different from a hobby because parents have the impression that it is something that parents send their children to, and it is not voluntary, so even when asked about hobbies, it does not come up as a topic. Self-evaluation of the skills acquired as a result of learning is also somewhat ambiguous.

- Pets

It is a personal choice whether or not to keep a pet, but do you feel aversion to labeling it as a hobby or introducing it to others?

4. Conclusion

Although we await full-scale quantitative research in the future, this survey suggests that it is not easy to understand the leisure activities of young people in particular in the category of ‘hobbies’. Even if ‘hobby’ is a subcategory of ‘leisure’, we need to reconsider to what extent it is a concept that defines serious leisure (Stebins 2015). In particular, the fact that young Germans answered that they had no image of their generation doing hobby activities, which are considered typical in research, suggests that the validity of the ‘hobby’ category itself will be reexamined in the future.

Furthermore, ‘hobby’ is mostly used in formal contexts, such as when introducing oneself to someone you are meeting for the first time, and the hobby activities that people say may change depending on the relationship to the other person or depending on the situation. It should also be noted that the fact that ‘hobby’ has the aspect of serious leisure which causes the speaker to develop

strategies when having conversations related to hobbies in everyday life. In society, including self-introduction in the workplace, asking people about their ‘hobbies’ rather than ‘leisure activities’ may not be said to be authoritative, but it does give the person the initiative to formulate ‘hobbies’ that are appropriate for the occasion. It seems that we should focus not only on the representation of social class as pointed out by Bourdieu, but also on aspects that include the appeal of ‘sociability’ that would not be considered as ‘*otaku*’.

Acknowledgments

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