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Relationships between Motivation for Learning English and Foreign Language Anxiety: A Pilot Study

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Several studies have investigated motivation and language anxiety, but there have been few studies on the direct relationship between the two. To determine which types of motivation best predict the students' foreign language anxiety, this study investigated the relationship between motivation for learning English and foreign language anxiety among Japanese university students. The results revealed that students who have practical reasons to study English and intellectual satisfaction tended to have lower levels of foreign language anxiety. Thus, this study suggests that instructors should a) be demonstrating how English structure, vocabulary, etc. that students are learning are useful for their life and b) design classes in which students can find intellectual satisfaction.

いくつかの研究が動機と言語不安を同時に調査しているが、その2つの関係を直接に調べている研究は今までほとんど行われていない。ゆえに、本研究ではどの動機のタイプが学生の外国語不安に最も影響を与えるのかを調べるため、日本の大学生の英語学習に対する動機と外国語不安の関係を調査した。その結果、英語学習に対する実用的な理由や知的満足を感じている学生は外国語不安が低い傾向にあることが明らかになった。それゆえ、本研究では英語教員は学生が学んでいる英語の構文や語彙がどのように彼らの実生活で役に立つかを示し、学生が知的満足を得ることができるような授業を行うことが必要であることを示唆している。

Introduction

Motivation, “the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained” (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002, p. 5), is one of the keys that influence the rate and success of language learning (Dörnyei, 1998). Virtually all language teachers want to motivate their students to study languages. Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope (1986) defined anxiety as a “subjective feeling of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry” (p.125). A number of language teachers have been concerned about the possibility that anxiety may prevent learners from achieving a high level of proficiency in foreign languages (Aida, 1994). While some studies (e.g., Brown, Robson, & Rosenkjar, 2001; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, & Mihic, 2004) have investigated motivation and language anxiety, there have been few studies on the direct relationship between the two.

Questions to explore include:

- Do students who are strongly motivated tend to feel less anxiety?
- What is the relationship between motivation and foreign language anxiety?
- Which types of motivation best predict the students’ foreign language anxiety?

To date, there appears to be little research directly associated with these questions in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL). Thus, this study investigated the relationship between motivation for learning EFL and foreign language anxiety among Japanese university students.

Motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggested two kinds of motivation: *integrative motivation*, referring to positive attitudes and feelings toward the target language group, and *instrumental motivation*, referring to the potential utilitarian gains of second language

(L2) proficiency, such as getting a better job or higher salary. According to Gardner (1985), integrative motivation was positively related to achievement in language proficiency. Some researchers, however, have raised questions about Gardner's claims (e.g., Svanes, 1987). According to Svanes, European and American students were considered integratively motivated at university in Norway, whereas the Middle Eastern, African and Asian students were considered instrumentally motivated. Svanes concluded that the types of motivation were related to the background of the students.

Furthermore, some researchers (e.g., Dörnyei, 1990) have argued that differences in contexts between second language acquisition (SLA) and foreign language learning (FLL) are significant. Dörnyei attempted to conceptualize motivation in a typical European FLL context. Because learners in FLL had not had enough contact with the target language group, integrative motivation was determined by more general attitudes and beliefs, that is, an interest in foreign languages and people; the cultural and intellectual values of the target language; and new stimuli through learning and using the target language (Dörnyei, 1990).

In Japan, several researchers (e.g., Kimura, Nakata & Okumura, 2001; Kubo, 1997) have revealed some motivational factors for learning EFL among Japanese university students. Kimura et al. (2001) investigated 1,027 Japanese EFL students from various backgrounds. Kubo (1997) developed a scale of university students' motivation for learning EFL, collecting data from Japanese learners of English.

Anxiety

Foreign language anxiety is becoming important in SLA. Horwitz et al. (1986) developed the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS), which consists of 33 items reflecting communication apprehension, test-anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation in the foreign language classroom. Many studies on foreign language anxiety

(e.g., Aida, 1994; Macintyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997) have been conducted around the world. A review of the literature has shown that foreign language anxiety is negatively related to foreign language learning (e.g., Aida, 1994) and to student self-ratings of second language proficiency (Macintyre, Noels, & Clément, 1997). Several studies (e.g., Brown et al., 2001; Gardner, et al., 2004) have simultaneously investigated motivation and language anxiety. Few studies, however, are available on the direct relationship between motivation and anxiety.

