

*Motivation and demotivation over two years:  
A case study of English language learners in Japan*

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Abstract

This paper is about four Japanese university students majoring in international studies, who participated in a two-year study examining changes in their motivation. Using monthly interviews and a 29-item questionnaire on Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self system that was administered alongside each interview, the trajectories of learner motivation were investigated, based on both quantitative and qualitative data. First, changes in the participants' motivation were identified using quantitative data. Next, a variety of motivators and demotivators that learners experienced both inside and outside of their classrooms were analyzed using the qualitative data. With the data obtained, this study focuses on how four learners' language learning motivation and contexts adapt to each other, and how the dynamics of the four learners' motivation changes due to their learning experiences. Each learner was different in their trajectory of motivation and the kinds of motivators and demotivators that they experienced in their particular contexts. The four learners underwent unique motivators and demotivators, and reacted differently. While participants identified their ideal L2 selves, or ought-to L2 selves, these self-guides were not strengthened by their L2 experiences over time. Based on these findings, the importance of studying the rich experiences of language learners in motivation research is discussed.

*Keywords:* learning experience; L2 motivational self system; motivational trajectories

## 1. Introduction

Although teachers see students regularly in their classrooms, it may not be easy to understand each learner's motivation to study the target language of the class. Some learners appear to be motivated during the first weeks, while others do not seem to be so even from the beginning of the course. Then, towards the end of the course, teachers cannot tell which students may maintain motivation towards language learning after the course. Learners' motivation may be influenced by reasons why they are taking the class or by their friends, parents, or other people in their lives. Teachers may want to know what their students' motivation is or how they can grasp it while many researchers argue that studying the motivation of language learners is not a simple task. In the view of Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011), language learners' reasons for studying, their lengths of sustained study, and their intensity of study should be researched. While there are a handful of studies investigating large groups of learners (e.g., Yashima, Nishida, & Mizumoto, 2017; You, Dörnyei, & Csizér, 2016), there have been few studies tackling the complexity of language learning motivation focusing on the aspects of motivation – discussed Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011). In terms of why learners study English, how long they study, and how hard they study, there should indeed be a number of fluctuations. While cross-sectional studies can capture a snapshot of the learners' motivation, longitudinal studies of learners are also needed. This study serves to fill this research niche, following the experiences of four Japanese college students studying English in a Japanese college over two years.

## 2. Literature review

Dörnyei's (2005) L2 motivational self system has attracted the attention of many researchers. According to Boo, Dörnyei, and Ryan (2015), who reviewed a large set of journal articles and book chapters published between 2005 and 2014, the use of the L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) became very popular in 2011. Regarded as an integrative synthesis of several key constructs and theories in L2 motivational research, it consists of three principal constructs: the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience. Using this theoretical background, large survey studies were first conducted in Hungary (Csizér & Lukacs, 2010; Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Then, Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) conducted a comparative study in Japan, China, and Iran. Other researchers also conducted studies in Saudi Arabia (Al-Shehri, 2009), Sweden (Henry, 2009, 2010), Indonesia (Lamb, 2012), and Germany (Busse, 2013).

While many small case studies on motivation were conducted focusing on the ideal L2 self or the ought-to L2 self, which work as participants' self-guides

in language learning (e.g., Irie & Ryan, 2015; Nitta & Baba, 2015; You & Chan, 2015), studies focusing on L2 experiences that use the framework of the L2MSS are rare. However, if we track back two decades, Norton (1995) has conducted studies on investment, social identity and imagined communities, although she has eschewed using the term *motivation* due to the static nature of the term at that time. In her study, she used the term *investment* instead of motivation in studying the language learning experiences of five female immigrants to Canada since the concept of investment “more accurately signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of the women to the target language and their sometimes ambivalent desire to learn and speak it” (p. 17).

