Survey results: Learning about language learners' learning styles

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Reference data:

The author has taught various English courses at university in Japan, and continues to avidly gather research data. This poster presentation shows the results of his students' motivation and pedagogical activity preferences (N=64). Motivation survey results determined if a student is intrinsically or extrinsically motivated. A pedagogical methodologies questionnaire determined which activities they preferred. The results were analyzed and reveal intriguing trends between a student's motivation to learn English and their preferred pedagogical methods. The results are discussed. The author hopes that this information can aid educators to teach language courses that take advantage of students' specific learning activity preferences.

　著者は日本で大学でいろいろな英国のコースを教えて、熱心に研究データを集め続けます。このポスタープレゼンテーションは、彼の学生の動機づけと教育学的活動設定 (N=64) の結果を示します。動機づけ調査結果は、学生が本質的にまたは付帯的に動機を与えられるかどうか決定しました。教育学的方法論アンケートは、彼らがどの活動を好むかについて決定しました。結果は分析されて、英語と彼らの好ましい教育学的方法を学ぶために、学生の動機づけの間で興味をそそる傾向を明らかにします。結果は議論されます。著者は、この情報が教育者が学生の特定の学習活動設定を利用する言語コースを教えるのを手伝うことができることを望みます。

Literature review

Motivation

Gardner & Lambert's (1959) motivation model has integrative and instrumental types for students in a Canadian English as a Second Language (ESL) environment. Ur (1996) however, proposes a theory of motivation for English as a Foreign Language (EFL). She defines integrative motivation as intrinsic and instrumental motivation as extrinsic. Intrinsically motivated learners are "willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress" (Ur, 1996, p. 175) where extrinsically motivated learners are engaged in the activities due to "the influence of some kind of external incentive" (Ur, 1996 p. 277) – the desire to please

significant others such as parents, teachers, and friends, or to do well on as the TOEFL and/or TOEIC tests.

There are differences amongst various theories of second language learner motivation (e.g., Dornyei, 1994a, 1994b; Gardner and Tremblay, 1994; Oxford, 1994; Oxford and Shearin, 1994). However, Dornyei (2001b) offers Ten Commandments to L2 teachers for motivating language learners. These are:

1. Set a personal example with your own behavior.

2. Create a pleasant, relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

3. Present tasks properly.

4. Develop a good relationship with your students.

5. Increase your students' linguistic self-confidence.

6. Make the language classes interesting.

7. Promote learner autonomy.

8. Personalize the learning process.

9. Increase the learner's goal-orientedness.

10. Familiarize learners with the target language culture.

Noels, Clement, Pelletier, and Vallerand (2003) introduced a theoretical framework of motivation based on Deci and Ryan's Self-Determination Theory (SDT). In SDT, motivation is: intrinsic - based on interest in the activity itself; or extrinsic - based on rewards separate from the activity; and finally amotivation - lacking the intention to act (Deci and Ryan, 2002).

SDT theory attempts to "provide an account of the seemingly discrepant viewpoints characterized…by the humanistic, psychoanalytic, and developmental theories that employ an organismic metatheory on the one hand, and the behavioral, cognitive, and post-modern theories that do not" (Deci and Ryan, 2002, p. 5). By way of further explanation, the authors desire to provide a framework that integrates the tendencies of humans toward active engagement and development as well as the manifold indication of fragmentation and conditioned responses (Deci and Ryan, 2002). To sum up, people tend to do things because they themselves desire to engage in the activity for their own satisfaction, and also, at times, because they do so to satisfy an external stimuli/locus. SDT captures this discrepancy, tries to explain its foundation, and works toward a framework both from within which this can be explained while simultaneously providing a means to analyze the behaviors and/or motivations of the specific individuals.

Vallerand and Ratelle have proposed a hierarchical model of intrinsic motivation (IM), extrinsic motivation (EM) and amotivation. IM implies engaging in an activity for the pleasure and/or satisfaction of the activity itself. EM, in contrast to IM, refers to a wide range of behaviors that are engaged in for instrumental reasons. Therefore, extrinsically motivated behaviors are those done to attain an end state, separate from the actual activity. In amotivation, persons have neither a state of IM nor EM – an absence of any motivation (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002). However, according to Noels, et al., (2003) a conceptual impasse has been reached amongst the researchers regarding the various motivation theories.

According to Hidi & Harackiewicz (2000), interest has a powerful effect on cognitive functioning, and when the teacher gives the students choices (learner autonomy), interest is enhanced. Also, providing a variety of activities is considered one method of increasing/holding student interest. Furthermore, they state that one of the keys to maintaining student interest lies in finding ways to empower them by helping to find meaning or personal relevance.

English language learning in Japan is English as a foreign language (EFL). In this study, student motivation is examined based on a) whether the students are engaged in learning for their own sake – that is to say, purely intrinsic reasons, and/or b) they have an external goal or motivation locus – that is to say, purely extrinsic reasons, and/or c) only because they are forced to be in the learning context because English is a mandatory subject - amotivation, and/or d) a combination thereof.

