

Japanese language learning motivation through interaction with native speakers: A case study

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ABSTRACT

The research aims at investigating social-psychological orientations of HIUJLLs (Japanese Language Department learners of Hong Bang International University). A survey and a semi-structured interview are governed by 68 students ranging from 2nd to 4th academic year with various Japanese levels from elementary to advanced. Besides, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is employed to analyze the collected data by percentage, mean of frequency and standard deviation. As a result, the research reveals that participants are generally motivated at a very high level in interacting with native speakers both Japanese teachers and students. Also, students affirm that their learning with native speakers if well arranged and designed would result in intense motivation and inspiration for them to learn Japanese much harder. As a result, some recommendations are made for further preparation and arrangement of comprehensively structured settings for long-term interactions with native speakers in Japanese language teaching and studying methodology.

Keywords: instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, language learning motivation

1. INTRODUCTION

This research study purpose is to do a survey in to comprehend the effectiveness of interacting with native speakers, namely teachers, students and guests, in Japanese language learning motivation of HIUJLLs. As a subsequence, authors aspire to recommend adjustments in curriculum design, extra-curricular activities and international cultural exchanges with intensive native speaker's interactions. Research subject is Japanese language learning motivation in interacting with native speakers. Survey subjects HIUJLLs of K19, K20 & K21 as seniors, juniors and sophomores, respectively those who have already had experiences in learning directly with Japanese teachers, engaging cultural exchanges and communication with Japanese students and guests during their study. The research study analyzes literature review on roles and significance of language learning motivation in interacting with native speakers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Language Learning motivation: Definition and beyond

Though the term "motivation" sounds brief and

straightforward, its meaning has yet to be fully conveyed. According to Lightbrown and Spada [1], motivation in language learning is obvious as learners have communicative needs and attitudes towards the target language community. Therefore, to satisfy such a need is a prerequisite in initiating an effective language learning environment. Meanwhile, Harmer [2] defines motivation in learners' short-term goal and long-term one. For him, language learners always have two needs to meet; one is to earn a high score or to pass an exam and the other is the learner's desire to communicate with native speakers of the target language or job opportunities in the future. Among definitions of motivation from scholars, Garner [3] claims a clear definition of motivation as (1) desire to learn the language, (2) motivational intensity and effort and (3) attitude towards learning. He also said a truly motivated learner must exemplify the three categories.

Ames [4] reconfirmed the famous quote of US former Secretary of Education, Terrel Howard Bell by highlighting the significance of motivation when saying "There are three things to remember

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about education. The first is motivation. The second one is motivation. The third one is motivation." No need to say but through education we can recognize that students aspire to achieve skills and knowledge, so motivation becomes a key to recharge their energy and spirit to keep running in this learning process. In short, motivation is the crucial factor that puts learners always at ready step to move forward to their goal.

2.2. Classification of language learning motivation

Different scholars might have various ways of seeing motivation in language learning; however, according to Ryan and Deci [5] and Passer and Smith [6], the essence of motivation can be interpreted into "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" values. While intrinsic ones refer to the learner's passion for language proficiency and self-determination, extrinsic ones encourage them to work harder for rewards and avoid punishment.

Garner and Lambert [7] received popular acceptance from the academic community when attempting to categorize motivation into "integrative motivation" and "instrumental motivation". This is in turn clarified by Saville-Troike in exemplifying extrinsic values by social interactions, during which language learners can communicate in targeted language with native speakers to understand more about their culture and introduce our own culture with the outside world. Meanwhile, they state that intrinsic values are more concerned with practical values such as getting a high score in class or passing an exam to climb higher in academics.