In more recent years, many L2 motivation researchers have been treating motivation not as a trait, but rather “a fluid play, an ever-changing one that emerges from the processes of interaction of many agents, internal and external, in the ever-changing complex world of the learner” (Ellis & Larsen-Freeman, 2006, p. 563). In Ushioda’s (2009) “person-in-context relational view,” motivation is viewed “not simply as cause or product of particular learning experiences, but as process – in effect, the ongoing process of how the learner thinks about and interprets events in relevant L2-learning and L2-related experiences and how such cognitions and beliefs then shape subsequent involvement in learning” (p. 122). She developed such views based on a qualitative study of 20 Irish learners of French. The study focused on their conception of motivation, their motivational evolution and language learning experiences over 15 to 16 months.

In the vein of this view of motivation in the socio-dynamic period (Dörnyei & Ushioda 2011), many researchers are studying language learners in context, and attempting to understand what is happening in their complex world. Studying how learners interact with a variety of external and internal factors in their particular learning experiences is needed in this line of research. Apparently, this way of looking at motivation is becoming closer to Norton’s notion of investment. If we study motivation from the L2MSS perspective, for instance, we should study participants’ ideal L2 selves or ought-to L2 selves as well as their L2 experience, and comprehend the dynamic interaction of learners’ selves and their experiences. By doing so, learners’ socially constructed relationships with the language and their learning histories, their motivation and demotivation, as well as ambivalence can be studied.

Kikuchi (2017) reported on one of the few case studies that examined the dynamics of a group of Japanese learners of English over one school year. He studied the trajectory of English language learning motivation of five Japanese freshmen over two semesters, using monthly group interviews, a questionnaire, and reflective journals. Based on a quantitative analysis of the questionnaire measuring the L2MSS, he identified the types of learners and how their motivation

changed through the lens of dynamic systems theory (DST). Turner and Waugh (2007) describe one important aspect of DST as follows:

Within academic settings and events, each student may be thought of as a self-organizing system that acts and reacts to both external and internal informational signals. These processes may explain the unique, individual facets of students' learning-related cognitions, emotions, motivations, and behaviors. (p. 229)

Based on the qualitative analysis of the data obtained, he described each learner's self-organizing system and argued that the social environment outside of the classroom can be a crucial factor affecting learners' dynamic systems. Another key term in DST is *attractor states*, which are defined as "a critical value, pattern, solution or outcome towards which a system settles down or approaches over time" (Hiver, 2014, p. 21). Especially during a summer break, some learners had a great motivating experience, while others did not. That seemed to change their motivation in the second semester. Each learner settled down to a different attractor state. Using qualitative data, Kikuchi (2017) discussed the agents or experiences that might have helped to develop such attractor states, while not focusing on learners' L2 experiences per se.

In this study, I followed the research design used in Kikuchi (2017), but with two differences. First, a shorter questionnaire consisting of 29 items was developed (Kikuchi & Hamada, 2018) and used in this research. In addition, the length of the study was extended to two academic years. By extending it to two academic years, a richer history of language learning experiences over four semesters at university as well as three breaks was included in the study. This way, the development of participants' ideal L2 selves and ought-to L2 selves over four semesters, as well as their L2 experiences could be tracked. In tracking the development of student motivation as well as the influence of the L2 experience, this study focuses on the following research questions:

1. How do learners' motivational states change over two semesters in light of their L2 self systems?
2. How do learners' motivation and language learning experiences affect each other?

### 3. Research method

#### 3.1. Participants

The four female students (Asako, Nana, Tamami, and Yuki; all pseudonyms) participating in the study were admitted to the Department of Cross-cultural Studies,

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Aoi University (a pseudonym) in 2015. To be a student at Aoi University, there are several paths to admission. Asako was admitted as a scholarship student based on an entrance exam in December 2014. This scholarship guarantees coverage of most of the tuition costs and living expenses. Nana and Tamami took the same entrance exam but did not receive scholarships. However, they were admitted without taking the February general entrance examination for many university applicants in Japan. Yuki took the general entrance examination in February and was admitted. In this university program, students take the TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication), a very common English proficiency test in Japan. Table 1 shows the changes in TOEIC scores for these four participants, as well as the average score for all 119 students admitted to this department in April 2015.

