

Teacher Motivation and Practice in the Language Learning Classroom

Saki Suemori

Ochanomizu University

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Current studies on motivation in EFL focus mainly on learner motivation. However, teacher motivation, which is the motivation to teach, is as important to investigate as is learner motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) because it influences not only learners' motivation but also their achievement and attitudes towards L2 learning. Teacher motivation is also directly connected to the lessons they provide, and a high level of motivation helps sustain professional development. This paper presents the findings of my investigation of 2 Japanese secondary-school English teachers' motivation. Data was collected from in-depth interviews and classroom observation. The interviews focused on the teachers' feelings about teaching English. The classroom observations were conducted to see how their feelings and motivation were reflected in their teaching. Analysis of the data suggests that teachers' motivation and attitudes towards teaching are reflected in their behavior in the classroom.

外国語学習に関する動機づけ研究は、主に学習者の動機づけに焦点を置き、研究が行われている。しかしながら、教師が教えることに対して抱く教師の動機づけも、学習者の動機づけと同様に重要である (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011)。教師の動機づけは、学習者の動機づけに対してだけでなく、学習者がどのような外国語能力を身につけるかに対しても影響を与えるためである。また、教師の動機づけは、教師の教え方にも影響を与え、教師として成長する上でも重要である。本論文は、2名の日本人英語教師を対象に実施したインタビュー、授業観察の結果を提示する。インタビューでは、教師が英語を教える上で何を感じているかに焦点を置き、授業観察では、インタビューで見られた教師の考えや動機づけが、実際の授業にどのように反映されているかという点に着目した。データを分析した結果、教師の動機づけや授業に対する考えは、教室での行動に反映されていることが明らかになった。

Motivation is one of the most important factors influencing foreign language learning (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Previous studies have shown that a variety of factors can be motivators and demotivators (e.g., Kikuchi & Sakai, 2016). Among them, a teacher is one of the most influential factors in student learning motivation. A teacher can be both a motivator and demotivator in language learning (e.g., Matsumoto, 2011), and teacher motivation is said to be related to learner motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Although teachers and teacher motivation can influence learners, there are few studies that have investigated teacher motivation itself. In particular, the relation between teacher motivation and classroom practices remains unclear. In the present study, I investigated teacher motivation and its relationship with classroom teaching.

Motivation and Teacher Motivation

Before discussing teacher motivation, it is important to clarify what motivation means in general. Motivation is an abstract and complicated concept and does not have a straightforward definition. In psychology, for example, it is said that “motivation is the study of why individuals or organisms behave as they do: what gets their behavior started, and what directs, energizes, sustains, and eventually terminates action” (Graham & Weiner, 2012, p. 367). In applied linguistics, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) held that “motivation is responsible for why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity, and how hard they are going to pursue it” (p. 4).

As a concept, teacher motivation is not as straightforward as learner motivation. This is mainly because teachers are involved in various kinds of activities as part of their work. Teachers teach the subject, for example, and take care of students in their homeroom class and club activities. Teachers are also on school committees, and they need to study their own subjects and issues related to teaching. Teacher motivation is responsible for their work overall. One example of teacher motivation is when a teacher attends a

conference on language teaching over a weekend despite being very busy. The teacher might do this because she or he would like to learn in general or learn how to teach better. In other words, a teacher's behavior is supported by his or her desire to learn or improve his or her skills. This desire that directs how a teacher's behavior started is teacher motivation. Teacher motivation, therefore, is responsible for a variety of teacher behaviors such as teaching, working, and learning.

Previous Studies

Teacher motivation research is not as common as learner motivation research. However, teacher motivation studies have been conducted in different types of schools. The influence of teacher motivation on learner motivation is an important issue to investigate in a teacher motivation study. Previous studies have shown that teachers and teacher motivation influence learner motivation. Matsumoto (2011) conducted a study at an English language center of Bond University, Australia. Participants were the language center's 119 students. They joined the questionnaire study investigating their own motivation as learners and their teachers' motivation. The data was analyzed statistically; the findings showed a positive correlation between the students' motivation and their perception of their teachers' motivation to teach English. These findings supported the idea that teachers are an important factor in improving the level of student education.

