

Motivational Differences for Students Learning Languages

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本論文ではアンケートに基づき、1) 母語+外国語(英語)のみの2言語学習者と母語+2つ以上の外国語の最低3言語学習者の2つのグループに被験者を分け、この2グループ間では外国語学習に関し、どのような動機要因の相違が見られるのか、2) 学習者が母語以外の新たな言語を学ぶ際に“理想的な教育者”の条件として考えている要素とはどのようなものか。また、その言語のNative Speaker(母語話者)という事実は“理想的な教育者”の条件としてどの程度重要視されているのか、という点につき、考察を行った。

1. Introduction

As a language teacher as well as a language learner I know that motivation plays a vital role when learning a foreign language. In 2013, I was able to explore some of the issues around its importance as I was fortunate to have two language classes where I was able to compare and contrast students' motivations towards foreign language (FL) learning. For purposes of comparison, as you will see below, I divided the students into two groups: those who have studied two or more foreign languages besides their mother tongue (Group 1), and those who have studied only one foreign language besides their mother tongue (Group 2). I then used a questionnaire to assess the characteristics of and differences between these two groups (see Appendix). In particular, I examined the extent to which motivational factors influence learning—a key question being why some individuals are motivated to learn several languages but others are not.

2. Research background

Before conducting the study, I assumed that there would be many substantial differences between learners who had studied two or more FLs and learners who had studied only one FL. Unfortunately, however, only a few of the important issues around motivation can be addressed here. The result is a paper that is much more modest and narrower than you might expect. Still, I hope it is not without interest and some merit. First I offer a sketch of the different motivational factors affecting two groups of learners I have taught. The sketch is based on my students' answers to the questionnaire. Second I look at my students' idea of their ideal language teacher. Of course the two are not unrelated as teachers are one of the most significant influences on second language (L2) learners' motivation. A recent study by Matsumoto (2011) confirms this, and he goes on to establish an important correlation between teachers' motivational strategies and students' level of proficiency.

Looking into the literature on motivation and second language acquisition (SLA), one soon recognizes that applied linguists have interpreted it in many different ways. Gardner (1985), for instance, is interested in the way attitude affects L2 acquisition, while Crookes and Schmidt (1991) identify motivation as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning an L2. For Dörnyei (1994), according to his taxonomy, motivation

is comprised of three levels: the language level (language, culture and community); the learner level (learners' characteristics, tasks, achievement and confidence); and the learning situation level (course, teacher and group dynamics). Later he considers motivation as a force that energizes and provides direction (Dörnyei 1998). For Hussin, Maarof, and D'Cruz (2001), "positive self-concept, high self-esteem, positive attitude, clear understanding of the goals for language learning, continuous active participation in the language learning process, the relevance of conductive environment that could contribute to the success of language learning" are important. In addition, they list six motivational influences for language learning: attitudes, beliefs about self, goals, involvement, environmental support, and personal attributes. I would like to keep these various senses of motivation in mind for the rest of this paper.

3. Participants

The participants were 30 pupils (10 males and 20 females) enrolled in a private university in Shizuoka, Japan taking my English class. With the exception of 5 students (1 male and 1 female Korean, 1 male and 1 female Cantonese and 1 female Vietnamese), all of them were born in Japan and their mother tongue was Japanese. They were second or third year students¹ and ranged from 19 to 24 years old. As mentioned, the participants were divided into two groups. Group 1 were taking two or more FLs (20 students: 5 males and 15 females)². The second foreign language studied was Spanish (6 students), French (5 students), German (3 students), Korean (3 students) and Chinese (3 students). Group 2 were taking English as their sole FL (10 students: 5 males and 5 females). Besides English, which they have studied for at least 7 years (6 years until they enter university and one or two years of study at university before the survey), all of the respondents in Group 1 had studied another FL for at least one year.

The survey was conducted at a college of international relations, which suggests the students are generally more interested in language learning than students at many other universities. Moreover, the presence of a sizeable number of international students on campus is likely to encourage and make language learning familiar to them.

There is a significant difference between each group's English proficiency as measured by TOEIC: Group 1's average TOEIC score was 518, whereas Group 2's average was 477. While TOEIC scores are a crude measure of proficiency, they do suggest that learners who had studied multiple foreign languages were significantly better English speakers than those who had studied only English. And in fact the average difference in TOEIC assessment between the two groups was borne out by how well they did a writing task I assigned. Asked to write an essay on "My Ideal Language Teacher" within 30 minutes, Group 1's average length of words were 336, whereas Group 2's average was 247.