Table 1 TOEIC scores of the four participants

Participant	April 2015	January 2016	January 2017
Asako	465	405	660
Nana	445	490	-
Tamami	295	460	405
Yuki	510	505	615
Average	383	429	489

### 3.2. Instruments

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by Kikuchi and Hamada (2018). The eight constructs (based on Taguchi, Magid, & Papi 2009) and the number of items for each construct were as follows:

- *Criterion Measure: Motivated Learning Behavior (Mot)*: the learners' intended efforts for learning English (3 items; e.g., "I am prepared to expend a lot of effort to learn English").
- *Ideal L2 Self (Ids)*: an L2-specific aspect of learners' ideal selves (4 items; e.g., "I can imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English").
- *Ought-to L2 Self (Ots)*: the attributes that learners believe they ought to possess (i.e., various duties, obligations, or responsibilities) in order to avoid possible negative outcomes (2 items; e.g., "I study English because close friends of mine think it is important").
- *Attitudes to Learning English (AttL)*: situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (4 items; e.g., "I like the atmosphere of English classes").
- *Instrumentality–Promotion (InPrm)*: the regulation of learners' personal goals to become successful, such as attaining high proficiency in English in order to

make more money or find better jobs (3 items; e.g., “Studying English can be important because I think it will be useful in getting a good job someday”).

- *Instrumentality–Prevention (InPrv)*: the regulation of learners’ duties and obligations, such as studying English in order to pass an examination (3 items; e.g., “Studying English is important to me because, if I don’t have a knowledge of English, I’ll be considered a weak student”).
- *Cultural Interest (CI)*: the learners’ interests in the cultural products of the L2 culture, such as TV, magazines, movies, and music (5 items; e.g., “I like English magazines, newspapers, or books”).
- *Attitudes to the L2 Community (AttC)*: the learners’ attitudes toward the community of the target language (5 items; e.g., “I like to travel to English-speaking countries”).

### 3.3. Procedures

In April 2015, I made an announcement in an English course to recruit students for a four-year-long project to study their motivation to learn English. I explained that participants would receive about 1000 yen (roughly the equivalent of ten US dollars) to compensate for their time participating in the interviews each month, held seven times throughout the year from April to January in the first year and nine times in the following school year. Five students agreed to participate in this project. At the beginning, they were told that they would be able to drop out of this project any time, respecting research ethics. One female participant dropped out in the middle of the second year since she decided to study abroad. Either during their lunchtime or after classes, they met with the researcher once a month for 30 to 60 minutes. After completing a questionnaire, interviews were conducted covering questions about their life experiences in general, experiences with their English learning, and factors that may have affected their motivation. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Three research assistants were hired in order to transcribe the interview data. Questionnaire sheets were scanned and responses saved in a spreadsheet program.

### 3.4. Data analysis

In order to answer the first research question, the questionnaire data were processed and analyzed in order to understand the changes in each of the eight constructs described in the previous section. The averages of the items measuring each of the eight motivational constructs were plotted: Criterion Measure (Mot), Ideal L2 Self (Ids), Ought-to L2 Self (Ots), Attitudes to Learning English (AttL), Instrumentality–Promotion (InPrm), Instrumentality–Prevention (InPrv), Cultural Interest (CI) and Attitudes to the L2 Community (AttC).

Qualitative data collected from each interview were analyzed through three processes, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994). During the analysis, cognitive maps (p. 134) were used to display learners' experiences and the effects on motivation. Seven figures were made for each participant displaying the data obtained in the spring (1S1, 1S2, and 1S3) and fall semesters in the 1st year (1F1, 1F2, 1F3 and 1F4), and the spring (2S1, 2S2, 2S3, 2S3 and 2S4) and fall semesters in the 2nd year (2F1, 2F2, 2F3, 2F3, 2F4, and 2F5) after the spring break at the end of the 1st year. Out of seven figures, only one sample cognitive map for each participant is presented in the next section in order to save space. In Figures 2, 4, 6, and 8, the boxes with the solid line are for learners' comments related to their attractor states, while the ones with the broken line are for L2 experiences related to study at the university, and the ones with the dotted line are for L2 experiences outside the university.

