

How Task-Based Teaching Can Affect Motivation

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1.0 Introduction

An overview of motivation theory

We can all testify to having started to study something, whether it be a language, playing an instrument or participating in chess, and at some point probably given up. When talking about such as experience or being asked why we gave it up we would usually reply that we didn't have the motivation or we become de-motivated. At this level is it clear that at least from our perceptive view motivation is a "big clincher" in carrying on or stopping something. According to Gardner (1985) motivation in terms of second language study is described as: *"the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitude toward learning the language and the ability to sustain that effort and attitude"*

Dörnyei (2001) produces an easier summation, saying that it *"why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and, how hard they are going to pursue it"*

Gardner and Lambert (1972) differentiated between two orientations, or varieties of motivation, integrative which they described as "desire to learn a language in order to interact with, and perhaps to identify with, members of the L2 community", and the other they called instrumental orientation which they claim reflect practical goals, such as "attaining an academic goal or job advancement"

Gardner and Lambert thought that students displaying factors related to the

integrative model would provide a better indicator of future proficiency, but caution should be taken with these ideas as the subjects were English speakers studying in French speaking Quebec, Canada. As had been pointed out, the difficulty comes in separating these two orientations. For instance how can you separate fulfilling the need of a Japanese person to be accepted by, say the American society, which would be an integrative orientation from getting a good-status job in an American company, which would be more toward the instrumental orientation. On a more positive note, at the very least teaching materials used in the classroom should appeal to both orientations (Ely, 1986). In the previous example this could include instruction in the American value system or working ethic in comparison to, say, a Japanese working ethic, thereby fulfilling integrative requirements. On top of this students could be shown occupational benefits that pursuing English could bring and this may appeal to their instrumental orientation.

Ryan and Deci (2000) proposed three new perspectives, in what they called the self-determination continuum, incorporating intrinsic, extrinsic and amotivational factors. Intrinsic was described as reasons for L2 learning that *“are derived from one’s inherent pleasure and interest in the activity; the activity is undertaken because of spontaneous satisfaction with it”*, (Noel, 1999). This basically means a student who for curiosity sake drives his/her own quest for English knowledge. One quote that might sum up intrinsic orientation was observed by one of Noel’s subjects as: *“The ability to communicate in another language is a good feeling. Communication is a big part of life as it is, but with two languages it is that much larger.”*

Extrinsic orientation refers to *“reasons that are instrumental to some consequence apart from inherent interest in the activity.”* There are four parts to the extrinsic orientation, ranging from the least self-determined, called external regulation which might be to fulfill some basic education requirement and the most self-determined, called identified regulation, which might include a student who perceives competence in a language as being cultured and educated, and for those reason strives to succeed in the L2.

Finally is amotivational orientation, which appears right at the other end of a self-determined continuum to intrinsic orientation. Noel (1999) claims, such students do not expect L2 study to lead to a desired outcome. Furthermore, these people feel they are clearly being forced to study a language. One example might be Japanese students who never plan to leave Japan, or have decided that they don't need English for work or social purposes. The longer this type of person feels that they are being forced to do an unnecessary thing, then the more resentment and negative feelings towards the L2 will build in such a person.

The difference between the Gardner and Lambert and Ryan and Deci models is that the latter indicated that reasons for studying are not exclusive and that students who show signs of one type of motivation can also display factors from orientations around their particular attributed orientation. The integrative and extrinsic models seem to be showing a similar type of learner orientation in that they both address a realization in the benefit in the L2 over and above the "pure" love of study. However, the Gardner and Lambert model could be fitted along the Ryan and Deci continuum (Appendix A). There appears to be some overlapping in some of the areas, but both models provide a full range of dispositions that students in Japan could bring to the learning task, but even though these studies show what is in the students' mind before, during or whilst studying based on exhaustive studies, teachers are not told how to go about dealing with such a wide range of dispositions that could potentially appear in Japanese classrooms.