4. Procedure

I gave the questionnaire assessing students' motivation, attitudes, and anxiety in relation to learning both English and another FL at the beginning of the 2013 academic year. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I focused on their impressions and reasons for studying one or more FLs; Part II focused on their background and other factors affecting achievement such as their ideal FL teacher.

Although Japanese is the primary language of communication used both inside and outside of school, I administered the questionnaire in English. That was in part because for some respondents Japanese was their

FL. They were allowed to respond to questions in Japanese if necessary. When this occurred, I translated their responses. After introducing my students to the questionnaire, they were given 10 to 15 minutes to complete it. Before answering, they were informed that there were no right or wrong responses and their answers would remain confidential and naturally not affect their grades.

5. Measures

To determine the influence of motivation on learning multiple languages, participants were asked to complete Part I of the questionnaire by providing self-ratings on a five-point Likert scale: Group 1 for English and a second FL; and English only for Group 2. Students indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the statements. A heading explaining how to complete the questionnaire listed the following choices: totally disagree = 1, disagree = 2, not sure / don't know = 3, agree = 4, totally agree = 5.

6. Results from Part I

The table below shows the average score of the answers to the 10 questions from Part I.

Table 1 Average score of the answers to the 10 questions of Part I by the two Groups

	Group 1	Group 2
Q 1	3.71	3.21
Q 2	4.43	3.11
Q 3	4.57	3.35
Q 4	4.29	3.33
Q 5	4.10	2.98
Q 6	4.71	3.41
Q 7	3.71	2.24
Q 8 ³	4.14	4.38
Q 9	4.02	2.47
Q 10	3.67	3.15

As Table 1 clearly shows, their answers to some of the questions differed significantly. Except for Question 8, which asked if language learning was a challenge, all the averages from Group 2 were lower than those from Group 1. Before conducting this survey, I assumed that the multiple language learners enjoyed language learning and did not feel that the language learning was a challenge; however, interestingly, both groups thought language learning was a challenge. Excluding Questions 1, 4, 8 and 10, there was over one point difference between the two groups.

Question 6, "Learning other languages helps me to communicate with people from other countries" got the highest points (4.71). The respondents in Group 1 gave the following as reasons for language learning: 1) their interest in language learning itself; 2) their interests in the foreign culture including architecture, drama, fashion, food and music; 3) for traveling abroad; 4) the economic situation of that country; 5) to broaden their own perspectives; 6) as a reason for studying German - German is in the same Germanic language group as English; and 7) learning multiple languages helps them realize the similarities and differences between languages and to understand them more deeply.

On the other hand, Question 7, “Learning other languages now will make it easier to learn other languages in the future” got the lowest points (2.24); and Question 9, “Learning other languages improves my understanding of my own language” got the second lowest points (2.47). Interestingly, both of these numbers are in the responses from Group 2; so neither interest in their own language nor interest in learning other languages in the future appears to affect the motivation of students in this group as much as it affects the motivation of students in Group 1.

Many respondents in Group 1 mentioned that while they are learning about the culture and the language of a particular country, they tend to compare it with their own language and culture, whereas the respondents in Group 2 do not always think that way.

Gardner and Lambert (1959 and 1972) suggested that an individual’s motivation to learn an L2 is sustained by both attitudes toward the L2 community and the goals or orientations sought through the acquisition of the L2. These authors identified two classes of motivation. First, integrative motivation refers to a desire to learn the L2 in order to have contact with, and perhaps to identify with, members from the L2 community. This orientation can be contrasted with the instrumental orientation, which refers to a desire to learn the L2 to achieve some practical goal, such as job advancement or course credit.

I assumed that all students studying a foreign language would consider the similarities and differences between the FL and their native language and this would presumably lead to a deeper understanding of their own language and culture (Question 9). But Group 1 confounded my assumption by returning an average of 2.47. To name just a few of the notable differences between Japanese and English, 1) there are numerous words borrowed from English and other languages and there are special *katakana* characters for writing them; 2) there are no articles and no distinctions between singular and plural nouns; and 3) there are no relative pronouns in Japanese. There are also major differences in sentence structures. The usual sentence order in English is Subject-Verb-Object, whereas in Japanese it is (Subject)-Object-Verb⁴. And while English frequently uses prepositions such as *in* the park and *on* the desk, Japanese uses postpositions such as *kouen no naka*, *tsukue no ue* etc. Other major differences are the ways of making questions, different uses of tense such as the present perfect tense, and ways of answering negative questions.