The author created and administered both the motivation and classroom activities surveys prior to reading about SDT and the work of its creators or professors Vallerand and Ratelle. It is hoped that the research results presented herein will be useful to understanding IM and EM in an EFL setting. As has been noted, "These types of motivation are not categorically different…but rather lie along a continuum of self-determination" (Noels, et al., 2003).

It appears that the experts in the field may never come to an agreement on a single theory, leaving the door open for further inquiry. Therefore, since English language learning in Japan is an EFL context, this study seeks to determine if student motivation is based on a) students learning for their own sake, b) an external goal or motivation locus, c) only because English is a mandatory subject - amotivation, or d) a combination thereof.

Classroom activities

Recently, task-based English language instruction has been written about extensively.

Willis describes task-based activities as "activities where the target language is used by the learner for a communicative purpose in order to achieve an outcome" (Willis, 1996, p. 23). She further defines them under various categories such as listing, ordering/sorting, comparing, problem solving, sharing personal experiences, and creative tasks (Willis, 1996, pp. 23-29). In addition, Dornyei (2003) has written that

> tasks are the building blocks of classroom learning. Furthermore, L2 motivation can hardly be examined in a more situated manner than within a task-based framework. Recognizing the significance of tasks in shaping learners' interest and enthusiasm coincides with teachers' perceptions: the quality of the activities used and the way they are presented makes a difference in students' attitudes toward learning. Therefore, the study of task motivation is in line with the current shift toward communicative, task-based English instruction.

In EFL research, communicative and task-based activities have been contrasted with traditional activities such as grammar exercises. An investigation for relationships between learners' opinions on their usefulness and

effectiveness compared with the opinions of an educator were reported (Burden, 2005, p. 6). Finally, research by Martin, et al (2005) has shown student preference for an Event-Driven Curriculum in which they pursue English for the purpose of performing in an event such as a speech contest, presentation, or culture festival.

Survey design

Constructing a substantive scale remains difficult and requires a lot of time (Ockert, 2005). Writing successful attitude statements requires careful piloting, experience, a little intuition and even some flair (from Dornyei, 2001, p. 203). In order to develop these surveys, the author read several used by Dornyei, Clement et al., Dornyei et al., (Dornyei, 2001, pp. 260-269). In addition, Gardner and Tremblay stated survey items should be appropriate to the situation in which the study is being conducted and researchers should not simply take items and administer them unthinkingly in just any context (Dornyei, 2001).

Deciding how to measure learners' attitudes toward various pedagogical activities may appear simple, but in fact constructing a valid and reliable instrument remains challenging (Griffee, 1999). Therefore, when choosing questionnaire statements for surveys, Stone (2003) proposes the following guidelines:

1. Avoid factual statements.

2. Do not mix past and present. Present is preferred.

3. Avoid ambiguity.

4. Do not ask questions that everyone will endorse.

5. Keep wording clear and simple.

6. Keep statements short and similar in length.

7. Express only one concept in each item.

8. Avoid compound sentences.

9. Assure that reading difficulty is appropriate.

10. Do not use double negatives.

11. Do not use "and" or "or" or lists of instances. (p. 288)

In addition, these surveys were designed with Japanese learners' cultural situation and educational goals in mind. For example, many Japanese students study to take the TOEIC and/or TOEFL tests, so questions regarding these exams were included on the survey.

Research questions and hypotheses

First, how are students motivated? Second, what are their activity preferences? For example, do they prefer to work in small groups or teams first, followed by pair work, and individual work? Do learners prefer activities in which they are actually engaged in using the language for a practical purpose? Based on these questions, the author proposed the following three hypotheses:

1. Students will have different motivational orientations for learning English.

2. Students of different orientations will prefer different pedagogical methodologies.

3. The preferred methodologies will be in the following

order: group, pair work, and individual work, with slight variations as a result of the survey choices.

Methods
Students

All of the participants were members of the authors' required Communication I course. They are all in the Sciences and Engineering Department in a private Japanese university. Approximately 95% of the respondents were male and 5% female. Therefore, gender was not taken into account in the analysis of the data.

Instrumentation

Two surveys were created. First, a survey to measure student motivation to learn English; and second, a pedagogical methodologies survey with twelve activities with two sub-sections. The first lists six traditional activities followed by six communicative/task-based activities.

Cronbach alpha confirmed the validity of the motivation instrument as a whole (.88) and the sub-sections (.84 and .82 respectively). (Please see Appendices A and B)

The survey was piloted with three male and three female students, each of whom stated that they understood the survey in English and had no problems with comprehending the questions and statements on the survey, except for activity question number 11, which was then reworded and comprehensible to them.

Procedures

The data were collected with paper surveys in the authors' Communication classes. The surveys were in English, the same as in the appendices. There was no incentive to participate; nor negative repercussions for not participating. All students were seated at tables in a quiet classroom atmosphere. Students were free to ask questions before and during the survey if necessary.

Analysis

Factor analysis was conducted with the Statistics for the Social Sciences software package (SPSSv.13) to determine for the motivation survey factor groups and also to calculate the factor scores for each student. These numbers were then used to determine how many students were in each factor group. The Likert scale results were analyzed using Microsoft Excel to calculate the mean score for the results of the pedagogical activities survey by following the steps given in Brown's book on survey use in language programs (2001, pp. 119-120).

