



## **Motivation, the Japanese Freshman University Student and Foreign Language Acquisition**

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Japanese freshman university students can be classified into two groups, those who have chosen to study English, and those who have not. This study focuses on the relationship between motivation and foreign language acquisition for each group. More specifically, it attempts to discover what differences exist between the two groups according to three basic motivational criteria, and what consequences this has for English teaching in the Japanese university classroom.

Using a questionnaire survey, student motivation is measured according to one of three general categories; integrative (personal), instrumental, and intrinsic. The questionnaire findings suggest that, as expected English major students are highly motivated in all categories. In comparison, non-English major students perceive English as less relevant to their lives in general, but enjoy studying English and find it a worthwhile challenge. Based on these findings, suggestions are made to improve student motivation in each category.

この研究は、日本の大学における新入生を対象に、外国語の習得とその動機付けの関係の調査を目的に行なった。新入生は二つのグループに分けて（英語専攻と他専攻）両グループの外国語習得における学習の動機付けについて「どんなふうに異なりますか？」「どのような授業計画が、学習に対する動機付けに対して効果があるか」についての研究である。

アンケート調査を通して、①主観的、②手段となる、③本質的 3つのカテゴリーで学習の動機付けを分析した。結果として、英語専攻の学生グループの全体カテゴリーに対する高い動機付けが明確になった。その一方、英語専攻以外の学生グループの場合、一般的に英語の役割が割に高くないが、英語の勉強に関するチャレンジャーの面白さ・楽しさという動機付けが見られる。調査の結果に基づいて、カテゴリーにおける動機付けの改善方法を提案する。

## Introduction

Although motivation is only one of several factors influencing language acquisition, it is a very important one. For the purpose of this paper, Williams and Burden's (1997) definition of motivation as "sustained efforts towards a set goal, where the value the individual places on that goal will determine the effort directed towards attaining it," (p.120) is adopted.

This paper attempts to classify student motivation according to one of three basic categories based on the nature of the desired goal.

- Intrinsic
- Instrumental
- Integrative and personal

### *Intrinsic motivation*

Characteristically with intrinsic motivation, the intensity of behavior does not change once an external goal has been obtained. For example, if you play soccer because you enjoy it, you will not stop just because your team has won a championship. In an ESL setting, intrinsic motivation is accessible to teacher influence by generating tasks that the student perceives as worthwhile and enjoyable.

### *Integrative and instrumental motivation*

According to Gardner and Lambert (1972), integrative motivation is characterized by the learner's positive attitude towards the target language group and a desire to integrate with that group. In contrast, instrumental motivation is characterized by a desire for some social or economic reward through second language acquisition, and there may be little or no desire to integrate with the target language group.

## **Personal motivation**

In mono cultural societies such as Japan, a more useful classification than integrative might be personal motivation as defined by Benson (1991). He found that university students' motivation to study English sometimes could not be grouped as either integrative or instrumental forms of motivation. For this reason he constructed another category labeled "personal". This category included motivational reasons such as, "pleasure at being able to read English, and enjoyment of entertainment in English" (Benson 1991:36). Personal motivation involves a positive orientation towards the target culture, but not involving integration with this culture. For the purpose of this paper, it is considered to be a sub-category of integrative motivation, and is included in the same motivational category.

### *Motivation, and foreign versus second language acquisition*

Foreign language instruction has been distinguished from second language instruction. (Brown, 1993; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994). Students of a second language usually live in an area where that language is used by the majority of the population, and can put the language ability learned in the classroom to immediate use in real situations.

Students of a foreign language live in an area where there are few, if any, speakers of the target language, and so they cannot put their new linguistic skills to use. In addition, the isolation from native speakers prevents the development of cultural empathy necessary for linguistic fluency. (Brown, 1993; Dörnyei, 1990, 1994). While instrumental motivation may be sufficient to achieve specific instrumental goals such as passing a university entrance exam, Dörnyei (1990, 1994) indicates that such instrumental motivation alone will not be enough to progress to more advanced levels, where integrative motivation appears to be a more important factor

Foreign language students are at a distinct disadvantage compared to second language students, as they do not have enough contact with the speakers and culture of the foreign language to develop negative or positive attitudes towards it, so remain indifferent. Thus, Dörnyei (1994) found that where motivation exists in the foreign language classroom it tends to be instrumental. Indeed, many studies have found instrumental motivation to be most prevalent in mono-cultural, non-university foreign language learning Asian settings, (Lukmani, 1972; Lai, 1996 etc).

#### *Motivation and the Japanese educational system*

In a Japanese setting, previous research suggests that motivation prior to university entrance motivation is predominately instrumental. Morrow (1987), and LoCastro (1996) both found that for junior and high school students in Japan, the purpose of studying English is strongly instrumental, namely passing a university entrance exam.

