

Shared Identities: Our Interweaving Threads

A change of heart: Motivation and studying abroad

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This paper is a pre-test and post-test longitudinal study into the effects of studying abroad based on two types of motivation and international posture. Thirty-one high school students were given a questionnaire in January to measure for these variables. After returning from a short summer home stay, the identical survey was given again in September, including a qualitative survey to determine reasons for any motivational changes. Quantitative data results from the survey showed some changes in motivation and international posture in the study group. Results showed extrinsic motivation (EMV) increased 6%, intrinsic motivation (IMV) increased 8%, and international posture (INP) increased by 9%. These results were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). Two distinct types of international posture were discovered: passive and active. Moreover, qualitative data revealed a desire to speak more English, yet at the same time, a hesitancy to initiate L2 conversations.

この論文は、本質的なやる気と非本質的なやる気の2種類の動機づけと国際的な姿勢についての事前調査と事後調査を基にした留学の効果についての長期的な研究である。これらを調べるため、31人の学生に1月にアンケートを行い、夏期短期ホームステイ留学を終えた後、9月に全く同じアンケートを行った。学生達の動機づけの変化に対する理由を見つけ出すために筆記式アンケートも行った。消極的な姿勢と積極的な姿勢という明確な2種類の国際的な姿勢がわかった。さらに筆記式アンケートの結果、もっと英語を話したいという願望と同時に会話を始めるのにためらいがあるということが示された。

The original idea for this year-long project came from first hand experience teaching the English Intensive (*Eigo Shuyaku*) Course at a Japanese high school in Osaka. Students who returned from their home stay experienced considerable changes, not only in fluency, but their entire attitude towards speaking English seemed to change over the summer. Their “*I don’t know so I can’t speak*” barrier, or unwillingness to communicate, was considerably lowered. I thought I knew why, but needed to create a construct and operationalize it in order to observe and measure those changes in student behavior.



Therefore, this paper will be drawing survey questions from instruments such as Horwitz's Foreign Language Class Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI), Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) as well as Yashima's Willingness to Communicate (WTC) surveys. Survey questions from these instruments were considered, modified, and designed to be appropriate for my own Japanese high school learners. Each of the above instruments measures slightly different variables, and yet there is a noticeable degree of overlap among them. Motivation, in one form or other, seems to be a central component of all of these landmark SLA studies, and therefore worthy of further attention.

Literature review

Robert Gardner's social psychological approach was quite popular in our field in the 1980s, brought on by his work into learner attitudes, integrativeness, and motivation towards an L2 community. At the center of his model of integrative motives (Gardner, 1972) lies motivation, which is fed by many factors such as attitudes, interests, and the desire to learn L2. However, there are different forces at work in countries where SLA is driven primarily by instrumental motivation, such as the desire to pass exams, secure better employment, and so on. Naturally, learner feelings toward an L2 group drive interest (or integrative motivation) in SLA.

However, Gardner's studies do not concur in a country like Japan, where the possible L2 community constitutes less than two percent of the entire population. The integrative motive in Asian countries was addressed by Warden and Lin's (2000) study into motivation among Taiwan's EFL

students at the university level. Taiwan, Korea, Japan, and to certain extent China, are similar countries in this demographic regard. As one might expect, the integrative motivation was found to be exceptionally weak. With L2 English speakers being so few and far between, the main source of integrative motivation can only come from foreign pop culture, movies, and TV, which is hardly representative of reality.

Warden and Lin did, however, determine that instrumental (extrinsic) motivation and "required" motivation (students must study L2) is a dominating force among Taiwanese EFL students (2000). With almost no chance to interact with native English speakers, and frequent high-stakes testing, all students really have, to keep up the difficult work of learning English as a foreign language, is extrinsic motivation. Japan is not so different in this regard.

Although it is generally assumed that out-of-class contact with L2 speakers in a natural setting will improve proficiency, studies by Ellis (1994) have shown that educational settings and the type of L2 contact promote a greater degree of proficiency. In other words, my students may learn more from the study abroad part of their experience than from their interactions with home stay family. This point should be considered as part of a post-trip qualitative interview with some of the returning students. What do they feel changed their heart more, meta-cognitive strategies or sentimental feelings?

Freed (1993, 1995, 1998) and Coleman (1997) found from their research that most L2 learners studying abroad made gains in terms of fluency and oral proficiency rather than accuracy and complexity. Based on my experience

teaching the same English course in previous years, I would like to predict similar results for my learners. The study abroad period is too short (three weeks) to seriously improve grammatical accuracy and complexity. However, their listening and speaking skills in an English immersion environment should make dramatic improvements, and their hesitation to speak English when called upon should also decrease.

