

University of Southern Queensland

Faculty of Education

# An Examination of EFL Learning Motivation in Japanese Engineering Students

A Folio submitted by

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# Abstract

The studies contained in this folio sought to assess English as a foreign language (EFL) learning motivation in Japanese engineering students. While a great deal of research has been conducted into language learning motivation in recent years, little inquiry has explored the specific motivational characteristics of this population of learners. Due to the various challenges inherent in assessing a phenomenon as complex as language learning motivation, a folio was chosen due to its utility in providing multiple perspectives through the use of a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches. Of the four studies presented in this folio, the first two conducted (Elements 3 & 4) were exploratory in nature. Due to the dearth of empirical inquiry into the specific motivational characteristics of Japanese engineering students learning EFL, these studies represent foundational research as they sought to explore, establish, and examine some of the overall motivational characteristics of this segment of learners. The initial two studies conducted were approached from two distinct methodological paradigms. The study presented as Element 3 was conducted from a traditional quantitative perspective, measuring many of the established motivational variables that have come to be considered foundational in the field. The findings revealed significant variations across yearly cohorts in a number of variables, and an inconsistent motivational core in the learners, with participants expressing positive attitudes and desire toward English learning, but low motivational intensity. Participants across all cohorts were also demonstrated to have high instrumental and international orientations. The second exploratory study (Element 4) set out to evaluate and explore how and why EFL motivation changes in Japanese EFL learners over time. This study was qualitative in nature, assessing motivational change longitudinally over a two year period through semi-structured interviews. Results indicated that students experienced fluctuations in their EFL learning motivation both prior to, and during, university. These fluctuations were attributed to a variety of factors including variables within the learning environment, future career considerations, changing academic priorities, feelings of social-responsibility, outside activities, and variations in self-efficacy related to class difficulty. Drawing on the results of the first two exploratory studies, this folio's central study (Element 2) was designed to assess the impact of a single classroom environmental factor, instructional materials, on the EFL learning motivation of Japanese engineering students. This mixed-method study examined learners' motivational responses to two different genres of instructional materials (general communicative EFL materials, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) materials).

Data were collected using Keller's (2010) Instructional Materials Motivational Survey (IMMS), short post-class questionnaires, instructor observations, and semi-structured interviews. Data collected across these instruments indicated that learners preferred ESP materials due to their perceived relevance, appeal, necessity, and ease of use. Additionally, instructional materials' genre, characteristics, content and design features, as well as individual and group factors, contributed to a preference for ESP materials. Element 5 describes a study which used adapted instruments from the central study to evaluate a different set of materials and instructional design with the target segment of learners. Using a questionnaire consisting of a modified version of the IMMS and open-ended items, the study sought to evaluate learners' motivational response to an online extensive reading program. Results revealed positive endorsement of the four cognitive variables represented in the IMMS, as well as provided insight into learners' graded reader preferences. Combined, the four studies presented in this folio shed light on the specific EFL learning motivational characteristics of Japanese engineering students, and provide insight into the types of curricular choices that may contribute to more positive learning behaviours and attitudes that promote motivational engagement in the classroom.

# Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the ideas, experimental work, results, analysis, software and conclusions reported in this folio are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Michael P. Johnson

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Signature of Candidate

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Date

## ENDORSEMENT

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Signature of Supervisors

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Johnson, M.P. (2013). A longitudinal perspective on EFL learning motivation in Japanese engineering students. In M. Apple, D. DaSilva, & T. Fellner (Eds.), <i>Language learning motivation in Japan</i> (pp. 189-205). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.	

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