In Japan, several researchers (e.g., Kondo & Yang, 2003; Matsuda & Gobel, 2001) have conducted studies on foreign language anxiety. Kondo and Yang developed a scale based on open-ended questionnaires administered to 148 university students. They found three factors relating to anxiety in English language classrooms in Japan: anxiety about (a) low proficiency in English; (b) evaluation from classmates; and (c) speaking activities. On the other hand, Matsuda and Gobel investigated the possible link between foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) and foreign language reading anxiety (FLRA) among Japanese university students. They found that FLCA and FLRA are clearly independent constructs.

Purpose of the Study

There appears to be little research directly associated with the relationship between motivation and language anxiety in the EFL context. This study was designed to identify a combination of motivation and foreign language anxiety among Japanese university students. Thus, it reintroduces the two scales developed by Japanese researchers: the motivational scale by Kubo (1997); and anxiety scale by Kondo & Yang (2003). The investigation of the relationship between motivation and anxiety was at the heart of this study. It is hoped that specific motivation for learning EFL that might be correlated with foreign language anxiety would be identified. The following research question is addressed: Which variables of motivation best predict students' foreign

language anxiety?

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 91 sophomores majoring in English at a women's private college in Japan. They enrolled in an English language course as a required subject. Their ages ranged from 19 to 21. These students had broadly similar learning experience in that none of them had spent over six months in an English speaking country. The range of their TOEIC score was between the 400s and 700s.

Materials

The instruments used in this study were two questionnaires on motivation for learning EFL (Kubo, 1997) and foreign language anxiety (Kondo & Yang, 2003). The participants responded to 22 motivation items and 18 anxiety items during regular classes. A set of questionnaires with motivational measures and anxiety scales was administered at the end of the second semester. Responses to items on both questionnaires were recorded on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly agree" (4) to "strongly disagree" (1). Both questionnaires, written in Japanese, were developed based on open-ended questionnaires administered to Japanese university students, which may reflect psychological states of Japanese university students.

Motivation

Kubo (1997) developed a 22-item, based on self-reporting Motivation Scales created by Ichikawa, who developed the questionnaire for Japanese high school students. Kubo administered the questionnaire to 434 Japanese university students and found two factors: fulfillment-training and self-esteem-reward orientations.

Fulfillment-training orientation means that individuals can feel fulfilled or train their brain by studying English. The sample questions of fulfillment-training orientation

include: *I cannot feel fulfilled if I do not study English and I can get knowledge and skills about language if I study English.* Self-esteem-reward orientation means that individuals can feel superior to others or live a rich lifestyle if they have higher English proficiency. The sample items of self-esteem-reward orientation included: *I can feel superior to others if I have higher English proficiency and I can live a rich lifestyle if I have some qualifications in English.* Kubo (1997) conducted validity and reliability studies that have shown the scale to be both reliable and valid. According to Kubo, reliability was established via an alpha coefficient of fulfillment-training orientation (.86) and self-esteem-reward orientation (.84), and a four-week test-retest coefficient of fulfillment-training orientation (.76) and self-esteem-reward orientation (.66). Validity was established via significant correlation with the amount of time spent in studying English and the scores on the Concept of Learning Scale by Horino et al, the Achievement Motivation Scale by Horino & Mori, and the Self-consciousness Scale by Sugawara (see Kubo, 1997).

Anxiety

Anxiety was measured by the questionnaire developed by Kondo & Yang (2003) with an 18-item questionnaire. Sample questions included: *I am anxious whether I can follow the class. I am afraid that classmates will laugh at my English. I am afraid that my English levels are lower than others'. I am afraid that other students consider my English to be bad.*

Reliability was established via an alpha coefficient of .92 (Kondo & Yang, 2003). Furthermore, test-retest reliability over eight weeks yielded an $r = .85$. Validity has been established via significant correlation with Leary's International Anxiousness Scale and with Shioya's scale of cognitive appraisals of English learning skills and costs.