Any oral proficiency or fluency gains are strongly influenced by a willingness to communicate (Yashima, Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). A willingness to communicate (WTC) refers to the idea that language students are both willing to use a foreign language, and actively seek out opportunities to communicate in a foreign language. This construct, in addition to an international posture, showed that the satisfaction and quality of relationships (with L2 members) was important in determining the frequency of L2 communication.

Yashima (2004) defines international posture as an interest in international affairs, a willingness to live or work overseas, and a desire to engage foreigners in conversation. Yashima links these individual differences directly to motivation and ultimately, L2 proficiency (2004). These are apparently affective factors (based on feelings, instinct, friendships, mutual understanding, and other emotions) and should be followed up with qualitative interviews. Yashima's communication model also shows a significant relationship between international posture, motivation (desire and intensity) and a general willingness to communicate. As my students found themselves in various challenging situations living in Canada, hopefully their WTC will increase out of

sheer necessity to communicate. But how do they feel about English prior to going abroad?

Research questions

The students were sent on a study abroad trip from July 10th to July 31st, 2008, to study abroad and stay at homes with Canadian families. I have seen big changes in student's attitude and motivation levels from past courses, and this year, I will attempt to measure these changes over time. I aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the present levels of international posture in my learners?
2. To what extent are my students presently extrinsically motivated to learn L2?
3. To what extent are my students presently intrinsically motivated to learn L2?
4. How will these variables change after their summer trip abroad?

It is my hypothesis that, as a result of rich interactions with Canadians, students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will increase, at least initially. Their international posture will increase for the same reasons.

Method

The participants

There are 32 Grade 10 students in the English Intensive (*Eigo Shuyaku*) program at a private high school in Osaka city. This single class of 15 and 16 year-olds has 26 girls

compared with only 6 boys, all of whom completed the survey. One survey was not taken seriously and discarded. These students have already taken 3 years of English classes as required by the Ministry of Education for all Japanese junior high school students. However, they have voluntarily chosen to take the English Intensive Program, which, in addition to having two extra English classes each week, also runs a study abroad program in Calgary, Canada.

The study abroad program

The study group of students went to Calgary, Canada for 3 weeks in July 2008. They attended 20 hours of formal ESL instruction at a community college, and they were placed with various Calgary families for the duration of their home stay period. In addition to taking English classes and interacting with their host family, students participated in a number of extra-curricular group activities, such as field trips, barbecues, horseback riding, and white-water rafting while in the Calgary area. The city itself is located in western Canada, near the scenic Rocky Mountains, and was the fastest growing Canadian city in 2007. The immigrant population is over 20 percent, in a city of just over a million residents, with the majority of newcomers hailing from the Asia Pacific region (Chahal, 2005). Such ethnic diversity and L2 community size is common in many large Canadian cities.

Materials

Design

The survey (Appendix 1) was given to students in mid-January, 2008 (time period 1). It was administered again

in September (time period 2), one month after returning to Japan. Changes in learner motivation, international posture, and general anxiety were tracked over an eight-month period. Time period 2 also included a qualitative survey to identify the reasons for possible changes in motivation and international posture.

Survey instrument

A 26 item bilingual questionnaire was created drawing from some well-known instruments in the SLA field. Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), Horwitz's Foreign Language Class Anxiety Survey (FLCAS), and Yashima, Nishide, and Shimizu's Willingness To Communicate (WTC) survey all served as guidelines in formulating survey questions, which I modified for my learners age and situation. A six-point Likert scale recorded student responses, which ranged from (1) to (6), or strongly disagree to strongly agree, respectively. I decided that denying students a neutral category would force students to make a clear decision. All questions were worded positively.

Several items aimed at measuring extrinsic motivation ($k=7$), focusing on inquiries about future employment opportunities, entrance exams, and the usefulness of English as an international language. The emphasis here was to confirm the belief (some may argue myth) that Japanese high school students are primarily extrinsically motivated due to high stakes exam pressure and the lack of L2 community to empower motivation into the intrinsic category.

Other items examined learners' intrinsic motivation ($k=7$), asking if they liked speaking in class, asking the

teacher questions in class, and if they felt satisfaction after completing difficult English assignments. Further items looked at my students' international posture ($k=7$). Students were asked if they minded: interacting with foreigners, trying to understand English movies and TV, and if they were generally interested in the world outside of Japan. Additional items ($k=5$) were added to this repeated study survey to serve as distracters.

Procedure

A native speaker of Japanese translated all questions into Japanese. The qualitative data was gathered in the student's L1 (during time period 2) to ensure accurate formulation of comments, feelings, and experiences that may be responsible for changes in motivation and international posture. In some ways, this data was very valuable, measuring intervening variables, which cannot be accounted for in a quantitative survey. This includes the quality of home stay family interactions, willingness to communicate with people outside of the home stay house, friendships made, usefulness of spoken English, and being able to make oneself understood often.