2.3. Interacting with native speakers and language learning motivation

Saville-Troike [8] argues that individual motivation is the key to ultimate achievement in language learning. The more motivated a language learner is, the easier and faster he/she can become competent in the learning process. Also, he continued to claim that language learning motivation can be categorized into two types. One is "integrative motivation" which inspires learners to work harder to achieve such a language competence stage when they can comfortably communicate with native speakers and enjoy the utmost satisfaction in comprehensive understanding and exploring mutual cultures, defining their values and earning respect and

admiration from the public. Another one is "instrumental motivation" which motivates language learners in a more practical orientation. Such motivation prevails to push learners forward to attain higher test scores or pass the exam. The former one can be achieved through interactions with native speaker teachers, students and visitors. Ellis [9] identifies that learner's attitudes can be shaped by external factors that in turn alter the way they approach their language learning. In particular, learners are put into a context where they are supposed to communicate positively their learning text with a native speaker, either their teacher or exchange student or a school visitor. In other words, if students are interested in the culture and the country of the language they are learning, definitely they would be inspired to learn that language better.

2.4. Recent research related to language learning motivation

Siriluck and Sirithip [10] conducted a research study on two groups of students whose language proficiency varies according to their difference in integrative motivation. The findings show that those who have higher integrative motivation seem to perform English better than the other group. Also, they found a higher motivation among better English performance. As a subsequence, this research finding reveals that those who have a strong integrative motivation in them would find approaches to improve their language proficiency so that they can satisfy preliminary needs in language acquisition to achieve their targets such as communication in cultural exchanges, exploration in lifestyles and meeting social expectations.

More recently, Tatjana, Carlos and Janos [11] implemented a research study to learn about motivations for learning Hungarian for international students in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary. In-depth interviews were made to find out that both integrative and instrumental motivation inspired the students to study Hungarian. While many might see instrumental motivation could be short-term and might go down when language learners achieve the target they set up, it may not be true if combined with integrative motivation which push learners forward and continuously improve themselves to satisfy long-term needs in

language learning acquisition.

Regardless of the wealth of literature on language learning motivation, there is a dearth of practical study on learning motivation from interacting with native speakers in Japanese students. Therefore, this inspires me to do this research and find out more about motivational orientations of HIUJLLs through their expectations and concerns about what might motivate them in learning Japanese language as well as through interactive experiences they have had with native speaker teachers, students and visitors both online and offline.

2.5. Research questions

1. How are HIUJLLs motivated to learn the Japanese language?
2. Is the motivation in learning Japanese of students at HIU (Hong Bang International University) more integrative or instrumental?
3. What are their perceptions of interactions with Japanese native speaker teachers, students and visitors influencing their motivation to study Japanese?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research participants

This study is implemented on 68 students ranging from 2nd year to 4th year students of the Japanese Language Department, Hong Bang International University. They are all Japanese majors and agree to attend this research project. Before doing the survey and attending semi-structured interviews, they are all informed about the purpose of their participation and aware that the research result will serve for improving the curriculum, which would result in positive modification to the current curriculum. There are 3 classes with each of them consisting of approximately 30 students. K19 (senior) 25 students, K20 (junior) 32 students and K21 (sophomore) 30 students. They all started their learning at HIU at a comparatively lower entry level but with various learning motivations.

3.2. Research instruments

The data for this research study was gathered from a survey of 46 questions covering 6 categories ranging from conveying participant's general information with 10 questions, instrumental motivation 7 questions, integrative motivation 5

questions, interaction with native speaker teachers 6 questions, with native speaker students 7 questions, with native speaker students online 7 questions, with native speaker visitor 4 questions. The questionnaire utilized a five-point Likert scale with responses set on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the first section of the questionnaire, 10 questions focused on general information about the participant and if they are interested in interacting with native speakers using the Japanese language. The second section concentrated on instrumental motivation while the third one on integrative motivation. The next section goes into details about whether students enjoyed past interactions with native speaker teachers, students, visitors, and even online native speaker students. Through the questions, the research study is supposed to know more about the expectations and concerns students have for interactions with native speakers. The result promises to bring to teachers and administrators a lot of pedagogical and administrative discussions for the sake of student's benefits from interacting with native speakers.