Results

This study investigated the relationship between motivation for learning EFL and anxiety. The response rate was 100%. The returned questionnaires were coded, and the collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program. The data collected from the questionnaire developed by Kubo (1997) were factor analyzed using varimax rotation. The scores for the items loading highest on each factor were added up to create the variables. For example, items 13,12,20,16, and 4 were loaded on Factor 1 (see Table 1). The scores of these items were summed to form a subscale, Self-esteem.

A multiple regression analysis was used to determine the unique contribution of motivation to foreign language anxiety. Multiple regression is a statistical method in which scores on one or more variables (independent variable) are used to predict scores on another variable (dependent variable). In the present study, the English learning motivation factors were used as independent variables, and foreign language anxiety (total score) was used as the dependent variable

Motivation

The 22 items in Kubo (1997) were subjected to factor analysis. Item 10 was eliminated because it loaded highly on two factors. The remaining 21 items were again factor analyzed. The results of factors loading, the correlation between a variable and a factor, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Summary of Factor Loadings for Varimax Orthogonal Six-Factor Solution for the Motivational Questionnaire (N =91)

Item	Factor loading					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I can feel superior to others if I have high English proficiency.	.80	.16	.12	.01	.12	-.05
12. If I have lower English proficiency than others, I am embarrassed.	.77	.21	.02	.14	.00	.24
20. If I do not have English qualification, I cannot find a good job.	.75	.17	-.11	.04	.12	.06
16. It is nothing special that we have high English proficiency.	.74	.06	.21	.25	.22	.13
4. Everybody studies English, so I study, too.	.71	.12	-.25	-.13	.19	.23
11. I can live a rich lifestyle if I have some qualifications in English.	.08	.83	.01	.11	.07	.07
14. English is useful in real life.	.22	.79	.14	.03	.08	.20
21. I want to feel happy to learn new knowledge and skills.	.35	.71	-.11	-.05	.11	.13
18. If we study English when we need it, it's too late.	.11	.56	-.01	.34	.07	.49
6. I study English because I want to know new things.	-.19	-.07	.75	.20	.10	.23
5. I can get knowledge and skills about language if I study English.	.05	.04	.73	-.01	.02	.05
22. If I have English qualification, I will gain a profit in society.	.31	.31	.65	.09	.11	-.09
2. Studying English may be not useful in my current life, but it is fun.	-.12	-.13	.55	.30	.18	.04
1. I can make friends in English schools, so I study English	.11	-.03	.11	.84	.08	.24
3. I can make friends with foreigners if I can	.04	.15	.18	.83	.13	-.12

speak English.

15. If I have high English proficiency, others think I am cool.	.10	.31	.21	.47	.10	.34
7. If I don't study English, I can't think things from various perspectives.	.09	.11	.01	.09	.85	.16
9. I cannot feel fulfilled if I do not study English.	.33	.13	.11	.00	.71	-.02
8. I study English in order to think things from various perspectives.	.14	.03	.29	.30	.67	.09
19. Other persons study English, so I study.	.14	.14	.13	-.01	.30	.77
17. If I do not study English, I will have trouble finding a job in the future	.22	.22	.08	.15	-.05	.76

Note. Boldface indicates highest factor loadings.

As can be seen in Table 1, Factor 1 receives appreciable loadings from five variables, most of which were concerned with self-esteem, e.g., *I can feel superior to others if I have high English proficiency*. Factor 1 was therefore called Self-esteem. Factor 2 receives loadings from four variables. The three variables relate learning English for practical reasons, e.g., *Learning English is useful in my current life*. The other is related to intellectual satisfaction. Thus, Factor 2 is named Practical Reasons and Intellectual Satisfaction. Factor 3 obtains appreciable loadings from four variables, three of which concern intrinsic motivation e.g., *I study English because I want to know new things*, although item 22 is related to the utility of English certification in the society. Factor 3 is therefore labeled Intrinsic Motivation and English Certification. The three variables loading on Factor 4 are related to relationship with others, e.g., *I can make friends in English schools*. Thus, Factor 4 is called Relationship. The three items loading on Factor 5 are related to (a) thinking about things from various angles e.g., *If I do not study English, I cannot think about things from various perspectives* and (b) feeling fulfilled by studying English e.g., *I cannot feel fulfilled if I do not study English*. Thus, Factor 5 is labeled Thinking and Fulfillment. The items that load to Factor 6 indicate passive reasons to study English, e.g., *If I do not study English, I will have trouble*

finding a job in the future. Factor 6 is therefore called Passive Reasons.