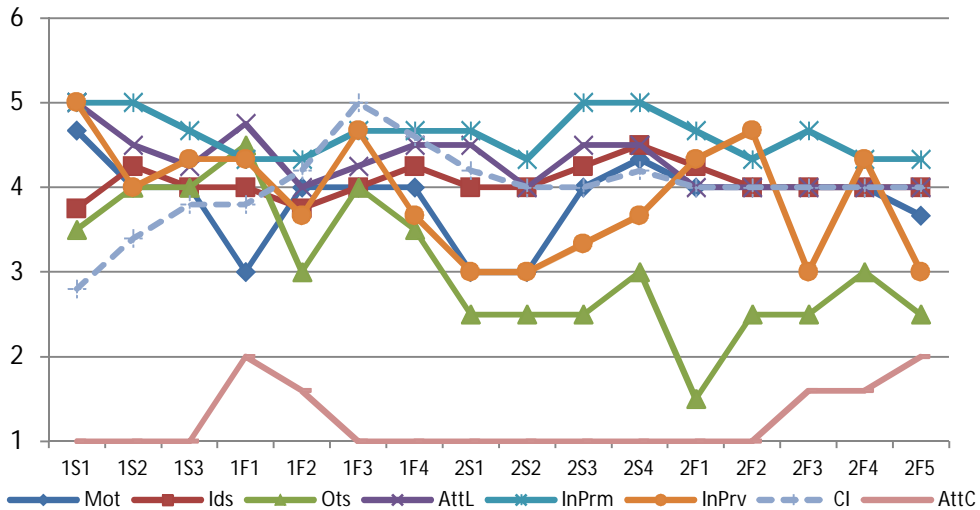


Figure 1 Asako's motivational changes in spring and fall semesters over two years

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Asako: A test-driven learner with the experience of studying in Cebu

As seen in Figure 1, Asako maintained a higher Instrumentality–Promotion (InPrm) and very low Attitudes to the L2 Community (AttC), which matched her regular account in the interview that getting a good TOEIC score would be important for getting a good job. She felt that she would rather study on her own than practice in the

classroom. She was aware that her listening ability was weak, so she watched movies in English in her first year, and TED Talks in her second year. She constantly said that she wanted to work on TOEIC test preparation in her second year, too. As seen in Table 1, her score went up to 660 in January of her second year. In the spring semester of her first year, she often talked about her part-time job as staff at wedding ceremonies, which appeared to become a central part of her life. During the summer and spring vacations in her first year, she went to Tohoku and Niigata for volunteer work and became inspired. Through these experiences, she started to realize that she could not keep a stressful part-time job, so she changed to being a waitress at a cafe.

During the two years, the main highlight for her was that she went to Cebu in the Philippines to study English at a language school. She said in an interview:

*Before studying in Cebu, I thought that social experience is important. I thought I could learn more from a part-time job and it would be helpful for my future. However, I think that I want to study more after hearing stories from other people. I don't know what I'm interested in studying, though. I just don't know because I haven't studied. Since I want to find out what I'm interested in, I want to work on English for now ...<sup>1</sup> That's why I study for the TOEIC. (Asako, September [2], p. 4)<sup>2</sup>*

Although she expressed her determination to study English to find out what she would like to study, in the interview the next month, she noted:

*I work part-time on the weekend and hang out with friends. It's easy to give into doing this kind of fun stuff. If I can find time, I feel like I want to study. I can't study much, but finding enough time to study is not possible. It's no good. I was able to do it right after I came back from Cebu. (Asako, October [2], p. 2)*

As expressed in the interview excerpt above, even though she was influenced by studying English in Cebu, she could not help but make excuses for not studying English the next month. Figure 2 shows the cognitive map drawn for the data obtained in the fall semester of her second year. After the life-changing experience from which she thought she should study something while she could at university, she did not appear to have a positive L2 learning experience. She thought about going to a free English conversation room, but she did not do that. She needed to take mandatory classes, but she explained that her classmates were not motivated, and she did not feel like studying hard. Towards the end, she found one class, the TOEFL preparation class, to be interesting and she

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<sup>1</sup> Unspaced elipses like this one indicate pauses.

