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Japanese learners of English: Their perceptions of teachers as a motivator

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Learning in a Multilingual World

Second Language (L2) Learners' Motivation – Fluctuations

- ▶ L2 learners' motivation fluctuates as being continuously affected by various internal and external factors (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005).
- ▶ Positive influences may enhance study (active learners).
- ▶ Negative influences may however impede learning (demotivation) (Kikuchi, 2009)
- ▶ Therefore, research strongly needed to ascertain the mechanism of factors affecting L2 learner motivation; what affects who in what way and why.

Teachers: A primary factor influencing L2 learners' motivation

- ▶ Studies of motivation revealed the teacher as one of the most prominent factors that affects L2 learners' motivation (Dörnyei, 1994; Tanaka, 2005).
- ▶ Students' perceptions of motivational factors, including teachers determine the learners' future motivational states.
- ▶ Perceptions could be influenced by their levels of proficiency (Matsumoto, 2011), and by the teacher's L1 (i.e. English native or non-native teachers) and the learners' learning environment, as well as the learning experience.

Previous study

- ▶ Matsumoto's (2011) study:
 - Investigated the difference in L2 English learners' levels of motivation, their perceived levels of teachers' motivation to teach them English, the perceived importance of various teacher factors among the three levels of English proficiency: elementary, intermediate and advanced.
 - Learners with various L1 backgrounds learn English as an L2 in domestic language schools (Australia).
 - Teacher factors are categorised into three types: *personality*, *behaviour* and *teaching*.
 - A questionnaire was developed and used to collect nominal (three teacher factors) and ordinal data (Likert-scale for the strength of motivation and the degree of agreement).

Previous study (cont.)

- ▶ The previous study found that:
 - Learners' level of proficiency is a significant factor affecting learners' level of motivation.
 - Students at an intermediate level showed the lowest level of motivation, perceived level of teachers' motivation, and they agreed the least in their teachers' influence on their own motivation.
 - Learners of different proficiency levels perceive different teacher factors as the primary factor influencing their motivation: elementary = personality; intermediate and advanced = teaching.

Current research context & subjects

- ▶ Learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in high school and universities in Japan ($N = 380$).
- ▶ Public high schools that have a high rate of students entering universities ($n = 125$).
- ▶ University students majoring in English ($n = 255$).
- ▶ Students learning English from teachers who are native Japanese speakers (JNT) ($n = 173$).
- ▶ Students learning English from teachers who are native English speakers (ENT) ($n = 202$).
- ▶ Five students did not indicate the teachers' language.

Research method

- ▶ Duplicated a questionnaire utilised in previous study (Matsumoto, 2011).
- ▶ Five-point Likert scale to find the intensity of learners' own motivation, perceived level of teachers' motivation and the extent of agreement in the influence of teacher's motivation on their own.
- ▶ Paired sample T-test for equality of means between groups.
- ▶ Three teacher factors: *personality, behaviour and teaching*, plus "another factor" for open-ended questions to investigate which factors affect what type of learners the most.
- ▶ Chi-square test for the significance of teacher factors.

Research Questions

- 1) What difference is there between HS and university students regarding their levels of motivation, their perceptions of teachers' levels of motivation teaching English, and the extent to which they agree on the teachers' influence regarding their motivation to learn English?
- 2) What difference is there between HS and university students regarding their perceptions on three teacher factors: *personality*, *behaviour* and *teaching*, that affect their motivation to learn English?

Research Questions (cont.)

3) What difference is there between students taught English from ENT and JNT regarding their levels of motivation, their perceptions of teachers' levels of motivation to teach them English, and the extent to which they agree on the teachers' influence regarding their motivation to learn English?

4) What difference is there between students taught English from ENT and JNT regarding their perceptions on three teacher factors: *personality*, *behaviour* and *teaching* that affect their motivation to learn English?

