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## Measuring Resistance and Engagement: The Linguaculture Motivation Profiler

Joseph Shaules

Keio University

Robinson Fritz

Nagasaki University

Sumiko Miyafusa

Toyo Gakuen University

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This paper is a report on a research project examining psychological resistance to foreign language learning and describes the development of a psychometric instrument—the Linguaculture Motivation Profiler (LMP). The authors argue that in SLA, motivation is often conceptualized in binary terms—motivated vs. unmotivated. They indicate that, in fact, humans have two neurocognitive motivational systems—approach motivation and avoidance motivation. Borrowing from intercultural adjustment theory, the researchers argue that negative reactions to the psychological challenges of language learning are a normal part of the learning process. The LMP conceptualizes motivation in terms of engagement (approach motivation) and resistance (avoidance motivation). It also measures mixed states, a complex psychological state in which learners both engage and resist at the same time. The authors discuss how the LMP is being used in the classroom, and implications for an enriched, more complex understanding of motivation. This can encourage learner self-understanding and improved learning outcomes.

外国語学習における心理的な抵抗感に関する考察と、それを測定するLinguaculture Motivation Profiler (LMP)について報告する。第二言語習得研究 (SLA) では、学習意欲は意欲があるかどうか議論される。実際、人には学習意欲が向上したり、低下したりする神経認知の学習意欲のシステムがあり、学習者は言語を学ぶ際に心理的に複雑な反応をしている。SLAは、学習意欲の向上に注目し、意欲の低下については否定的に捉える傾向にある。しかし、異文化適応説では、言語を学ぶ際の否定的な反応は学習過程において通常のことであるとしている。本稿は意欲があることをengagement、低い状態をresistanceと概念化している。また、学習意欲を示しながらも否定的な反応を示す複雑な心理状態をmixed statesとする。最後にLMPが授業の中でどのように実践されているのかについてまとめた。

Human behavior is complex and often cannot be explained in simple binary terms. It is not uncommon, for example, to hear teachers describe students as being either “motivated” or “unmotivated.” Educators know, however, that feelings about learning are more involved than this. A student may do homework regularly, yet always wait until the last minute and turn in sloppy work. Is that student motivated? In the sense that they have taken action, they are motivated. Yet such “motivation” seems more like obligation or avoidance of punishment, rather than engagement with learning. Or, learners may want to speak a foreign language, yet find learning it unpleasant and give up. They may pay for language lessons but stop attending class. Does positive intention count as motivation? How can one interpret such contradictory and conflicted states? This suggests that, as will be argued in this paper, simple binary descriptions do not fully capture the psychological complexity of the language learning experience.

This article reports on a research project exploring contradictory motivational states like these, and the psychometric instrument that resulted. The researchers point out that in terms of neurocognitive structures, humans have not one, but two motivational systems—approach motivation and avoidance motivation (Elliot & Covington, 2001). It will be argued that motivation research in the field of second language acquisition (SLA) focuses primarily on approach motivation—the “enthusiasm, commitment and persistence” that leads to learner success (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013, p. 1). As we will argue, negative reactions to learning are often discussed in terms that imply psychological disfunction, such as demotivation, learner anxiety, and (lack of) willingness



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to communicate. Borrowing from intercultural adjustment theory, the researchers argue that negative reactions to language learning are a sign of *resistance*—an avoidance response to the foreignness of a new language or culture (Shaules, 2007). Shaules (2017) has also argued that resistance is a normal part of the learning process, and that motivation can be better understood with the dual axes of *engagement* (approach motivation) and resistance (avoidance motivation).

To gain insight into these motivational states, a psychometric instrument—the Linguaculture Motivation Profiler (LMP)—was developed. The term *linguaculture* emphasizes the integrated nature of language and culture, and the idea that language is integral to one’s experience of the world and self (Risager, 2015). The LMP is a questionnaire that uses a quantitative approach to measuring motivation in terms of resistance and engagement, as well as *mixed states*—a psychologically complex state of engaging and resisting at the same time. The constructs that the LMP measures are described, as well as the process of creating the LMP, and ways in which the LMP is being used by teachers.