Background to study

2.0 Motivational profile of the Japanese student

2.2.1 International importance of English

From the above two models it may be possible to describe a broad overview of different motivation types amongst Japanese learners. The role of English in the Japanese education system has become more and more prominent over the years, in tandem with a universal recognition that English ability is necessary and not

only could advance one's career, but also conversely, the absence of English can be inhibiting. These notions are set against a current economic backdrop that now places importance on Japan forging international alliances not just to grow, but also to survive. This situation gives rise to the instrumental orientation. Perhaps a more tangible example of this is the prolific increase in English proficiency tests like TOEFL, STEP, or Eiken. High scores on these tests look good on a resume and carry "clout" with employers. Particularly, now TOEFL is making plans to include a spoken test in its test battery and most foreign universities include a spoken interview before allowing enrollment thereby circumventing the problem of accepting students with just good grammatical and listening skills who perhaps don't have the oral proficiency to match.

From the point of view of integrative motivation there has been an increase in the concept of "Americanization" which has spawned a variety of sub-cultures not only in Japan, but also in many other Asian countries. In unicultural settings there was a greater tendency for individuals to be interested in L2 for sociocultural reasons (Noel, 1999), though not necessarily for friendship reasons. In Japan the phenomenon manifests itself through urban music associated with black culture, namely rap and white culture through rock and heavy metal. The music permeates into dance, fashion and art all of which have been embraced to some extent by Japanese youth.

2.2.2 Recognition of self-driven students

A further examination by Benson (1991) also found groups of other Japanese learners who he referred to as "personal.", fitting into neither instrumental nor integrative. These people, it was observed, have motivation reasons like pursuit of enjoyment of reading English and entertainment in English. This is evident in students who want to learn the lyrics to English songs or want to watch videos with or without the use of subtitles. This personal group seems to be a permutation of the intrinsic orientation and appears to study an L2 because of the enjoyment it gives them. However, as Benson further noted, and perhaps others will attest to,

this group is insignificant in size and not really necessary to address as an issue in motivation, other than seeing what makes such people tick.

2.2.3 Problem areas

Unfortunately, there does seem to also be a large number of people that fit into the amotivation orientation. For the teacher with communicative philosophies Japan does present a few problems in that Japanese students appear to be reluctant to participate in communicative student-based learning situations at university level. This problem stems from the fact that pre-university (and sometimes carried through into university) English study, probably for the majority of people, comprised of heavily-teacher controlled predominantly grammar-based instruction delivered to help students pass the grammatically biased entrance-examinations. The pressure and resulting stress that these exams could have produced might be enough to have put a student off English study for life as people make the link between English study and stress only. If the student gets through the exam period successfully there are no more of “those” exams to pass so motivation to succeed in the class is dampened and passivity sets in. Yoshida (2002) likens the experience to learning in a fish bowl. This analogy draws attention to the fact that students are provided with all the knowledge during a lecture, which the students then try to master. The onus is on perfection and native speaker models are often used to provide only the most ideal and stylized way of speaking. The need for actual communication is reduced because there is one right model that everyone works from and must internalize. This makes for an artificially limited environment in which communication with the outside world is not needed; it is Japan specific knowledge and therefore Yoshida’s fishbowl refers to Japan. These factors can be seen to affect motivation strongly, indeed Lo Castro (1996) suggests that joining these classes just to pass tests are the main motivation for people studying English at that level. Indeed there could be nothing worse than pursuing a discipline like English if it has only caused grief. Therein lies the problem some students cannot look above and beyond the idea of grammar tests in English towards more

instrumental or integrative perspectives.

It is clear then that there are a wide range of levels and distinctions in motivation amongst young Japanese learners. In order to change motivation of learners it might at first seem impossible considering the way the exam system has been set up in the past, but the existence of instrumentally and integratively motivated students is testimony to the fact that some students are traversing their possibly bad experiences and finding new ways of appreciating English.

Ellis (1994) recognizes that motivation changes over time as a result of external factors. The teacher can clearly be seen as one of those external factors, especially with the lower order orientations, like the amotivated, who seem to have lost the will to continue English or refuse to see any benefit that such study could hold. Of course other orientations, leading up to intrinsically driven students, will need the attention of the teacher who must build on existing motivation in their students.