3.3. Data analysis

SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyze the data in this research. In the first place, sample responses were coded as numerical data. In particular, "strongly agree" is named as 5, "strongly disagree" numbered as 1, with 4, 3, 2 in the middle. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean and standard deviation of the participant selections. The closer the response means are to 1, the lower the student's agreement with the statement. As a result, respondents with a mean of 3.68 or higher were categorized as high-motivation learners while between 2.34 & 3.67 as medium-motivation learners and finally between 1 to 2.33 as low-motivation ones. Eventually, based on the research findings the author formed a conclusion and offered some recommendations for changes in curriculum as well as teaching methodology so that they can bring to students the most motivations for their learning Japanese better.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Research findings from survey

4.1.1. Student's image and initial motivation and interest in learning Japanese in the first place

More females than male students participate in

the survey. They are majoring in Japanese Language Studies and have a definite strong passion for communicating with Japanese people, ranging from their own teacher, students and visitors. Almost 100% of their responses to the question if they like to interact with native speakers is yes. The reasons for their aspiration for communicating with Japanese people range from their very preliminary need for practicing pronunciation with native speakers, learning new things from their counterparts to getting to know more about each other and upgrading knowledge. I am surprised to find out that their desire in learning Japanese comes from within themselves rather than the outside world. Particularly, I find it very astonishing to learn that they mostly state their learning motivation

comes from the surroundings and their own ability rather than from their teacher.

4.1.2. HIUJLLs' instrumental motivation in language learning

The result shows that students have quite high instrumental motivation for learning Japanese, with an average mean score of 4.09. It is obvious that students think very practically about their study at the university. For them, to study well means to promise a good certification from the society as well as an easier way to find a highly paying job. For them, to be admired with good Japanese knowledge or to please teachers and compete with classmates is not that important, though quite many of them admit that they would like to please their parents about their study result.

Table 1. HIUJLLs reveal their instrumental motivation

No.	Statements	N = 68		Motivation level
		M	SD	
Item 1	Study Japanese well to graduate	4.78	0.41	High
Item 2	Study Japanese well to easily find a good job with high pay.	4.61	0.42	High
Item 3	Speaking Japanese well can make people admire me.	3.65	0.88	Medium
Item 4	Using Japanese well makes people highly evaluate me as an erudite.	4.14	0.92	High
Item 5	I must study Japanese well to meet my family's expectations.	4.05	0.86	High
Item 6	I must study Japanese well to please my teachers.	3.68	0.89	Medium
Item 7	I don't want to be inferior to my classmates.	3.78	0.90	Medium
	Overall	4.09	0.75	High

4.1.3. HIUJLLs' integrative motivation in language learning

The respondents had a very high level of integrative motivation for Japanese learning with a total mean score of 4.77. They were stimulated by the capability of introducing Vietnamese culture to Japanese people. Also, they affirm that a

high ability in Japanese enables them to explore Japanese culture, communicate with native speakers and comfortably join interactive activities with native speakers. Besides, they do not forget to confirm that a high capability in Japanese enables them to enjoy manga, Japanese music and films.

Table 2. HIUJLLs show their integrative motivation

No	Statements	N = 68		Motivation level
		M	SD	
Item 1	Fluency in Japanese enables me to introduce Vietnamese culture to Japanese people.	4.68	0.74	High
Item 2	Fluency in Japanese enables me to explore Japanese culture	4.80	0.88	High
Item 3	Competent in Japanese makes me communicate with native speakers more easily	4.89	0.41	High
Item 4	Being good at Japanese makes me join interactive activities with native speakers more easily	4.90	0.38	High
Item 5	Being fluent in Japanese makes me enjoy manga, Japanese music and films more comfortably	4.60	0.48	High
	Overall	4.77	0.57	High

4.1.4. HIUJLLs' motivation in interacting with native speaker teachers

Students share their positive experiences learning with Japanese teachers (N=4.87). For them, a teacher's positive attitude, active learning environment and effective teaching methodology would result in the success of learning with Japanese teachers. If that is the case then it would turn in their higher motivation to learn Japanese more at home such as improving their vocabulary, kanji and grammar and encouraging them to read newspapers, watch movies and do homework assignments in Japanese more.