Results and discussion
Factor analysis results

Table 1 shows the factor analysis results for the motivation survey in five groups. Work (extrinsic), Leisure (intrinsic), Praise (intrinsic/extrinsic), Fun (intrinsic), and Tests (extrinsic). Clearly most students in this study are studying English for future work related reasons and because they must.

Likert scale analysis results

Table 2 shows the factor groups at the top with the number of students in each group. The activities are listed on the left side in the order they appear on the survey. As hypothesized, the groups formed based on either the communicative/task-based and traditional activity variables.

Table 1. Factor groups of the motivation survey results

Factor Group Names Motivation Survey Variables	Work n=45	Tests n=4	Praise n=8	Fun n=1	Leisure n=6
6. Language learning often gives me a feeling of success.	0.77				
7. I study English because being able to use English is important to me.	0.75				
13. In the future, English will be helpful/ useful to me.	0.65				
5. Language learning often makes me happy.	0.53				
14. English is important to me because I might need it later for my job, etc.	0.53				
12. I study English because I want to do well on the TOEFL test.		0.91			
11. I study English because I want to do well on the TOEIC test.		0.88			
9. I study English because it will make my teacher proud of me/ praise me.			0.78		
10. I study English because it will make my parents proud of me/ praise me.			0.67		
2. English is important to me because I want to make friends with foreigners.			0.59		
15. I study English because all educated people can use English.			0.58		
16. I study English because I must study English (amotivation?).				-0.8	
1. I enjoy studying English.				0.54	
3. English is important to me because I want to study overseas.				0.48	
8. English is important to me because I like English movies or songs.					0.74
4. English is important to me because I want to read books in English.					0.55

Conclusions

There are several implications: first, most students prefer to move around and work in groups, followed by pair work and then info-seek and listening activities; second, the least liked activity of all factor groups was grammar drills and practice. This may indicate that by the time Japanese students have

Table 2. Factor groups and pedagogical activities

Group / Activity	Work n = 45	Leisure n = 4	Praise n = 8	Fun n = 1	Tests n = 6
lecture	3.3	3	3.8	4	3.7
listening	3.5	3.3	3.3	3	3.3
dialogue	3.4	3	3.1	3	3.3
writing	3.2	3	3.4	3	3.2
translate	3.3	3.5	3	3	3.3
grammar	2.8	2.5	2.6	3	3.2
group	3.9	4.3	4.1	4	4.3
info-seek	3.5	2.8	3.1	3	3.3
problem	3.4	3.3	3.5	4	3.3
moving	4	3	3.8	4	3.2
intellect	3.4	3	3.8	4	3.2
pair work	3.4	4	3	4	4

The number 1 choice is yellow; number 2 is light blue; number 3 is green and the lowest is in red. For the Fun student, the third and last choices are orange.

entered university, they are bored with traditional teaching methods and are interested in more engaging methodologies. In the author's opinion, the results demonstrate that students are more interested in living the language and learning by using English in meaningful classroom activities rather than studying it merely because it is a required course. Classroom teachers can also benefit by analyzing their students' inherent learning style preferences at the beginning of a term and attempting to tailor their lessons accordingly.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix A

The motivation survey

What is your attitude toward learning English?

Please circle the number of the answer that best matches your opinion:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree

1. I enjoy studying English.	1	2	3	4	5
2. English is important to me because I want to make friends with foreigners.	1	2	3	4	5
3. English is important to me because I want to study overseas.	1	2	3	4	5
4. English is important to me because I want to read books in English.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Language learning often makes me happy.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Language learning often gives me a feeling of success.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I study English because being able to use English is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5
8. English is important to me because I like English movies or songs.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I study English because it will make my teacher proud of me/ praise me.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I study English because it will make my parents proud of me/ praise me.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I study English because I want to do well on the TOEIC test.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I study English because I want to do well on the TOEFL test.	1	2	3	4	5
13. In the future, English will be helpful/ useful to me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. English is important to me because I might need it later for my job, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I study English because all educated people can use English.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I study English because I must study English.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

The pedagogical activities survey

Your name _____   Class number _____   Your major _____

What classroom activities do you enjoy or find motivating?

Step 1: Circle the number on the right that best matches your opinion.

1 = strongly dislike, 2 = dislike, 3 = neutral, 4 = like, 5 = strongly like

1. lecture (listen to the teacher and stay in my seat)	1	2	3	4	5
2. listening exercises	1	2	3	4	5
3. dialogue / reading practice from the text	1	2	3	4	5
4. writing exercises	1	2	3	4	5
5. translation exercises	1	2	3	4	5
6. grammar drills/ practice	1	2	3	4	5
7. small-group / team activities	1	2	3	4	5
8. info-seek / finding information activities	1	2	3	4	5
9. problem-solving activities	1	2	3	4	5
10. activities where I am moving around the room	1	2	3	4	5
11. tasks that are intellectually challenging	1	2	3	4	5
12. pair-work	1	2	3	4	5