But what happens to student motivation once this goal has been achieved? Berwick and Ross (1989) studied a group of 90 first students in a compulsory English course at a Japanese university. The instrumental motivation possessed prior to writing the entrance exam diminished once it had been passed. Although some students remained enthusiastic, many attended classes solely because they were compulsory, a situation described as a motivational wasteland. They state instrumental motivation peaks in the last year of high school, after which, “there is little to sustain this kind of motivation, so the student appears in the freshmen classrooms as a kind of timid, exam-worn survivor with no apparent academic purpose.” (p.206).

Despite Dörnyei’s (1994) findings that integrative motivation will be inhibited in a foreign language-learning environment, and that motivation will be predominately instrumental, research amongst Japanese freshmen contradicts this. Widdows and Voller, (1991) and Kobayashi, Redekop and Porter, (1992), found that in a university environment motivation tends to be integrative, if it exists at all. Students in these

studies were most interested in speaking, listening and learning about foreign cultures. The researchers suggested the rejection of instrumental goals to be symptomatic of the students' boredom with their high school's exam-focused, grammar-orientated English classes.

Benson (1991) also found that although there was not a clear difference between levels of the different motivation types, "integrative and personal reasons for learning were preferred over instrumental ones," (p.34).

### **Question for Research**

Previous research has not distinguished the motivational characteristics between those students who choose to study English, and those for whom English classes are obligatory. While we can expect motivation levels to be higher in all categories for the English major students, the objective of this paper is to better understand how motivation differs between English and non-English majors according to these three categories. Based upon these differences, teaching methods that take advantage of the motivational strengths and weakness of both groups can be suggested.

### **Methodology**

The study consisted of an attitude questionnaire consisting of 13 reasons for studying English, which respondents were asked to agree or disagree with on a 5-point Likert Scale format, where "1" was strongly disagree and "5" was strongly agree. The questionnaire was conducted in Japanese, to ensure the students fully understood the questions and prevent those students who did not want to make the effort to understand the English from randomly ticking numbers.

Each question was approximately aligned to each of the three categories of motivation described above. The questions were based on an integrative/instrumental section of a test in the appendix of Gardner, R. (1985), adapted for use with the Likert test.

### *Validity*

Each category of motivation is defined by its goal; therefore, it is possible to establish explicit connections between the constructs (the different forms of motivation) and the variables (the survey questions) by checking which goal each question relates to.

Questions 1, 3, 6 and 10 relate specifically to instrumental goals: passing a test, future career, overseas volunteer position, and so can be seen as valid tests of instrumental motivation.

Questions 2, 4, 5, 8 and 13 relate specifically to integrative and personal goals: make friends with people from other countries, enjoy overseas trips, enjoy books or movies in their original language, and so can be seen as valid tests of integrative and personal motivation.

Questions 7, 9, 11 and 12 relate specifically to intrinsic goals: the challenge of studying a foreign language, desire to study for its own sake, to become more knowledgeable, and because it is fun, and so can be seen as valid tests of intrinsic motivation.

### *Survey respondents*

The participants were all first year students in a medium-sized national teacher training university. Of the 122 respondents, 92 were studying in the “Foreign Language Communication” (FLC) class obligatory for all freshman students regardless of major, while 25 were English major students studying in the “Practical English” (PE) course. For each class, student numbers were between 20 and 25. In the ‘FLC class’ the female to male ratio was approximately 3 to 1; however, of the 25 English major students only 4 were males. The role of gender in second language acquisition is beyond the scope of

this paper, although the author notes it could have influenced the results of the survey.

## Results

### *Reliability*

The author acknowledges that the 5-point Likert scale can be criticized in the Japanese setting because there is a tendency for students to choose a neutral '3' response. However, in the present study, scores for reversely worded questions indicated that the questionnaire was generally reliable. Questions 1 and 6 (Mean scores 4.11 and 1.58,) and 9 and 12 (mean scores 1.29 and 4.29), although not exactly worded in reverse, suggest that the students did read the questions and were not merely ticking numbers in a perfunctory manner.

In the following tables, the responses of the non-English major FLC students are compared to English major PE students. The questions are grouped according to the three motivation categories.