<sup>2</sup> Following the participants's name is the month of the interview, with the number in square brackets indicating the year of the study and the page number referring to the interview transcript.



took the TOEFL test at school. Throughout the two years, she had one friend from her high school, whom she often mentioned. She was the one who asked her to go to Cebu. As seen in Figure 2, Asako mentioned her again, saying that she had gone to Myanmar. For her, her friends' influence seemed to be the key. She started to watch DVDs in English because her friend had asked her to. She also participated in a volunteer project because of another friend. In terms of her English study, she usually thinks of getting good scores on proficiency tests. She appears to be test-driven in her language learning and she prefers things that she can do by herself, like studying for tests.

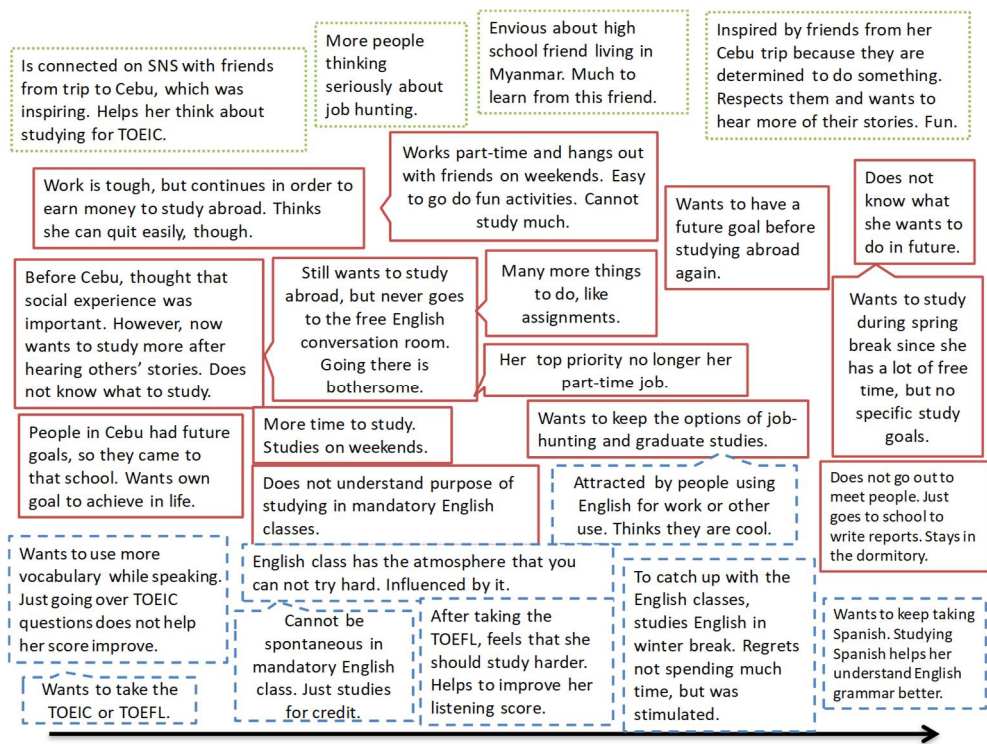


Figure 2 Cognitive map for Asako's dynamic system in the fall semester of her second year

#### 4.2. Nana: A learner becoming demotivated in studying English

As seen in Figure 3, Nana's motivation to study English went down, as observed by the drop in Attitudes to Learning English (AttL) and Criterion Measures (Mot). At the beginning of each semester, she usually shared her interests in new classes. However, she could not maintain her interest, as seen in Figure 4. She became a member of the English Speaking Society (ESS) club and felt that she was overwhelmed by the good English speakers from other universities during her first year.