Group 1 tended to think that learning a new language facilitates better understanding of grammar, sentence construction and other aspects of their own language. When asked about why they do not study an additional foreign language, subjects in Group 2 gave the following reasons:

- a) I (We) do not feel any need to learn another foreign language besides English.
- b) In countries like Malaysia and Singapore, English is spoken and used in daily life more than their local languages, so English is enough.
- c) I cannot even speak English properly, so I do not need to (or rather cannot) study another language.
- d) I am simply not interested in learning another foreign language.

For the differences between learners who study multiple languages and those who study only English as their FL, I think that the following factors have a significant effect on learner outcome: 1) positive motivation vs. negative motivation: both groups appear motivated to learn FLs; however, the respondents in Group 1 have a more positive motivation (learning language is fun), whereas those in Group 2 tend to think that they have to study English because it is required or necessary; 2) the existence of clear goals and motives to learn languages: those in Group 1 tend to have clearer goals such as passing an exam or going abroad by a specific

date, whereas those in Group 2 do not; 3) connecting the second FL with either English or their mother tongue: those in Group 1 tend to compare and contrast languages, whereas those in Group 2 do not; and 4) thinking about additional values of learning languages: those in Group 1 think learning language makes them understand their culture more, whereas those in Group 2 tend to focus on the L2.

One thing that is worth mentioning is learners at an elementary level may not have developed insight into the second FL system or its background, especially if that language is very different from the languages they have spoken or studied. For future research, it would be useful therefore to compare data from novice multiple language learners with that from experienced and committed learners. It is also worth thinking about linguistic distance. By Hofstede's (1980) analysis, where he arranged 51 languages according to their distance from English, none of my respondents' mother tongues are close to English; remoteness may therefore weaken motivation for learning another FL.

7. Results from Part II

In this section, I sought information⁵ about the students' backgrounds. Participants were also asked to explain their reasons in writing for learning or not learning second or multiple languages, and to state their views of an ideal FL teacher.

Here are some of the benefits of learning another language according to my students. I have paraphrased or in some cases translated their replies as precisely as possible:

- a) Foreign language study creates more positive attitudes and less prejudice toward people who are different. Learning foreign languages expands my view of the world. Thanks to knowing other languages, one can better appreciate cultural diversity.
- b) I assume that foreign language skills make a job applicant more valuable in the marketplace. And speaking English is kind of expected, so that is why I am studying Spanish, which I believe is another useful language.
- c) Knowing another culture and language enables me to gain a more profound understanding of my culture and language.
- d) International travel becomes easier and more pleasant through knowing a foreign language.
- e) A second language improves my skills and grades in English. The study of a foreign tongue (in this case, German) improves my knowledge of Japanese.
- f) I believe that foreign languages open the door to art, music, films and so forth.

On ideal language teachers, most respondents in both groups chose either "native speaker of that language who can speak Japanese well" (38 per cent) or "as long as s/he is a native speaker, it's OK with me" (47 per cent). This indicates that they think the native speaker (no matter where they are from or what teaching experience they have) is a better teacher to learn that language from.

Interestingly, scholars are divided on this issue. It is true that many believe native speaker teachers (NSTs) have advantages over non-native speaker teachers (NNSTs): Seidlhofer (1999) highlights that language proficiency is usually associated with teaching competence, which is why native speakers are more often than not supposed to have a clear advantage over NNSTs. Kim (2009) compared 12 Canadian NSTs with 12 Korean NNSTs and found that substantial dissimilarities emerged between the two groups in the evaluation criteria teachers used to assess students' performance. Cook (1999), however, believes that language teaching would

benefit by paying attention to the L2 user rather than concentrating primarily on the native speaker—there is no doubt NNSTs have the advantage here. Medgyes argues that “natives and non-natives have an equal chance to become successful teachers, but the routes used by the two groups are not the same” (p.340, 1992). Discussing NNSTs, he states their advantages as:

- a) NNSTs can provide a better learner model;
- b) NNSTs can teach learning strategies more effectively;
- c) NNSTs can supply more information about the English language;
- d) NNSTs better anticipate and prevent language difficulties;
- e) NNSTs are more sensitive to their students;
- f) NNSTs can benefit from their ability to use students’ mother tongue.

My students gave a couple of reasons for their strong NST preference. They wrote, 1) I think the part of the reasons that I cannot speak English well is that I was taught by Japanese teachers. Therefore, when I study another foreign language, I want to be taught by a native speaker from scratch. 2) I want to be able to speak as native speakers do, so I believe that learning from them is a shortcut to reach the goal. Yet another reply stated 3) I think it is necessary to be taught by a Japanese teacher first. Not knowing a word of the foreign language means there is no way that I can understand what the teacher says.