2.2.4 Studies of motivation Japan

Studies of motivation in Japan have had mixed results. One study of first year university students studying compulsory English by Berwick and Ross (1989) found that the students' motivation dropped on entry into the English program, presumably because of factors previously addressed, but after completing 150 hours of study the motivation levels rose greatly. Berwick and Ross attribute this rise to the use of a variety of instructional techniques and the implementation of an exchange program with an American sister university. A second study by Lanara (2002) tried to find out if integrative motivation was a factor in predicting language success. There was no correlation found, suggesting that above their attitudes to foreign people and culture were other factors. These factors included teachers' teaching methods and enthusiasm. This point was reiterated by Clark and Trafford (1995) who claimed that the teacher pupil relationship was the biggest factor affecting students' attitudes toward the learning situation.

As can be seen the teacher's role cannot be emphasized enough with all types of university classes, as it is a variable that can be easily changed. The traditional

central role of the teacher in Japanese classrooms, may seem at first a hindrance to a communicative teacher, but it is this control that can allow the teacher to steer students towards a more participative role in the classroom, through example, strategies and the effective use of tasks in the classroom

3.0 Teacher as motivator

In this next section of the paper a number of issues related to what teachers can do in their classroom to instill and maintain motivation will be discussed. Dornyei and Csizer (1998) have created a useful list of motivational strategies to consider as teachers plan and enact their course of study:

3.1 Set a personal example with your own behaviour

A lot of university students in Japan tend to pick part time work “arbeits” to supplement their lifestyles while they attend college. Some of these jobs like convenience store workers or restaurant workers can run into the night so the next day is a struggle to first of all keep awake and second to motivate themselves in class. Under such conditions if the teacher appears to not be motivated then there will be even less reason to attempt to be communicative. Oxford (1998) observed that lack of teacher enthusiasm lead to discomfort in classroom, so it can be said that there is a strong case for stating that people feed off positivity.

3.2 Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom and

3.3. Make the language classes interesting

One of the most hotly contested issues in SLA a few years ago was the idea of the “affective filter” and “comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1985). First Krashen tells us one of the main reasons why some adults fail to acquire second languages properly is because the high affective filter tends to affect anxiety and by definition this could lead to changes in motivation. Of course, I don’t want to rule out the idea that some students can’t operate in a “sink or swim “ situation, but as mentioned before Japanese college students have probably been faced with that kind of situation before and with no real positive outcome in the affective domain. The second point

to consider is the issue of comprehensible input which in order to be acquired should be interesting, in large amounts, not grammatically sequenced and just above students' current level of ability (i+1). This paper is not to judge the validity of these arguments as that has been done elsewhere many times. However, at the very least these issues will certainly have a bearing on motivation. Imagine the teacher that never changes his/her format, and produces boring repetitive lessons. As an example, the continuation of traditional grammar based lessons that students had become accustomed to high school could be demotivating according to Ushioda (2001). Teacher and student could be missing out on a whole world of new possibilities. The use of videos and magazines as teaching material is now prolific. These offer an alternative way to make a lesson more interesting and varied, and Potter and Lenz (2001) say that it can lead to an incredible improvement in language abilities, thus increasing the students' integrative motivation.

3.4 Present the tasks properly

Confusion can be a big de-motivator in whatever circumstance. Even after arming students with conversational strategies like asking for clarification, students still feel embarrassed if they have to "admit" that they don't understand. The teacher can overcome confusion regarding instructions by picking a confident student and doing an example with that student and then closely monitor other students as they participate in the particular task.

3.5 Develop a good relationship with the learners

The building of rapport with students appears to be paramount as it can indirectly affect other points Dornyei and Csizer (1998) have outlined. This rapport should begin on the first day via the "getting to know you" process. One thing that seems to work is to get the students to fill out a profile with an enclosed photograph. In large classes it really can be a challenge to remember all the students names, but neglect of this basic link between student and teacher could, although only in a small way, affect motivation.