Data collection and analysis techniques

All surveys were administered at the conclusion of a regular English class. The Japanese teacher helped explain the procedure, and asked the students to consider their regular English classes when answering. Since there were only 26 items, the bilingual survey was completed in about 10 minutes.

Data collected was analyzed using *Winsteps* software to produce results for three variables: reliability, fit, and misfit. The repeated measures data was subjected to a 2 x 3 ANOVA, to determine the degree of changes over time in the three variables above. However, the resulting numerical values discussed below are a sum of the means of the seven questions ($k=7$) for each of the three variables tested.

Results

The survey performed remarkably well, showing very good reliability considering the small data pool of only 31 students. Although statistical significance was not attained ($p>.05$) there is a small increase in extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Student's international posture posted the largest gains and the most interesting results.

Their international posture rated moderately, prior to going to Canada. This data revealed an interesting distinction between what I have termed an active international posture and a passive international posture. Here, it seems as though the variable has split unexpectedly, as seen in more detail below:

Table 1. Passive international posture

Item	Question	Mean	SD
6	I would like to live in/near my hometown all my life.	2.74	1.59
7	I often try to understand English movies and TV.	3.94	1.24
11	I am very interested in the world outside Japan.	5.23	0.83
17	I want to use English to speak with foreigners & understand global events.	3.58	1.52

Table 2. Active international posture

Item	Question	Mean	SD
4	I don't mind initiating conversations with foreigners.	2.90	1.30
9	I would assist an English-speaker having trouble communicating in a place like a restaurant or station.	3.45	1.36
20	I would like to work abroad.	3.84	1.50

This unexpected result reflects a possible cultural norm in Japan, where being shy or modest is usually considered a virtue. Given the student's young age (15-16 years old) and limited use of English in class, it is understandable that they are unlikely to actively engage an English-speaking foreigner in conversation. It would be more interesting to see how this characteristic changes as they mature and take command of a larger vocabulary over the next few years.

Presently, the data shows a noticeable increase in passive international posture, suggesting that the students may be more interested in the world around them (as long as they do not have to deal with it directly). This experience abroad certainly boosted their curiosity of the world outside Japan, but has not manifested itself into a desire to engage this outside world.

Below we can see a chart comparing the three variables both before and after the summer home stay. There are moderate increases in all three variables, however, given the briefness of the program (three weeks), one would not expect huge gains. The three variables were calculated as a sum of the means and as a percent value of the maximum possible Likert points. All questions were worded positively.

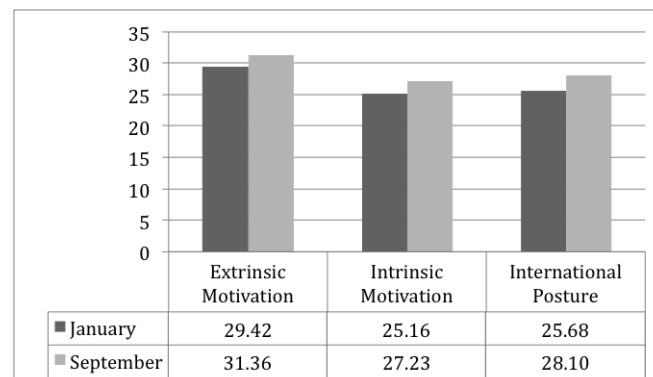


Figure 1. Three variables in motivation

Qualitative survey results

In general, the written replies from the students showed a strong desire to speak English better, and frustration over any inability to communicate in Calgary. Despite this frustration, when asked "Do you think that it is now easier to approach foreigners in Japan and provide assistance in English?" 12 students replied "not yet", six replied "a little", and only 10 answered "yes". Only three respondents felt that their experience abroad had not changed them in any way. Some of the problems faced by students were related to communication inadequacies. Getting on the right bus and shopping in English presented the most common problems.

Discussion

This temporal study into individual changes in motivation and international posture took place over a period of just 9

months. The survey was well written, with very few items performing poorly. Although reliability is very good across the three factors, it should be noted that responses to such surveys occasionally are contradictory, or give surprising results, such as in the case of passive and active international posture.

The second research question seeks to identify which is stronger, intrinsic or extrinsic motivation. Even a cursory look at the results shows that students are presently more extrinsically motivated. The belief that studying English will help secure a good job, and be useful English in the future, is strong. Surprisingly, pressure from university entrance exams is weak at this point in time. Perhaps this is because these high-stakes tests are about two years in the future and not yet on the minds of most fun-loving teens.

Intrinsic motivation results show that many of my learners are only mildly interested in speaking English, and then primarily so, for the purpose of making friends. This motivator will be helpful with regard to interacting with their host family in Calgary, and establishing productive relationships with L2 community members. And perhaps as a direct result, the international posture variable increased the most.