I believe the mere fact that teachers are native speakers in no way guarantees that they are good teachers. Matsumoto (2011) stated that the teacher is important for motivation, but it is not necessary to be a native speaker teacher. The important thing is know how to motivate students and how to teach effectively depending on the learners’ goals.

Finally, as for their goals as L2 speakers, more than a half of the respondents wanted either Educated Native Proficiency or Advanced Professional Proficiency; however, considering the fact that none of the respondents regarded their English level as matching either of these, they had to admit that it takes much time and effort to improve their FL ability to the level desired.

8. Summary

This paper attempted to find motivational factors for learning FLs by comparing two different groups. Both groups are at least somewhat motivated to learn an FL; however, some distinctive differences were found between the two: generally, the respondents who study only English think of it as a subject that they must learn; those subjects who study two or more FL believe that learning foreign languages can benefit them in a variety of ways.

Although NNSTs have lots of advantages that NSTs do not have, more than 80 percent of my respondents preferred the NSTs as their ideal FL teacher. This might relate to their beliefs that NSTs can teach better and effectively compared to NNSTs; however, this is only a suggestion and requires much research.

There was much beyond the scope of this short study. In the future, I would like to conduct related studies to determine the most conducive environments for language learning. I should also like to investigate whether different target languages, age, groups, and environments for learning present different motivational factors. In particular, the question of linguistic distance hampering learners’ motivation would be fruitful area for research. Other questions, such as whether there are differences between male and female learners, also need further examination.

Appendix: Motivational Factors for Student Learning Multiple Languages

The questionnaire is designed to understand the differences between the learners who take only one foreign language (in most cases English) and the learners who take more than two foreign languages (in most cases English and some other language(s)). Your answers and comments will be taken into serious consideration as the primary basis of developing the curriculum of the university, so please consider your answers carefully.

Your sincere and candid responses would be greatly appreciated.

Part I

Questions: Please answer to the questions in the following manner.

(totally disagree = 1, disagree = 2, not sure / don't know = 3, agree = 4, totally agree = 5)

1. I'm learning other languages to get a better job.
1 2 3 4 5
2. Language learning helps me to develop other skills.
1 2 3 4 5
3. Language learning provides better opportunities to travel abroad.
1 2 3 4 5
4. Language learning is enjoyable.
1 2 3 4 5
5. Language learning helps me to understand other cultures.
1 2 3 4 5
6. Learning other languages helps me to communicate with people from other countries.
1 2 3 4 5
7. Learning other languages now will make it easier to learn other languages in the future.
1 2 3 4 5
8. Language learning is a challenge.
1 2 3 4 5
9. Learning other languages improves my understanding of my own language.
1 2 3 4 5
10. People with knowledge of other languages will help the economy in Japan.
1 2 3 4 5

Part II

Please provide answers in the space provided. Also, please explain your reasons if requested. (日本語でも構いません)

- A. How fluent are you in English?
 - a. Educated Native Proficiency
 - b. Advanced Professional Proficiency
 - c. General Professional Proficiency
 - d. Limited Working Proficiency
 - e. Elementary Proficiency

B. Including English, I am studying _____.
(name of the foreign language you are studying)

〈Reasons〉

C. Are there benefits by learning another foreign language besides English?

Yes No

〈Please Explain〉

D. How fluent do you want to be in that language?

- a. Educated Native Proficiency
- b. Advanced Professional Proficiency
- c. General Professional Proficiency
- d. Limited Working Proficiency
- e. Elementary Proficiency

E. Who do you want to be taught by?

- a. Japanese teacher who can speak that language very well.
- b. As long as s/he is Japanese, it's OK with me.
- c. Native speaker of that language who can speak Japanese well.
- d. As long as s/he is a native speaker, it's OK with me.
- e. No preferences

〈Please Explain〉

F. What is your gender?

Female Male

G. Please tell me your age group.

17 – 19 20 – 22 23 – 28 29 – 39

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¹ to make sure that all the respondents who participated in this survey learned the second foreign language at least one year

² all of the non-Japanese respondents are categorized into this Group

³ Question 8 Part 1 "Language learning is a challenge" is a negatively-keyed item. When calculated it was reverse scored. Yet because of the usage of the word "challenge" in Japanese, which has a positive connotation, there is a possibility that some of the respondents might have misunderstood this question.

⁴ The reason the Subject is in brackets is that, in colloquial Japanese, the subject is almost always omitted.

⁵ About their language proficiency, students tend to evaluate their language proficiency lower than their actual level. In fact, some of the respondents' TOEIC scores were above 600, which is equivalent to CEFR B1 level; however, they still regard their language proficiency as "General Professional Proficiency." When analysing the data, this needs to be taken into account.