3.6 Personalize the learning process

Students who have freedom to choose topics, and use new grammar and vocabulary that they want to will benefit from personal investment into their studying. The teacher needs to offer opportunities for personalization of contexts and examples. One way seems to be to get students to choose and write their own questions during a discussion format.

3.7 Increase the learner's linguistic self-confidence

A list of topics that the students are interested in should have also have come from a needs analysis. By sticking to simpler topics the students can have more opportunities to access schema they already possess and thereby reducing the anxiety they felt regarding studying areas they have little knowledge of in the beginning stages. A further point about self-confidence could be the use of small groups and pair work rather than teacher-fronted classes that single out an individual to perform in front of other students. The latter has been found to be a demotivating factor in many studies. The former according to Crooke and Schmidt (1989) can work well and lead to increased motivation

3.8 Promote learner autonomy

Dickinson (1995) claims that motivation is conditional on students taking responsibilities for their own learning. Oxford (1990), has made a very comprehensive taxonomy of learning strategies that students can use and teachers can make students aware of. A teacher with access to these strategies can pick and select and teach good ones that fit in with the dynamics of the learners.

3.9 Increase the learner's goal-orientedness

Ames (1992) divides student attitudes into two types mastery and performance orientation. The former is the belief that success will lead to personal growth, which seems to suggest a link between the level that students perceive they can reach and the perceived difficulty of the materials or instruction. Some researchers say that that difficulty should be moderate, but if that it is too easy it may weaken motivation. On the other hand Gass and Selinker (2001) say success can breed

confidence, which results in greater success, but sometimes they warn success can breed overconfidence, which sets one up for a fall. In Japan those who study language solely as a university requirement do not value language learning in and of itself. Challenging seems to benefit students who place a high value on language learning, but may not work for people who can be seen to display anxiety in one form or another in the classroom.

3.10 Familiarize learners with the target language culture

In research by Clement (1980) it was found that frequent contact with members of L2 influence confidence, motivation and ultimately proficiency. Labrie and Clement (1986) claim greater quality rather than frequency can lead to higher motivation, but at the very least bringing in realia like magazines and pictures from the teacher's home country can really grab the students' imagination.

Much of the commandments that Dornyei and Csizer put forward appear as a list of recommendations to maintain a good dialogue with the students all of which can be applied in Japanese classrooms for all types of motivation, but they seem to make little mention of the value of instruction to motivate. It would appear that any teacher could have a good rapport with students, but is that rapport by itself enough? If it is then wasted with instruction that doesn't appear to motivate something is certainly missing.

4.0 Make use of task based teaching

Nunan (1988) refers to task as "*a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form*". A lot of mention has been made about the use and benefits of task-based teaching Skehan (1998), Willis (1996) and Pica et. al. (1993) for providing opportunities for negotiation of meaning. It appears that if students have the opportunity to use and participate in tasks then higher levels of motivation are seen to follow. When tasks are the means of learning, the target language takes on meaning, instead of just the ENOP situation (English for No Obvious Purpose), students have a reason for learning

and new language is presented to students as a means of communication, and that they need to be able to transfer information and opinions in that language. This is a big step away from the teacher-fronted lessons of the past.

4.1 Ownership

Ownership is also a motivating factor in tasks if students are allowed to see the task through all of its stages (task completion), without the teacher constantly intervening and correcting students then they can achieve a valuable (and motivating) sense of fulfillment and heightened self-confidence that comes from understanding, performing, and reflecting on the activity by themselves. Without such motivational stimulus, learning is unlikely to occur, so encouraging mistakes during the allotted fluency section of the task cycle will provide a more relaxed environment.

4.2 Pace

Another problem that so-called product syllabuses (White, 1988) are that the teacher teaches everyone at the same pace and stronger students tend to keep up, but weaker students, who may show signs of de-motivation, soon tune out as the lesson begins to leave them dragging behind. Process syllabuses, like task-base syllabuses allow students to take (intake) content matter (input) that is appropriate to their current stage and if students are allowed to progress through tasks at their own rate, then not only better students, but also weaker ones can concentrate on aspects that are suitable for their learning level.