A study by Bernaus, Wilson, and Gardner (2009) investigated the relationship between the use of motivation strategies, teacher motivation, student motivation, and English proficiency. The study was conducted in Catalonia, Spain, with 31 teachers and 694 students as participants, and the data was collected through a questionnaire. The teachers answered how frequently they used the 26 strategies that were listed in the questionnaire in the classroom and rated teacher motivation on a Likert scale. Students first answered the questionnaire on their teachers' use of the 26 strategies and then on their own motivation to learn English. Students also took an English achievement test on reading and listening skills. The results of this study showed that teacher motivation was related to teachers' use of motivation strategies, student motivation, and students' English achievement, implying that any changes to promote teacher motivation can result in improving the levels of student achievement.

Study Purpose

Though the previous studies show that teachers influence learner motivation and teacher motivation tends to influence learner motivation, there were several limitations.

First, there is a small number of studies focusing on teacher-student relationship of motivation, particularly in Japan. Second, previous studies focusing on this relationship were conducted through interviews and questionnaires, in other words, outside a classroom. Therefore, it is still not known what happens inside a classroom. To fill these gaps, the present study was conducted in two Japanese secondary schools with both teachers and their students to understand and show examples of (a) teacher motivation itself and (b) how teacher motivation is reflected in their classroom teaching.

Method

Participants

The participants of this study were two JTEs (Japanese teachers of English) teaching in junior and senior high schools. The purpose of this study was not to generalize the findings but rather to show examples of the relationship between teacher motivation and classroom teaching, so I focused on two classrooms. I contacted several potential participants and chose two participants, Haruto and Jun, for the study through criterion sampling (Dörnyei, 2007): full-time secondary school JTEs with less than 10 years of teaching experience. The participants' background information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Participants' Background Information

Name	Age	Gender	Teaching experience	Degree	Type of school
Haruto*	25	Male	3 years	BA	Public high school in the Kanto region
Jun	38	Male	7 months	BA	Private junior and senior high school for girls in the Kanto region

*All names are pseudonyms.

As shown in Table 1, the teachers taught at two very different schools. Haruto's school was a public high school with a large student body, and its foreign language course gave students various opportunities to learn foreign languages. Jun's school was a private girls' junior and senior high school with a very small student body. The high school had an English course and a general course. The curriculum in the English course laid stress on English.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through semistructured interviews and classroom observations. I chose these two methods because they facilitate a better understanding of teachers' thinking and their actual classroom practices (see Kimura, 2014). Each semistructured interview was conducted in Japanese and lasted approximately 60 minutes. The first interview focused on their English learning experiences, from the time they started studying English to the present. The interview also explored the reasons why they chose teaching as a profession and their experiences after becoming teachers. The second and third interviews focused on their daily teaching practices and other duties. Sample questions are in the Appendix.

Classroom observations were conducted at the participants' schools. I visited each school for 3 days and observed lessons. At Haruto's school, I video- and audio-recorded the lessons; at Jun's school, I only audio-recorded the lessons, because some students at Jun's school did not consent to being video-recorded. The class size was small, so the audio recording was clear enough to understand what happened in the classroom. Basic information about the classroom observations is summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Basic Information About the Classroom Observations

Name	Number of students	Textbook	Class length
Haruto	40	Authorized by the Ministry of Education	45 minutes
Jun	13	Not authorized by the Ministry of Education	50 minutes

The data was coded and analyzed using NVivo 12, a qualitative data analysis software. First, I reviewed the interview data thoroughly to identify what the teachers emphasized in their teaching and how they described their motivation. Then I looked at the classroom observation data to explore how the teachers' motivation was reflected in their teaching. I focused on how the teachers' classroom practices were affected by teacher motivation as found through the interviews.

Results of Interviews and Classroom Observations

Haruto's Background

Haruto had many chances to use English after he enrolled in a high school that offered a foreign language course. In addition, he participated in debate competitions, speech contests, and English essay contests. During that time, he met an impressive teacher, and Haruto felt he wanted to be like that teacher as he said in the interview:

The teacher was strict toward English. Although he was not my homeroom teacher, he taught me everything, including speech and how to debate. He was always studying English and said to me, "I won't lose you as a learner." I realized I wanted to reach that teacher's level. (Haruto)

After finishing high school, Haruto majored in English phonology at university. He enjoyed studying phonology and other subjects related to education.