4.1.5. HIUJLLs' motivation in interacting with native speakers students

Like interacting with native Japanese teachers, communicating and learning with Japanese students through exchange programs bring students with a lot of opportunities to improve their Japanese language proficiency as Vietnamese students highly evaluate that Japanese friends are very friendly and positive in teaching them Japanese (N=4.39). As a consequently, they state in the survey that they would like to have more interactions with Japanese students and that they should be in a long-term exchange program so that they can have more communications both inside and outside of the classroom. However, from the

result table we can also see that students still feel that their lack of Japanese proficiency also interferes with their success interacting with Japanese native students. They said that the more they have time for each other the more they can get to know each other better and that would lead to their more interest in learning from each other and become a great motivation for their learning Japanese.

4.1.6. HIUJLLs' motivation in interacting with native speakers students via online approach

Students show their hesitations in communicating with Japanese students online as Internet connection plays an essential role in determining its success (N=3.47). From their past experiences, internet connectivity got lost too often that intervened into smoothness of their interactions. Although they still highly evaluate such interactions with Japanese friends positively and describe that their Japanese counterparts are so nice, a frequent loss in internet connectivity as well as a lack of structured program of interaction often result in positive feedback from those who can interact well with Japanese students while negative one from those left behind. As a result, they recommend that interesting topics with good preparation together with smooth internet connectivity would determine its success.

4.1.7. HIUJLLs' motivation in interacting with speaker visitors

There are always extra-curricular activities organized for students to learn more about Japanese culture such as music cultural festivals and community service events or professional skills workshops from Japanese experts. Through those events students have opportunities to interact with Japanese people and they like them very much. Therefore, students express in the survey that they really like to be able to attend such events as they are really interesting and they contribute to motivational factors inspiring them to learn Japanese even more (N=4.68).

4.2. Research findings through semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews are held in classes of sophomore, junior and senior students as they learnt with Japanese teachers in the past, while freshmen did not have the chance to do so. They are organized into different groups of 4-5 students. It takes about 10-15 minutes for the interview to be recorded.

Many of them share that they started to learn Japanese either by chance such as Japanese is a compulsory subject at high school; they got a chance to visit Japan when they were young or they heard someone say about Japan with good qualities or they are motivated by their family to learn this language instead of other ones.

Most students share their positive experiences learning with different Japanese teachers. They highly evaluate the experience as it is a great opportunity for them to improve their pronunciation. Also, as shared when learning Japanese teachers, they need to focus more on the lesson to comprehend the lesson. Besides, depending on the teacher's teaching method and class atmosphere, they might have various experiences in learning quality as some teachers speak too fast while others might have less interesting interactive activities.

They particularly show their high interest in learning Japanese with native students as they said they are the same age, share a lot of common hobbies so that they can easily communicate with each other without being afraid of getting judged or age gap. Because of those positive experiences they recommend having longer interactions with Japanese students. Also, affirm that outing activities with Japanese students are as important

as classroom ones as they are encouraged to learn more vocabulary, more communication in the open air and they are not pressured or constrained with topics fixed by teachers.

4.3. Discussion and pedagogical implications

According to Gardner and Lampert [12], motivation and learner's orientation towards language learning objectives are a high level of motivation, which means visible learning purposes together with cognitive processes can energize learner's self-determination, which leads to enhanced performance in language study.

Research study findings show HIUJLLs are motivated both instrumentally and integratively, but integrative motivation was more prevalent. In other words, they are more concerned with being exposed to more interactions with native speakers so that they can have opportunities to communicate their interests as well as get to know more and more about Japanese people and culture which is even more significant for them than pass an exam, attain a university degree or find a good job with high pay in the future.