Traditionally evaluation of students' performance was given in a snapshot of learning that can be turned into a grade. However, it is the students who need to know how they are progressing, so that their learning in the future can be informed by feedback. Tasks give students such information, focusing on outcomes, showing them their learning needs, and helping them to evaluate their communicative competence.

4.3 Error correction

As with other aspects of the synthetic, grammar-based approach to learning,

error-correction can be harmful to motivation and self-confidence, and ineffective in terms of its results for the entire class of students. If those students are working through an exercise such as problem solving in groups then errors in communication become apparent to the entire group and the teacher (functioning as a language resource) can be called upon to supply appropriate language to solve the language problem and help students reach a satisfactory outcome.

4.5 Creating Tasks

To begin to think about what makes a good task there are a number of ways of approaching the subject. Skehan (1998) makes the important point about how planning time in various discourse types of tasks can affect outcomes in fluency, accuracy and complexity, but little is mentioned about motivational outcomes of these three factors. In another work Cohen (2000) integrates learner styles and strategies to offer possible relationships in their outcome to a variety of tasks.

In addition to the previously mentioned it is important to consider task type, which strongly influences both motivation and learning success. Teachers should be concerned with bringing high-interest, real world content into the classroom, presented at a manageable level and incorporated into lessons through clear, achievable and focused task-based activities, that can enhance both learning and involvement. Such content should be chosen with a sensitivity to learners' interests goals, and expectations involving English study. Task based literature offers many task classifications and how they can be manipulated to provide more opportunities for negotiation of meaning amongst the participants Skehan (1998).

However, even though there is a vast array of information pertaining to types and how they have an impact on levels of acquisition, little or no evidence has been provided into how specific tasks can be seen to affect motivation.

Study

5.0 Individual tasks and motivation

As mentioned previously the range and types of task can be daunting so for this

paper Willis's framework (1996) for tasks has been used. In that framework six different types of tasks were identified. The variety of tasks just within these six is sufficient to suspect that each task will have different effects on motivation. This paper would like to offer suggestions to teachers on how tasks of this nature have an affect on three variables that have a recognizable impact on motivation. The information contained in this paper has been collected through personal experience as a teacher who uses tasks a lot for false beginners at university level and from the thoughts and experience of practiced colleagues. This paper recognizes that the three main determiners are autonomy, clear outcomes and appropriateness of challenge.

Autonomy is now recognized as a primary factor in being able to use what has been learnt in the classroom into the real world. Students have to be able to assess and monitor their own progress and then finally evaluate how well they have done. Without autonomy the student is too dependent on the teacher to show learning outcomes. For tasks this means the opportunity to work in relative freedom and have control over what input or output they may wish to negotiate to complete the task or express feelings and opinions related to a particular tasks.

The next determiner should be to provide clear outcomes, without which students can't see how the activity that they are doing will have any relevance to their development. In this part sequencing is very important and the final product of the task is something that can stimulate and inspire the students.

Appropriateness of challenge is the final factor to consider and this means providing something that is stimulating, but not too difficult. There must be a perceived level of challenge, but when the task becomes too difficult this will result in de-motivation. Alternatively an easy task will not motivate students sufficiently.

Results

From Appendix B the six types of tasks are listed down the side. Across the top the three determiners are listed. From the table it is clear that creative tasks and

project work can offer the best opportunity for increasing motivation. This can be explained in the fact that students can have control over the input and output that they use for that kind of task, also a project offers a clear outcome, culminating in, for example a presentation or report. Furthermore, project work is usually spaced out over the period of a few lessons so the students will have to fulfill various criteria by deadlines in order to proceed, so the size and therefore potential difficulty of the task could be a motivating factor. Personal experiences and anecdotes can be good motivators, however sometimes the outcome may be unclear if the students are not directed to do something after finishing the spoken experience, like forming an essay. Problem solving can also be a motivating task, but again care should be taken with how much leeway a student has for controlling such problems and solutions. It can be seen that listing tasks could potentially offer the least amount of opportunities for motivation in the class.