### Approach and Avoidance Motivation

The term *motivation* is easy to understand yet hard to define clearly. Dörnyei (1998) notes that there is broad general agreement that “motivation is responsible for determining human behaviour by energising it and giving it direction” yet also remarks on “how little agreement there is in the literature with regard to the exact meaning of this concept” (p. 117). An implicit assumption of this view is that motivation pertains to action towards desirable goals—people are motivated *towards* something. This downplays the reality that humans are also motivated to avoid unpleasant or dangerous phenomena. In psychology, this distinction is referred to in terms of *approach* motivation and *avoidance* motivation (Elliot & Covington, 2001), with positive valenced stimuli leading to approach, and negatively valenced stimuli leading to avoidance. This is more than a psychological construct—it represents two distinct motivational systems in the nervous system (Rutherford & Lindell, 2011). These dual systems are a basic component of people’s evolutionary biology, motivating them to seek rewards and avoid danger.

Both approach motivation and avoidance motivation can be activated simultaneously, and thus be in conflict. For example, one may want something (an apple on a branch), yet at the same time be afraid to reach for it (because it’s so far out on the limb). Furthermore, because humans have competing interests and priorities, they may have complex reactions to the same stimulus—I may desire a third piece of chocolate cake, even as I seek to avoid eating too much. One can find something both appealing yet scary

(falling in love), attractive yet dangerous (motorcycles), desirable yet arduous (mountain climbing). Mediating these competing desires is a process of value expectancy—an intuitive sense of whether the things being sought are worth the effort or possible negative consequences (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). This research takes as a premise that these dual systems need to be taken into account when attempting to understand language learning motivation.

### Approach and Avoidance in SLA

The notion of avoidance motivation has received relatively little attention in SLA (Shaules, 2017). Negative feelings are often discussed in terms of demotivation—which implies a lack of motivation, rather than a competing motivation system (Agawa et al., 2011; Kikuchi, 2013). There is often an implicit assumption that unmotivated or demotivated learners lack something, as in research that associates a lack of interest in internationalism with low language-learning motivation (Agawa et al., 2011; Yashima, 2013). Negative feelings are sometimes treated almost as a form of psychological disfunction, as with the notion of language anxiety (Trang et al., 2013), or as a psychological state that interferes with learning, such as Krashen’s notion of the affective filter (Krashen, 1982). Gardner (2005) argues for the notion of integrative motivation—an affinity or desire to associate with the people who speak a foreign language, without exploring the opposite notion; an aversion to foreign peoples or cultures. Research such as this is representative of the broad tendency in SLA research to focus on approach motivation, without giving avoidance motivation parallel treatment.

There are exceptions to this. Drawing on a neurobiological perspective Schumann (2004) describes language-learning motivation in terms of preference and aversion. This view assumes that aversion is not simply a lack of positive motivation, but a normal element of neurocognitive function, and by extension, of learning processes. That is to say, having negative reactions to learning challenges is natural, and perhaps even unavoidable. This view is concordant with a sociocultural view of learning, which sees language learning in terms of taking on the features of another cultural community (Gardner, 1985; Lantolf, 2000). Such a view is also reflected in humanistic approaches to understanding motivation. Stevick (1980) argues that learning a language can be stressful—and hence, something to avoid—because it may threaten a person’s identity, or sense of self, since it is “imposed on us from the outside” (p. 10). Drawing on self-determination theory, Ryan and Deci (2002) argue that negative reactions to language learning are not uncommon and can lead to a “passive, reactive, or alienated self” (p. 5). Overall, although there is scholarship that is sympathetic to the stresses of learning and

the notion of aversion does exist in SLA literature, avoidance motivation has not been explored in great detail.

## Resistance and Engagement

As a way of expanding research in this area, the researchers drew on an intercultural adjustment perspective. Scholarship in this area concerns itself with the psychological challenges of foreign sojourns, such as immigrating or studying abroad (Bennett, 1998; Berry, 1997; Kim, 2001). Shaules (2017) has argued that the psychological challenges of learning a foreign language are fundamentally similar to that of adjusting to a foreign cultural environment. In his view, both language and culture learning involve the embodiment of foreign patterns in the cognitive structures of the mind and self. He argues that language learning involves a reconfiguration of cognitive systems that are deeply rooted in the architecture of the mind, and thus naturally provokes both positive and negative responses, which he calls engagement and resistance. Originally, resistance referred to negative judgments about cultural difference among sojourners (Shaules, 2007), but this notion has been expanded on to include reactions to the psychological demands of language learning. In line with this, Shaules' (2019) developmental model of linguaculture learning (DMLL) describes language and culture learning as involving a psychological adjustment to the demands of foreign linguistic and cultural patterns.