Results: Question 1 (HS vs. UNI)

		N	Mean	S.D.	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Learners' Motivation	HS	125	3.61	1.023	-.942	.347
	UNI	255	3.71	.973		
Perceived Teachers' Motivation	HS	125	4.10	1.011	-.622	.534
	UNI	255	4.15	.740		
Teacher affects motivation	HS	124	3.62	1.145	-5.689	.000***
	UNI	255	4.20	.794		

Maximum M = 5.00, S.D. = Standard Deviation, *** indicates p = .000

Results: Question 2 (HS vs. UNI)

		Four motivational factors about teachers				Total
		Classroom behavior	Personality	Teaching skills	Other	
HS	Number	84	9	27	3	123
	% within group	68.3%	7.3%	22.0%	2.4%	100%
UNI	Number	133	21	77	33	255
	% within group	52.2%	4.7%	30.2%	12.9%	100%

Chi-square test: $X^2 = 16.441$, $df = 3$, $Sig. \leq .001$

Results: Question 3 (ENT vs. JNT)

		N	Mean	S.D.	t	Sig. (2 tailed)
Learners' Motivation	ENT	202	3.72	.959	.910	.364
	JNT	173	3.62	1.030		
Perceived Teachers' Motivation	ENT	202	4.28	.641	3.572	.000***
	JNT	173	3.97	1.002		
Teacher affects motivation	ENT	202	4.23	.745	4.951	.000***
	JNT	173	3.75	1.109		

Maximum M = 5.00, S.D. = Standard Deviation, *** indicates p = .000

Results: Question 4 (Teacher factors)

		Four motivational factors about teachers				Total
		Classroom behavior	Personality	Teaching skills	Other	
ENT	Number	105	9	59	29	202
	% within group	52.0%	4.5%	29.2%	14.4%	100%
JNT	Number	110	12	42	7	171
	% within group	64.3%	7.0%	24.6%	4.1%	100%

Chi-square test: $X^2 = 14.374$, $df = 3$, $Sig. \leq .01$

Findings

- ▶ Between high school and university students, a significant difference in their motivational intensity and their perceptions of teacher's commitment levels in teaching them English was not detected.
- ▶ However, university students showed a stronger agreement in the teacher as a factor strongly affecting their motivation to study English.
- ▶ A large number of high school students (68.3% – more than two third) are likely to be affected by what teachers do/say in the class, while university students are less affected by teachers' behaviour (52.2%) and tend to be affected by various teacher factors (teaching skills = 30.2%, other factors = 12.9%).

Findings (cont.)

- ▶ Between the students learning English from ENTs and JNTs, a significant difference in their own motivational intensity was not detected.
- ▶ However, students learning from ENTs showed much stronger perceptions of their teachers' levels of motivation to teach them English, and they also agreed more strongly that their teachers are the factor affecting their motivation to learn English, compared to those who learn from JNTs.
- ▶ Many students taught by JNTs (64.3%) view what teachers do/say in the class affects their motivation the most, while those taught by ENTs regard various teacher-related factors as affecting their motivation (Behaviour 52.0%, Teaching skills = 29.2%, Other factors = 14.4%).

Discussion & Limitations

- ▶ Learning experience (taught from ENT or JNT), including learning context (High school or university) could be a factor that influences the learners' perceptions on teacher as a motivator.
- ▶ One single English teacher in high school and various teachers available in university may cause different views and results found between high school and university students.
- ▶ Students who learn from ENT positively view teachers who are strongly motivated to teach them English, which could then affect their motivation to learn English positively. Then, – What exact difference between ENT and JNT makes this difference? – Also, students learning from ENT strongly believe teachers affect their motivations and they perceive their teachers' motivation is strong but their own motivation is not significantly stronger than JNT. Why?
- ▶ The exact cause of these different results is further needed to be investigated for comprehending the precise nature of the relationship between L2 learners' motivation and what role the teacher should play as a motivator.

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