Haruto's Motivation to Teach and Work

Haruto became a teacher to teach English. At the time of the study, he was a homeroom teacher and also in charge of two sport club activities and was organizing a school tour for junior high school students. However, he realized he wanted to focus on teaching English:

Many teachers compliment me, "You are a subject person." I sometimes teach seven classes a day because of changes in the timetable, but it's not that hard. As long as I do something related to English, it's not hard at all. (Haruto)

For Haruto, preparing for a class was like engaging in a hobby, and it was not a struggle even when he was busy with club or other activities. He always made the effort to conduct a great English class. He attended conferences on language teaching when he had the time and visited other teachers' classes to learn.

Haruto's Classroom Teaching

With this motivation, Haruto conducted various activities in class that required the use of English. He spoke in English as much as possible so that students could practice using English. For example, he said the following in English in a class:

Who watched World Cup? Only a few. I asked 1-3, 3 kumi (class three), and half of the students said, "Yes." So, there are many girls (in this class), so maybe you are not interested in soccer. As you know, I'm not interested in any sports at all. No interest

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in sports. So, I don't like soccer, I don't like basketball, I don't like any other sports. (Haruto)

Having majored in English phonology, Haruto focused on pronunciation and conducted related activities. For one of these, he used a *Mother Goose* nursery rhyme and a metronome. Students then practiced the pronunciation, rhythm, and intonation of the rhyme. They practiced the rhyme in every class at the beginning of the semester.

Jun's Background Information

Jun became a teacher after he had worked in a cram school for 19 years. His experiences at the cram school formed the base of his teaching. In the cram school, the most important thing was results, such as improving students' scores in a regular exam and helping them pass the entrance exam. Jun, therefore, focused on those two things at the cram school. He also laid stress on interacting with students and their parents. Jun talked individually with each student once or twice a month and called their parents at least once a month to discuss the student's progress.

Jun's Motivation to Teach and Work

Jun's goal as a teacher was that everyone in class should understand English:

My goal is to ensure that everyone starts liking English and becomes good at it. I aim for students to enjoy studying English and understand it well. I tell them that if they become good at, like, and use English, I will be happy. (Jun)

In Jun's school, students used a textbook not authorized by the Ministry of Education. This textbook contained a lot of vocabulary and advanced grammar, which students usually study in high school. Jun expected his students to understand and learn its contents.

Jun also focused on helping each student. He did not want to leave his students alone, and he supported each student appropriately. He said, "I don't leave students alone. I just try to interact with them in class."

Jun's Classroom Teaching

With this motivation, Jun's class focused on grammar, which he explained in Japanese. One of the characteristics I observed was that Jun asked quite a lot of questions in class:

J (Jun): What are we studying in Lesson 3? What is the title? Please tell me the title, A-san (Student A).

Student A: Coordinators.

J: It is a coordinator. There are several types of coordinators. First one is B-san (Student B).

Student B: Coordinate. (e.g., and, but, or)

J: Coordinate. Then the second one is C-san (Student C).

Student C: Subordinate. (e.g., if, because)

J: OK. We write like this in kanji, like we did yesterday. Please just look at it first [Jun started writing the explanation on the blackboard]. Today, we will do this [Jun pointed to the word "subordinate" that he had written on the board]. Yesterday, we did this [Jun pointed to the word "coordinate" that he had written on the board]. Then, before I explain the second one, let's review. We will review once again. What's the first one, D-san (Student D)?

Student D: Coordinate.

In this lesson, Jun was teaching coordinators. First, Jun checked the coordinators in the textbook. Then he asked about two different types of coordinators: coordinate and subordinate. As the quotes in the observation show, each question was simple, and Jun asked similar questions again and again.

Jun also supported students who were absent by sharing with them later what was done in class:

Student E was absent yesterday; so, I informed that we played Bingo. Some students may wonder why we did Bingo even though they were absent. So, I thought I should clarify that we would definitely do it again when everyone is present. (Jun)

Discussion

In this study, I investigated (a) the nature of teacher motivation in the language classroom and (b) how their motivation was reflected in their teaching practices. The main purpose of the study was to show examples of how teacher motivation was reflected in teaching in class, which was not investigated in previous studies.