The motivational dynamic of linguaculture learning as described by Shaules (2019) is represented in Figure 1. Motivation is seen as emergent—it is the result of a dynamic process of responding to the psychological demands of learning. Engagement and resistance are seen as two sides of the same motivational coin—they both emerge from the same motivational dynamic. Foreign patterns impose *adaptive demands* on learners, who respond to them with more or less *acceptance*, resulting in resistance or engagement. Resistance and or engagement can form a self-reinforcing feedback loop. This model assumes that language and culture learning is a disruptive process because it requires a reconfiguring of socio-cognitive structures. Larsen-Freeman (2011) has argued that from the perspective of complex systems, “language learning is not just about adding knowledge to an unchanging system. It is about changing the system” (p. 57).

The resistance-engagement paradigm has important implications. One is that resistance is a natural, though not desirable, part of learning. Shaules (2017) argues that resistance is marked by critical judgments, and learners tend to assign blame for learning difficulties. They may declare that they are “no good at languages” or feel a sense of personal failure. Thus, although resistance is natural, it is not psychologically neutral. Indeed, resistance is an active state that can coexist with engagement—that is to say, a learner can engage and

resist at the same time. These mixed states can be seen in learners who may say they want to learn (engagement), yet not want to practice or study (resistance).

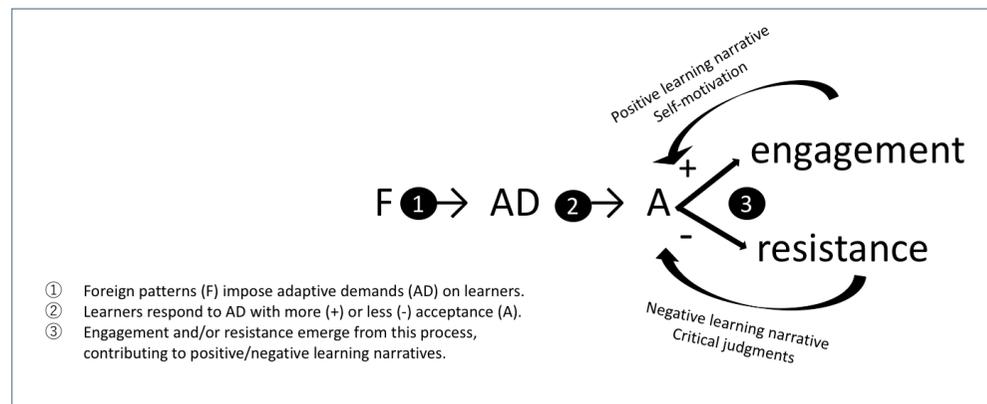


Figure 1. Emergent motivation and linguaculture learning.

As a way to understand how resistance and engagement manifest themselves in learners, Shaules (2017) surveyed 52 English language teachers, asking them to respond to the question “When talking about their feelings (positive or negative) towards English, what sort of comments do students make?” These comments were categorized in terms of engagement and resistance. Statements associated with engagement were those such as “I want to use English when I travel overseas,” or simply “I like English.” Statements associated with resistance implied negative value judgments, such as “I really hate English or I don’t want to work with people from foreign countries.” Resistance often involved a form of psychological distancing, as with the following statements: “I really hate English, I won’t go abroad, I won’t live abroad”; “my father is a farmer, so I don’t need to study English any more.” Another category of responses was that of mixed states, when learners seemed to be experiencing resistance and engagement at the same time. This included comments such as “I like English but I don’t like to study.” A more detailed description of this research can be found in Shaules (2017).

## Creation of the Linguaculture Motivation Profiler

The statements from this initial research served as a starting point for developing a psychometric instrument that would measure these qualities. An initial pool of 54 items

was created in English using statements similar to those found in the exploratory study and that were consistent with the constructs of engagement and resistance and mixed states (Shaules, 2017). Using these items as a starting point, an initial Japanese version of the LMP was created. In order to test construct validity, a total of 596 responses were collected from university students in the Kanto region. The sample included both foreign language majors and non-majors taking required English or German as a foreign language. All of the item testing was done with the Japanese version of the LMP. All of the participants gave informed consent, and data gathering followed institutional guidelines.