The qualitative survey did not perform as expected, and did not isolate reasons for changes in student motivation and international posture. Perhaps more specific questions may have elicited the kind of information I was looking for. Despite very good reliability, this questionnaire is not perfect. Only generalizations (and a few surprises) can be drawn from the results. Another repeated measures survey a full 6 months after returning might be useful, but it is

possible that such results might show a return to pre-home stay motivation levels.

Conclusions

The original research questions posed have been answered. The present levels of international posture, extrinsic motivation, and intrinsic motivation have been measured and analyzed, confirming the belief that my learners are primarily extrinsically motivated to learn English. Minimal contact with a foreign L2 community has created an environment where students are driven by immediate academic needs, rather than communication needs.

This is a long-term problem in many Asian EFL countries, and cannot be solved in short order. In fact, the size of the situation can only be overcome with large shifts in population demographics or dramatic social transformations that usually take generations to occur. With the declining birthrate, and the anticipated labor shortage, large-scale immigration may be the answer to Japan's integrative motive and a sizeable L2 community with which to interact. However, whether or not English will be the common language of such a mixed (mostly Asian) L2 population remains to be seen.

What is apparent is that language students would benefit from a lot more L2 input/output, a reason to learn English (beyond testing), and much more contact with English speakers in their daily lives. In such an environment, extrinsic and especially intrinsic motivation levels are likely to increase substantially. With more interactions with different types of peoples, Japanese are likely to drop

some of their cultural inhibitions (shyness, modesty, fear of mistakes) that impair communicative competence. As educators, we should encourage more quality home stay programs in order to overcome such barriers, and build on the grassroots connections that so often unite different cultures, and foster friendships that last a lifetime.

Douglas Meyer has recently completed the Temple University Japan Applied Linguistics program, and is employed at Momoyama Gakuin (St. Andrew's) high school in Osaka. He is also the publicity chair of Osaka JALT. He is interested in motivation, learning strategies, and making technology a part of the learning process.

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Appendix 1

The survey

Time period 1 (January 2008)

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following survey. The results will be confidential, and used to get a better understanding of how you feel about your English classes. The information will help improve your classes. Just answer honestly, and write the number on the answer sheet.

Variables

- | | | | |
|--|------|---|------|
| 1. If I know English well, I will have better chances for a good job. | EMV1 | 10. I enjoy speaking English when I have the chance. | IMV3 |
| 2. I believe that I will speak English well in the future. | IMV1 | 11. I am very interested in the world outside Japan. | INP5 |
| 3. Studying English will allow me to make friends with people all over the world. | IMV2 | 12. I study English mostly because of the entrance exams in grade 12. | EMV4 |
| 4. I don't mind initiating conversations with foreigners. | INP1 | 13. English is needed to interact with the English-speaking world. | EMV5 |
| 5. I will need English in order to do business with foreigners in the future. | EMV2 | 14. I look forward to my English classes. | IMV4 |
| 6. I would like to live in/near my hometown all my life. | INP3 | 15. Going abroad will encourage me to speak more English. | EMV6 |
| 7. I often try to understand English movies and TV. | INP4 | 16. When I don't understand what to do in English class, I often ask the teacher questions. | IMV5 |
| 8. Studying English will help make me a respectable global citizen. | EMV3 | 17. I want to use English to speak with foreigners and understand global events. | INP6 |
| 9. I'd assist an English-speaker having trouble communicating in a place like a restaurant or station. | INP2 | 18. I am very happy to have chosen the English Intensive Course. | IMV6 |
| | | 19. I feel satisfied when I complete difficult English assignments. | IMV7 |
| | | 20. I would like to work abroad. | INP7 |
| | | 21. My parents really want me to study English hard for my future. | EMV7 |
| | | <i>Distracter items</i> | |
| | | 22. I fear being called on to speak in English class. | |
| | | 23. I don't mind making mistakes in English, as long as others understand me. | |
| | | 24. I am anxious about communicating with my host family in Calgary. | |

25. I think I will still be shy and hesitant speaking English after my home stay.
26. I expect culture shock when I arrive in Calgary

Appendix 2

Qualitative survey

Time period: 2 (August 2008)

Thank you for taking the time to answer the following questions in Japanese. (Questions to be translated and answered in participant's L1.)

1. Do you think that your motivation to learn English has changed since your home stay?
If so, why do you think this is so?
2. Do you now think that it is easier to approach foreigners in Japan and provide assistance in English?
3. Do you think that your experience abroad has changed you in any way? If so, why?
4. Did you usually have good interactions with English speakers in Calgary? Why or why not?
5. What were your biggest two or three troubles in Calgary?
6. Did you feel that your English studies really prepared you well for your home stay?
7. If you were to name one thing in you that has changed the most, what would it be? Why?