From the interviews with teachers, one aspect of teacher motivation was found. Haruto was involved in many activities, but wanted to focus on teaching English. On

the other hand, Jun's goal as a teacher was to help each student understand the contents of a textbook, mainly grammar. This motivation could not be unidimensional, such as motivated and demotivated or introverted and extroverted, as Norton (2013) indicated. Rather, it was their investment in working and teaching as teachers. Haruto invested in teaching English, expecting to help students learn the language and grow as a teacher himself. Jun invested in helping each student understand textbook contents, expecting students to have a positive attitude towards English.

Haruto and Jun taught with this teacher motivation as an investment. There are, of course, many factors that influence teaching. However, teacher motivation can be the main factor that supports teaching behavior. In this study I found examples that show how teacher motivation and classroom teaching are connected to each other.

However, the study has several limitations, which should be considered in future studies. First, the number of participants is limited. Although the aim of this study was not to generalize, similar studies should be conducted with teachers in other educational contexts as well. By conducting further studies in different types of schools with more teachers, we might gain a better understanding of teacher motivation. Another study limitation is that the data are limited as the study was conducted over a short period of time. Furthermore, this study was focused on classroom observations but students' perspectives were not analyzed. In future studies, students' perspectives should be considered. Conducting individual or focus group interviews with students will be helpful to understand students' perspectives. With a better understanding of students' perspectives, it might be possible to understand how teacher motivation and classroom practices influence students.

Conclusion

This study was conducted with two JTEs in Japanese secondary schools and described their motivation. Depending on the context, teachers have different motivations for teaching, and their classroom practices can be explained by their motivation. Although the study has several limitations, its findings contribute to improving our understanding of the effect of teacher motivation on classroom practices.

Bio Data

Saki Suemori is a lecturer in Ochanomizu University. Her interests include teacher motivation and motivation in the classroom. <suemori.saki@ocha.ac.jp>

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Appendix

Sample Questions for Semistructured Interviews

A. The first interview

- I. What is your relationship with English?
 1. When did you start learning (using) English?
 2. What have been your experiences in the process of learning English?
 3. What did you major in at university?
- II. Past teaching experience
 1. In which type of schools did you teach?

2. Which year of students did you teach?
3. What kind of memorable events did you experience in the process of teaching?

III. Working as a teacher

1. What is your priority in your teaching?
2. What do you value as an English teacher?
3. What do you spend time and energy most now as a teacher?
4. What would you like to spend time and energy most as a teacher?
5. What do you value when you teach English?
6. What kind of difficulties do you have at this point?
7. What do you think about your relationship with others?

B. *The second interview*

1. Reflection for the first semester (from April to July or August)
 1. Memorable events and experiences
 2. What did you emphasize most in the semester?
- II. English classes
 1. How did you feel in your daily teaching?
 2. In what kind of situation (or when) did you enjoy teaching?
 3. In what kind of situation (or when) were you reluctant to teach?
- III. The relationship with the students
 1. What kind of influence did you get from your students' behavior and response in the class?
 2. Are there any memorable responses or remarks from your students?
- IV. The relationship with colleagues
 1. How is the relationship with your colleagues?
 2. What kind of influence do you get from your colleagues?

- V. Individual questions based on the previous interview and monthly teaching journal

C. *The third interview*

- I. Reflection for the semester (from the end of August)
 1. Memorable events and experiences
 2. What did you emphasize most in the semester?
- II. English classes
 1. How did you feel in your daily teaching?
 2. In what kind of situation (or when) did you enjoy teaching?
 3. In what kind of situation (or when) were you reluctant to teach?
- III. The relationship with the students
 1. What kind of influence did you get from your students' behavior and response in the class?
 2. Are there any memorable responses or remarks from your students?
- IV. The relationship with colleagues
 1. How is the relationship with your colleagues?
 2. What kind of influence do you get from your colleagues?
- V. Individual questions based on the previous interview and monthly teaching journal



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