The scores for the items loading highest on each factor were added up to create the six subscales. The Cronbach alpha index of internal consistency was acceptable for all subscales, varying between .66 and .86.

Anxiety

The overall scores from the questionnaire developed by Kondo & Yang (2003) were used as a subscale to measure strength of anxiety. The scale was subjected to a reliability assessment. The Cronbach alpha for the scale was found to be .93, which was very satisfactory.

Regression

The final analysis attempted to determine how well the six types of motivation would predict a students' strength of anxiety. Strength of anxiety was regressed on the six subscales using a simultaneous regression procedure. As Table 2 indicates, the practical reason and intellectual satisfaction subscale had a significant effect on anxiety. Practical reason and intellectual satisfaction was a negative predictor of strength of foreign language anxiety.

Table 2

Regression Analysis Summary for Motivational Variables Predicting Foreign Language Anxiety

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β
Self-esteem	0.11	.32	.04
Practical reasons and intellectual satisfaction	-3.40	.58	-.59*
Intrinsic motivation and English certification	0.49	.45	.11
Relationship	0.68	.65	.11
Thinking	-0.41	.60	-.07
Passive reasons	0.80	.51	.18

Note. $R^2 = .32$ ($N = 89, p < .01$). * $p < .05$.

Discussion

The regression model suggests that only one motivational variable -- namely, practical reasons and intellectual satisfaction -- was found to be associated with foreign language anxiety, providing weak support to the hypothesis of a relationship between motivation and foreign language anxiety. Students who have practical reasons and intellectual satisfaction tend to have lower levels of foreign language anxiety. That is, the findings indicate that practical reasons and intellectual satisfaction are important factors for reducing foreign language anxiety.

Several implications emerge from the findings of this study. In the first place, the findings revealed that students who have practical reasons are likely to have lower foreign language anxiety. Thus, for students who feel very anxious in English lessons, it is effective for instructors to provide practical reasons for learning English. For example, instructors should show how the English that students are learning, e.g., structure, vocabulary, etc. are useful for their life.

In the second place, the results showed that students who have intellectual satisfaction tend to have lower foreign language anxiety. We should therefore give classes and teaching materials in which students can find intellectual satisfaction.

The present study revealed important issues concerning motivation for learning EFL and foreign language anxiety among Japanese university students, but a few more limitations of the study and suggestions for future study need to be addressed. First, since this study was designed to probe the relationship between type of motivation and strength of anxiety for only one population of students, it is necessary to consider the generalizability of the present findings to other types of language students. Especially, several motivational studies focused on gender differences in EFL have been done, most of which have shown that girls were more motivated to learn languages than boys (e.g.,

Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006; Mori & Gobel, 2006). Thus, the participating students in the present study, who were all female, may influence the results.

Secondly, the data were collected only by questionnaires. Qualitative research, including classroom observations and interviews with students and teachers, can provide further layers of analysis. That is, qualitative studies might also provide more detailed insight as researchers seek to explain how learners' motivation would relate to foreign language anxiety.

Thirdly, the results of the current study suggest that foreign language anxiety is only related to a small extent to motivation, and then the low level of variance explained suggests that other variables play more important roles. In the future, it is necessary to explore other potential factors which would influence foreign language anxiety.

Fourthly, this study only investigated whether motivation would affect anxiety. Whether anxiety affects motivation or not, however, is an important issue, too. Future studies should explore a possible link between motivation and anxiety from different perspectives.

Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between motivation for EFL and foreign language anxiety. This study indicates that students who have practical reasons and intellectual satisfaction tend to have lower levels of foreign language anxiety. Although this study did not reveal strong correlations between motivation and foreign language anxiety, it would be unwise to conclude that motivation and foreign language anxiety do not interact. Further research is needed to explore possible links between motivation and foreign language anxiety.

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