Some caution should be taken with the above figures in that they are speculative and based on experiences in Japan. There is also an argument to say that each could be as equally motivating as the other depending on the teacher and how the task is handled, but as a first step into considering motivation of individual tasks this paper is just trying to offer a general overview.

6.0 Conclusion and Discussion

Students in Japan fit in to all different orientations of motivation, and the outlook of both students in terms of having aspirations to go overseas and obtain English qualifications for better work in this country seem to be on the rise, but there is also a large amotivational contingent of students who do not see a benefit to studying English and could indeed possess a negative image of English owing to previous experiences of English at high school.

It is clear that the teacher can make a difference and needs to, among other things, make students more autonomous, build a good relationship with students create interesting and personalized lessons that capture the students imagination, not boring ones that would certainly demotivate them. Along with good lessons

TBLT offers a change from the grammar practice routines that Japanese students may have had exposure to in the past, with fluency replacing accuracy at lower levels. TBLT encourages learners to experiment with whatever English they can recall, to experiment with different language without fear of failure and immediate correction, and to take active control of their own learning, both in and outside class. For the teacher TBLT offers security and control and a real chance of increasing motivation.

However for all the literature that relates to TBLT as a motivational tool, nothing seems to exist in that same literature about the effect that individual tasks can have on motivation. This paper used the six task types included in the Willis paper: ordering, listing, problem solving, telling personal experiences, project work and comparing. Then three determiners of motivation that included autonomy, clear outcomes and perceived level of challenge were applied to each individual task and a scale was made that pertained to how effective each determiner was for a particular task. It was found that project work was the best for motivation, followed closely by problem solving and telling personal stories. Not so good at instilling motivation were listing tasks. However, caution should be applied to these figures as they are based on experience through teaching tasks at university level in Japan. All factors mentioned could be manipulated to change the outcome, but as a starting point this chart begins to address the need to, as echoed by McGroaty (2001), create a wider variety of learning tasks and activities, which can provide motivational force. It is clear that the importance of task type should not be forgotten.

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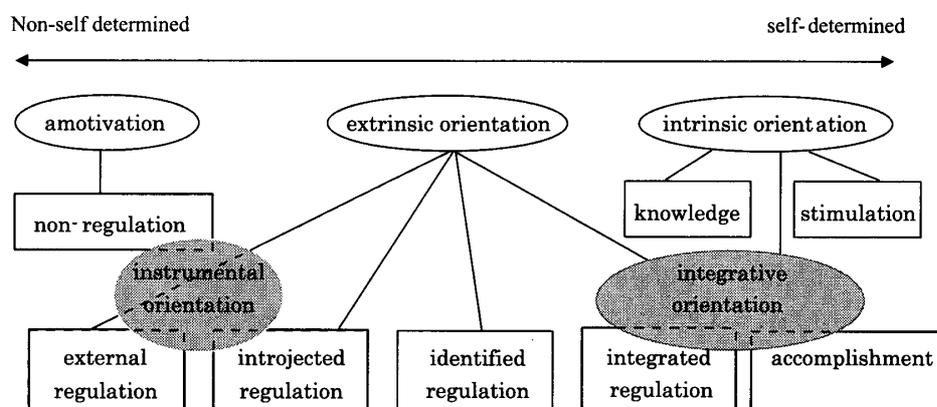
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Appendix A

A combination of the Gardner and Lambert and Ryan and Deci models



Appendix B

How individual tasks can affect 3 determiners of motivation

Task types taken from Willis (1996)	The 3 determiners		
	Autonomy	clear outcomes	perceived level of challenge
ordering, sorting, classifying	xx	xx	xx
listing	x	x	x
problem solving	x	xxx	xxx
personal experiences anecdote telling	xxx	x	xxx
creative tasks project work	xxx	xxx	xxx
matching comparing	xx	xx	xx

Explanation of key

- x - is poor at affecting the determiners
- xx - is good at affecting the determiners
- xxx - is perfect for affecting the determiners