**Table 1 Instrumental Motivation**

Item	Question	Mean score	
		FLC	PE
1	I want to study English as I will need it in my future career	3.7	4.51
3	I want to be a Japanese teacher abroad or an NGO volunteer and English language is compulsory.	2.89	3.78
6	Studying English is not important to my future career as I will not be required to use it.	1.79	1.37
10	I want to study English so I can take a test in the future (TOEIC etc).	3.34	4.30

**Table 2 Integrative Motivation / Personal Motivation**

2	I want to study English so I can make friends with people from other countries.	3.54	4.03
4	I want to study English as it will help me on overseas trips.	3.96	4
5	It is too hard to meet and make friends with people from other countries living in Japan.	3.12	2.40
8	I want to be able to understand a foreign movie without reading the sub-titles.	3.90	4.92
13	I want to be able to read books in their original language.	2.95	3.98

**Table 3 Intrinsic Motivation**

7	I like the challenge of learning a foreign language.	4.33	4.81
9	I am studying English because the school says I have to, if I could I would not take this class.	1.50	1.07
11	I want to study English as it will make me a more knowledgeable	4.24	4.62
12	Studying English is fun.	4.25	4.52

(Where “1” is strongly disagree, and “5” is highly agree)

PE students show strong instrumental motivation. Mean scores are high, ‘for a future career’, 4.51 and ‘for a test’ 4.30, which compares to 3.7 and 3.34 respectively for FLC students, who perceive English as relatively less relevant to their future working lives.

PE students also showed quite strong integrative motivation, and very strong personal motivation. “To make friends with people from other countries” was 4.03, but to “understand movies without reading the sub-titles” was an extremely high 4.92. “To read books in their original language” scored a much lower 3.98.

FLC showed much lower levels of integrative and personal motivation. “To make friends with people from other countries” was 3.54, and to “understand movies without reading the sub-titles” was a 3.90. “Reading books in their original language” scored a relatively low 2.95.

For all three intrinsic motivation questions, PE students’ mean scores were very high. “I like the challenge” scored 4.81, “to make me more knowledgeable” (4.62), and “because it is fun” (4.52). Although not as high as PE students, FLC students also demonstrated significant levels of intrinsic motivation. “I like the challenge” scored 4.33, “to make me more knowledgeable” (4.24), and “because it is fun” (4.25).

## **Discussion**

### *Motivation over time*

Fortunately motivation is not a static, unchanging entity. For example, Berwick and Ross (1989) found that on completion of 150 hours of class time motivation had improved, which they attributed to teaching techniques and the adoption of an exchange program with an American sister university. The question is: how can teachers increase motivation in each of the categories?

### *Increasing instrumental motivation*

Although higher than the neutral score “3”, non-English major university students’ instrumental motivation levels were much lower than their intrinsic motivation levels.

The research of Berwick and Ross (1989) suggests that for Japanese university students, once an instrumental goal, for example passing an entrance exam is achieved, motivation quickly dwindles. To avoid this, once a goal is achieved it needs to be replaced by another clear, attainable goal. For highly motivated English major students these goals seemed to be already in place. However non-English major students need to

be convinced of the relevance of English language ability to their future careers in a global economy and increasingly competitive job market, and be encouraged to set short term, obtainable goals that will enhance their career prospects. For example, sitting the TOEIC or 'Eiken' test can be an alternative to an end of term exam.

A paradoxical problem that may need to be avoided occurs when highly motivated students such as the PE students are encouraged to achieve a specific instrumental goal, and become over-motivated to achieve it. If the English classes do not help them achieve this goal their behavior motivation in the class may decrease. For this reason, with highly motivated students such as the PE students, it may be desirable to avoid specific, short-term instrumental goals unless the totality of the class can be devoted to achieving this goal.

#### *Increasing integrative motivation*

Dörnyei's (1994) research suggests that it is integrative motivation that pushes the student towards foreign language fluency, but in the foreign language learner setting such as the Japanese classroom, this type of motivation is difficult to foster. This is a problem for the PE students whose ultimate goal is high levels of fluency, but less of a problem for FLC students whose ultimate goal may only be intermediate levels of fluency. Although high, PE students' motivation scores were significantly lower than instrumental and intrinsic scores, suggesting a lack of integrative opportunities.

It would seem the goal for both groups should be to maximize students' contact with native speakers. The students' main contact with this target language group may be the foreign language teachers themselves, so teacher conduct is vital. An enthusiasm for English and one's own culture would seem to be essential. Also, teachers might try to increase the opportunity for students to communicate with native speakers. For example, if a JICA delegation is visiting the university they might be invited to the class.

However, it should be noted that Dörnyei (1994) questions the effectiveness of such tactics, believing them to be too sporadic and too artificial to successfully generate the necessary interest in the target groups' culture. So it would seem the only real methods available for increasing integrative motivation are, as in the Berwick and Ross (1989) study, create a second language learning environment via overseas study programs, home-stay visits, or acting as a host family for English speaking students visiting Japan. However, opportunities for such activities are extremely limited.

#### *Increasing personal motivation*

PE students' levels of personal motivation are higher than their integrative one, reflecting perhaps greater personal motivation opportunities. In the absence of effective methods to increase integrative motivation, it may be more effective to concentrate on personal motivation. The survey results could suggest that personal motivation might play the role that integrative motivation plays in second language learning environment, namely, stimulating the necessary response to the target language and its culture to develop the cultural empathy necessary to advance to higher levels of fluency.