Construct validity was tested by carrying out factor analysis (principal factor analysis using promax rotation), and three factors were extracted. The loading of the items included in the final version is shown in Appendix A. These three factors corresponded to the constructs predicted by the LMP: resistance, mixed states, and engagement. The first factor, resistance, involves items associated with demotivation such as *My English has not improved although I study hard*. The second factor, mixed states, has items that involve a mix of approach motivation (engagement), and avoidance motivation (resistance), such as *I like English, but I don't study*. The last factor, engagement, contains items that reflect approach motivation, such as *Studying English is fun*.

The final version of the LMP was created with six rounds of factor analysis. Items with a correlation of 0.39 or less were considered too weak and were eliminated. After deleting poorly correlated items, and testing new items, the final version of the LMP was created. Among the validated items, there were some that were quite similar. These were eliminated, and a final version resulted with a total of 30 items—14 corresponding to resistance, nine to mixed states, and seven to engagement. This final version can be found in Appendix B; the English translation of the items is in Appendix A. The Japanese version of the LMP can be taken online and takes less than 10 minutes to complete. Anyone interested in using the LMP can contact the authors and be given access to the instrument.

### Use of the LMP in a Teaching Context

The LMP measures motivation in terms of resistance, mixed states, and engagement. It is not intended to quantify learner motivation in an absolute sense, since it is assumed that motivation is dynamic and changes due to many factors. It can, however, provide a snapshot of motivational dynamics for individual learners at a particular point of time. With this in mind, in this section the authors discuss four ways in which the LMP can be used in teaching contexts. The LMP approaches motivation from the perspective of

the learner—the ways that they experience and explain their feelings towards learning. It can help to explore motivational dynamics from the perspective of learners' subjectivities and intersubjectivities. In this way, the LMP results can provide teachers with insights into the inner motivational states of learners. Results can also be used as a reflection tool, helping learners gain awareness of their inner motivational dynamics.

One use of the LMP is as a kind of diagnostic assessment. It can identify learner needs, inform curricula and help with syllabi design or lesson planning. Therefore, it can be used at the start of a learning period to shed light on student attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of linguaculture learning. This can be particularly useful for teachers who have no prior knowledge or experience of teaching a new group of students, or where remediation is necessary for teachers to improve an existing syllabus. Students can complete the LMP at the start of a study period, or it can be emailed to prospective students before the study period occurs.

A second use of the LMP is as a means of formative assessment that teachers carry out at one or multiple times, during a learning period. Formative assessment helps teachers meet diverse student needs through frequent and interactive assessment of progress, thus allowing teachers to accordingly modify their context (OECD/CERI, 2008). Using the LMP for formative assessment allows teachers to identify factors causing students to engage or resist at a given time. It can be used to create learner profiles that incorporate data such as learners' skills, strengths, potential barriers to learning, and attitudes toward learning, and thus to assist students in developing personal learning objectives. The end result is that a dialogue is created between teachers and students, or among students, which can help raise awareness of attitudes and beliefs towards learning among class members.

A third way to employ the LMP is to promote learner reflexivity. Reflexivity involves questioning one's own attitudes, thought process, values, assumptions, and striving to understand our roles in relation to others (Bolton, 2009). Scarino, Kohler, and Benedetti (2016), point out that intercultural reflection involves "reflecting on how experiences and perspectives are expressed and represented and how our perspectives are embedded in the linguistic choices we make in the language we use" (p. 47). Therefore, at points of time during a learning period, teachers can encourage students to reflect on the things that may be causing them to resist or engage in the process of linguaculture learning at the time the LMP is carried out. To continue the reflection process after the class has finished, teachers can set journaling or written homework and give writing prompts based on LMP findings. Also, as LMP results can be anonymously shared with class members immediately after collecting the data, classroom tasks such as group

discussions can be implemented in order for students to share their thoughts on the results and to reflect on what factors have been causing them to engage or resist in the process of linguaculture learning.