Gardner and Lampert integrative motivation inspire learners to intensify their attempts in acquiring a foreign language, leading to a greater commitment and a higher level of proficiency in target language. As a result, Domyei & Csizer [13] offers 10 principles in "Ten Commandments for motivating language learners" (p.215) which recommends (1) setting a role model through the teacher's behavior; (2) fostering positive rapport with learners; (3) building a relaxing studying environment; (4) making the classroom interesting (5) properly presenting tasks (6) personalizing the teaching and learning process (7) increasing student's self-confidence in language (8) boosting student's orientation to the learning objectives; (9) encouraging their learning autonomy and (10) familiarizing students with a target culture.

HIUJLLs are very favorable interacting with native speaker teachers, students and visitors, which demonstrates very obviously through the study result of both semi-structured interview and the survey. With native speaker teachers, they show their highest motivation in interaction illustrated in a score of 4.87, an extremely high motivation. Therefore, it is the responsibility of school administrators to arrange qualified native speaker teachers in Japanese language teaching to students as a prerequisite. For students, a

dedicated, caring and friendly native speaker teacher would definitely support their learning efficiency. About native speaker students, they show their enthusiasm in interaction illustrated in a score of 4.39, a very high motivation. They show their high interest in communicating with native speaker students though indicating some concerns about their lack of language proficiency as well as effectiveness of lesson design might determine the success of the interaction.

Regarding online interaction with native speaker students, they show worries and concerns about smoothness of internet connection as well as their language proficiency might interfere with the success of interaction. Therefore, it is the administrator and teachers who should take into consideration all these factors if they think of holding exchange programs online for student interaction. Finally, as students give a very high score of 4.68, high motivation in interacting with visitors, we can be alerted that extra-curricular activities are essential to student's growth in Japanese language use and acquisition.

5. CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to clarify the concept of motivation in Japanese language learning of HIU students. It helps to recognize the reason why students decide to join the Japanese language program at HIU and if what they considered as their initial motivation at the beginning of their Japanese learning process still prevails and develops through time or already collapses and disappears for reasons. With findings about their integrative motivation, instrumental motivation as well as their expressions and concerns about their past interactions with native speaker teachers, students and visitors with even online interactive approach, administrator and teachers at HIU can promote motivation in Japanese learning in their students to, in turn, enhance their language study performance and help them develop to their utmost potential of learning Japanese at HIU. With these research findings, HIU administrators and teachers will be more confident at adjusting curriculum, holding extra-curricular activities and engaging more native speaker teachers, students and visitors both online and offline in interactions with HIUJLLs.

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Động lực học tiếng Nhật thông qua các hoạt động tương tác với người bản ngữ: Một trường hợp nghiên cứu

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TÓM TẮT

Bài nghiên cứu phân tích các khía cạnh tâm lý xã hội của sinh viên ngành Nhật Bản học, Trường Đại học Quốc tế Hồng Bàng. Bảng câu hỏi và phỏng vấn sâu được thực hiện trên 68 sinh viên từ năm hai đến năm tư ở tất cả các cấp độ từ sơ cấp đến cao cấp. Ngoài ra, phương pháp thống kê nghiên cứu ngành Khoa học Xã hội (SPSS) được áp dụng để phân tích số liệu thu thập được từ hoạt động nghiên cứu nhằm tính ra tỷ lệ phân số, số phần trăm và độ lệch chuẩn thống kê. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy hầu hết người tham gia trả lời cực kì thích được tương tác với người bản ngữ, cả giáo viên và sinh viên bản ngữ. Hơn nữa, sinh viên cũng khẳng định việc học ngoại ngữ với người bản ngữ nếu được thiết kế bài bản chắc chắn sẽ mang đến nhiều động lực và đam mê với việc học tiếng Nhật của các em hơn. Vì thế, bài viết đưa ra một số đề nghị nhằm mang đến môi trường học tập tiếng Nhật với người bản ngữ thật hiệu quả sao cho sinh viên có thể tương tác học tập tiếng Nhật với người bản ngữ lâu dài.

Từ khóa: động lực học tiếng Nhật, tương tác lâu dài, thiết kế bài bản

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