The results of the questionnaire suggest both English and non-English majors have an interest in Western youth culture, as both groups express the desire to watch movies or read books in their original language, but PE students' personal motivation levels are particularly high. The students' interest can be exploited through teaching materials and activities based on the lifestyles, geography, literature, sports, and TV of the English speaking countries, showing clips from movies, TV shows etc. Students can be asked to write reviews of English language movies they have seen or musicians they listen to, and can discuss their reviews in class.

#### *Increasing intrinsic motivation*

Based on the results of the questionnaire, appealing to both groups of students' innate sense of challenge and providing activities they enjoy will exploit their already high

levels of intrinsic motivation. Traditionally, Japanese texts have emphasized grammar and vocabulary as opposed to developing communicative ability. More than 3,500 college textbooks have been published in Japan, of which sixty-nine percent are readers containing only prose -English or American novels or essays and articles (Koike, 1982), typically with notes in Japanese.

Fortunately, there are many EFL texts now available specifically designed for the Japanese student that encourage them to be active participants in the class and generate a feeling of accomplishment on the completion of a task.<sup>1</sup> Role plays, information gap activities, personalization, games, interesting visuals, and video clips all have a role to play in convincing students that although they may see no need to become proficient in a second language, the study of the language can in itself be a rewarding and enjoyable activity.

## **Conclusion**

As stated previously, motivated behavior is goal-orientated behavior, and whether English majors or not, by helping students to clearly define their goals and encouraging them to achieve them, motivation levels should improve. It seems less important whether this motivation is integrative, instrumental, or intrinsic, than that some goal is present that the student is encouraged to work towards.

However, the results of the survey do suggest certain differences in motivation types between English major and non-English major students, which might have implications for the classroom. First, non-English students' comparatively low levels of instrumental motivation need to be addressed, i.e. they need to be convinced of the relevance of English to their future careers. Second, English major-students' integrative motivation levels in the present study, although reasonably high, fall below both their instrumental

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<sup>1</sup> For example, "English Firsthand New Gold Edition", Longman Publishing

and intrinsic motivation levels. This contradicts previous research that found motivation at the university level to be predominately integrative. This might be a reflection of these students' lack of integrative opportunities compared to the students in the other studies. If possible, integrative opportunities such as overseas home stays or study trips should be arranged. If not, personal motivation should be encouraged through the use of English language movies, TV programs, or music so that this kind of motivation may at least partially take the role that integrative motivation plays in a second language learning environment, in pushing the learner to higher levels of language fluency.

In conclusion, if the learners' ultimate goal is intermediate levels of fluency, short term, instrumental goals might be sufficient. But if the learners' ultimate goal is a higher level of fluency in a foreign language learning environment, personal motivation may have to play the role that integrative motivation plays in the second language learning environment. This is because of the lack of integrative opportunities in a foreign language learning environment, and the difficulty the teacher faces in generating them for the students. It is uncertain, however, if personal motivational alone is sufficient to generate the necessary cultural empathy Dörnyei deems necessary to progress to these higher levels.

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## Appendix 1

英語の学習に関するアンケート

以下に示された、英語の学習に関する 13 項目の質問に対して答えてください。それぞれの質問は 1 の全くそう思わない。から 5 の強く思う。に分かれています。自分の意見に一番近いと思う番号に○をつけてください。この質問には正解がないので正直に思った番号を答えてください

全くそう思わない      そう思わない      どちらでもない      そう思う      強くそう思う

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1、将来の職業、仕事のために<br>英語を勉強したい                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2、外国人の友人を作るために<br>英語を勉強したい                                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3、海外での日本語教師やNGO<br>等のボランティアとして働く<br>ために英語が必要であるから<br>英語を勉強したい | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4、海外旅行をするのに英語が<br>必要であるから英語を勉強する                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5、日本に住んでいる外国人の<br>友人を作るのは難しい                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6、将来の仕事や職業において<br>英語を使わないから英語を<br>勉強する必要はない                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7、外国語の習得に挑戦してみたい  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8、洋画を吹き替え版や字幕つき<br>ではないオリジナル版を理解でき<br>るようになりたい                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9、英語を勉強するのは学校の<br>必修科目であるからであり、                               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

本当はこのクラスを取りたくはない

10、TOEIC、英検等、のテストの 1 2 3 4 5

準備のために英語を勉強したい

11、より豊かな知識のひとつとして 1 2 3 4 5

英語を勉強したい

12、英語の勉強は楽しい 1 2 3 4 5

13、原版のままで本を読んだり、 1 2 3 4 5

映画を見るのが好きである

アンケートは以上です。ご協力ありがとうございました。