Finally, for teachers attempting to improve teaching practices, curricula, or syllabi, the LMP can be used as a data collection tool for action research. The cyclic process of action research involves identifying problems, evaluating changes, starting a systematic enquiry to gather findings, and taking further action to instigate changes in practice (Descombe, 2014). Action research benefits practitioners who want to continually improve their practice in tune with student attitudes, perceptions and experiences of learning. Moreover, although the LMP is not a rating tool—it is not intended to give a motivation “score”—it could be used, for example, in mixed-methods studies. For instance, an explanatory sequential design could consist of the LMP as a quantitative first phase of data collection, to identify general patterns—such as high overall levels of resistance. A second qualitative phase could gain insights into these results through interviews, narrative methods and so on. Creswell (2012) points out that by collecting data in two phases, each data set can enhance, elaborate and compliment the final interpretation of the results.

## Conclusion

In addition to practical classroom applications, there are important implications to seeing motivation in terms of resistance and engagement. The notion of demotivation implies lack or failure. Resistance, on the other hand, is seen as a natural part of the learning process. This can help learners identify sources of resistance and strategies for more fully engaging with learning, with less need for feelings of failure and self-recrimination. The notion of mixed states highlights the psychological complexity of language learning. It sheds light on how students can have a sincere desire to learn, yet still have psychological resistance to the learning process. Such insights can help learners better understand their own motivational dynamics.

This approach provides a fresh way to look at many behaviours commonly seen in language classrooms. Learners who turn in homework that is done poorly and at the last minute are avoiding the punishment and embarrassment of not doing it. This avoidance motivation is a form of resistance. It is assumed that deeper levels of language learning require engagement—positive forms of motivation that reflect a psychological openness to foreign linguaculture patterns. Learners who profess a desire to learn, but seem to not actually practice or study, can be seen as having a form of mixed reaction. They have

*surface engagement*, a conscious desire to learn, while at the same time experiencing *deep resistance*—an intuitive or unconscious distaste for the experience of learning. This puts them at odds with themselves, and may lead to self-criticism and loss of self-efficacy.

Motivation is a complex phenomenon, and cannot be captured with any single conceptual model. It is hoped, however, that viewing motivation in terms of engagement and resistance, and having an instrument that can measure these reactions, will enrich teachers’ approaches to understanding motivation and provide learners with an additional tool of self-understanding that will ultimately help lead to positive learning experiences.

## Notes

1. The LMP was created thanks to a grant from the Japanese Ministry of Education, for which the researchers are deeply appreciative. This support has enabled an online version to be made freely available to the public. Please contact the authors for access and more information.

## Bio Data

**Joseph Shaules** (PhD) has worked in intercultural education in Japan, Mexico, and Europe for 25+ years. He is a specially appointed professor at Keio University. He is also the director of the Japan Intercultural Institute. Books include *Deep Culture* (Multilingual Matters), *The Intercultural Mind* (Intercultural Press), and *Language, Culture and the Embodied Mind* (Springer).

**Robinson Fritz** is an assistant professor at Nagasaki University Faculty of Economics. He has over 15 years of experience teaching students of all ages in Japan and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree related to intercultural education. His academic interests include intercultural education, communication, motivation and learner psychology.

**Sumiko Miyafusa** (PhD) is a lecturer at Toyo Gakuen University, Faculty of Global Communication. She is currently teaching English and intercultural communication classes. Her research interests are intercultural communication and sociolinguistics. She is researching how the study-abroad experiences of undergraduate students influence their language skills and intercultural communicative competence.

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## Appendix A

### Results of Factor Analysis (English Translation of Items)

The 4th place of the decimal point is rounded up	Factors		
	Resistance	Mixed states	Engagement
Q 19. I can't learn English even if I study hard, so I don't work hard.	0.724	0.124	-0.084
Q 34. It is not fair that Japanese people are forced to learn English.	0.723	-0.195	-0.094
Q 43. It is not as important to learn English as everyone says.	0.712	-0.217	0.004
Q 29. It is unnecessary to learn English because this is Japan.	0.667	-0.293	0.105
Q 45. I don't think English will be useful for me.	0.634	-0.218	0.178
Q 24. My progress is small compared to the efforts I make.	0.626	0.134	-0.113
Q 22. I dislike English because of English education system.	0.619	0.215	-0.213
Q 16. I want to use English abroad, but I don't like using English in class.	0.594	0.276	-0.170
Q 14. I won't use English in the future, so I'm not motivated to study.	0.541	-0.241	0.146
Q 55. I have been traumatized by English learning.	0.534	0.096	0.000
Q 39. I often think I'd like to stop learning English.	0.520	0.130	0.126
Q 63. I don't like the fact that I have to learn English.	0.506	0.064	0.203

List of Items	Factors		
	Resistance	Mixed states	Engagement
Q 51. Japanese schools have too many English classes.	0.501	-0.001	0.098
Q 18. I don't understand why I have to learn English.	0.494	-0.088	0.227
Q 59. I'd like to use English more actively, but I don't have the confidence.	-0.195	0.857	-0.104
Q 67. I'd like to speak English, but I'm not confident.	-0.287	0.832	0.041
Q 28. I think I should study English more, but in fact I don't.	0.143	0.623	-0.051
Q 66. I'd like to be able to speak English better, but I am shy.	-0.089	0.596	0.052
Q 54. I want to speak English fluently, but I don't like to practice.	0.040	0.576	0.235
Q 21. I know I should try harder, but I don't.	0.124	0.557	0.003
Q 49. I'd like to be fluent in English, but practicing it is a lot of trouble.	0.029	0.544	0.203
Q 62. I think I have less English learning ability than other people.	0.251	0.473	-0.163
Q 25. I'd like to get better at speaking English but I can't seem to get motivated.	0.213	0.433	0.325
Q 57. It's fun to learn English.	0.032	-0.159	-0.722
Q 53. It's fun to use English to express my thoughts.	0.107	-0.143	-0.702
Q 61. I know people using English in real situations so I am interested in learning English.	-0.010	0.080	-0.603

The 4th place of the decimal point is rounded up	Factors		
List of Items	Resistance	Mixed states	Engagement
Q 41. I'd like to learn English and be an international person.	-0.117	0.216	-0.566
Q 20. I look forward to studying English.	-0.219	-0.095	-0.526
Q 37. It's interesting to learn English using foreign films and music.	-0.078	0.049	-0.475
Q 36. The time I spend studying English is time well spent.	-0.200	-0.085	-0.445

Note. Factor extraction method: principal factor method; rotation method: promax, Kaiser.

## Appendix B

### LMP Original Items in Japanese

#### Resistance

1. 英語は一生懸命勉強してもできないので、努力しない。
2. 日本人が英語の習得を強制されるのは不公平だ。
3. 英語を学ぶことは皆が言うほど重要ではない。
4. ここは日本なので英語を学ぶ必要はない。
5. 英語が自分に役立つことはないと思う。
6. 英語を勉強することは努力に見合わない。
7. 英語教育のやり方のせいで英語が嫌いになった。
8. 海外で英語を使いたいけど、英語のクラスで英語を使うことは好きではない。
9. 将来英語を使うことはないから、勉強する気にならない。
10. 英語を学ぶことは、トラウマになっている。
11. 英語の習得をあきらめようと思う。
12. 英語を学ばなくてはいけないことがとても嫌だ。
13. 日本の学校では英語の授業が多すぎる。
14. なぜ英語を勉強しなくてはならないか分からない。

#### Mixed States

1. もっと英語を使いたいけど、自信がない。
2. 英語を長く勉強してきたが、ほとんど上達していない。
3. 英語をもっと勉強すべきだと思うが、実際にはしていない。
4. 英語をもっと話せたいけど、恥ずかしい。
5. 英語を流暢に話したいけど、練習することは好きではない。
6. もっと努力しないといけないと分かっているがしていない。
7. 英語がペラペラになりたいけど、練習がめんどくさい。
8. 学校での英語の勉強は嫌いだけど、実際に英語を使うことは好きだ。
9. もっと英語を上手に話したいけど、やる気が出ない。

#### Engagement

1. 英語を学ぶとワクワクする。
2. 英語を使って自分の考えを表現することは楽しい。
3. 英語を実際の場で使っている人を知っているから英語習得に興味がある。
4. 英語を学び、国際人になりたい。
5. 英語を勉強することは楽しみだ。
6. 海外の映画や音楽により英語を学ぶことに興味がわく。
7. 英語の勉強は自分にとって良い時間の使い方である。