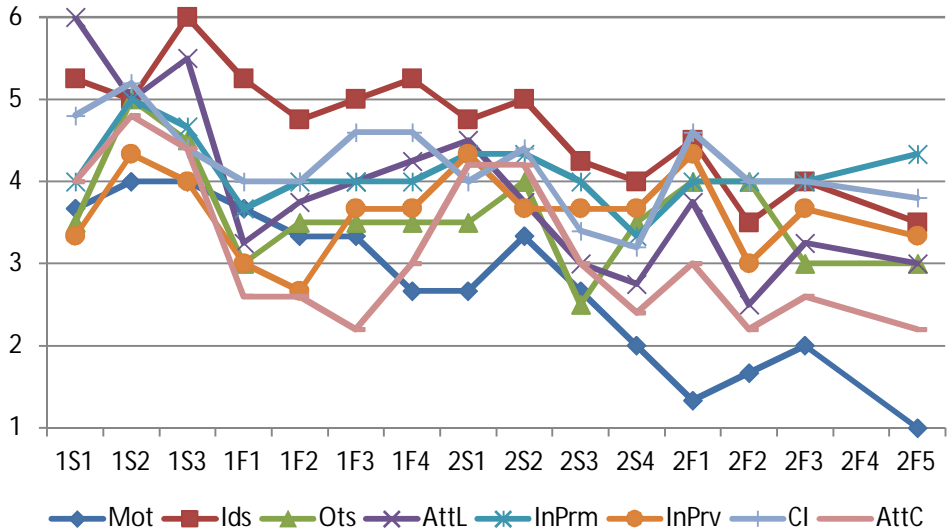


Figure 3 Nana's motivational changes in spring and fall semesters over two years

While she kept working hard with the ESS club, she was not able to enjoy her English classes. She said in an interview (I – interviewer, N – Nina):

- I: Okay, what do you think, Nana? Do you think you have been affected by your classmates in your English class?
- N: Well, things don't go deep in English classes. If I ask a lot of questions, people make disgusted faces.
- I: I see.
- N: Imagine that we were asked to talk about a topic. Then I would ask what my partner was doing in high school. She would answer that she belongs to the tennis club, and then I would ask what she was doing in her junior high-school ... I would stop asking any more questions then.
- I: I see. I see. Even though you wanted to talk more ...
- N: People don't want to talk in English. They want to do it in Japanese. People chat away in Japanese and the teacher scolds us. (Nana, November [1], p. 5)

She mentioned in an earlier interview in the spring semester in her first year that she liked classes in which she could move around and talk with other students. In the fall semester, the teacher changed. She mentioned that her teacher did not seem motivated and often looked irritated during class. What she was describing in the interview excerpt above is the experience from that class. Figure 4 shows the cognitive map drawn for the data obtained in the fall semester of her first year. One can immediately notice that she has a lot of feelings inside about English and she just cannot motivate herself to do anything. The debate contest in the ESS club was

an important moment for her. When she found a gap between herself and students from other universities, she said that she felt self-pity. As far as English classes were concerned, on the other hand, she said that she could not find a reason to take them. The following is an excerpt from another interview:

- I: So, you are saying that the classes are easier than in high school and not demanding. So, you don't know what to study. In terms of your motivation, do you ever think about being motivated to do something?
- N: Well, in my high school time, I studied hard for the university entrance exam, mid-term tests and such. Things mattered for the grades. They acted as goals. On the other hand, I don't have any goals now. From the school, we are not told to study for the TOEIC. Since my parents tell me to study for the TOEIC, I think I have to study in the future. Yet ..., I don't have ANY motivation. (Nana, December [1], p. 7)



Figure 4 Cognitive map for Nana's dynamic system in the fall semester of her first year

During her demotivated state, she seemed to find many reasons not to study. As seen in Figure 4, people around her were developing better scores on TOEIC. Using a messaging application, she communicated with Taiwanese or German friends and became inspired. Yet, one can see that even these experiences did not work to bring her out of her demotivated state.

## 4.3. Tamami: A learner who likes English a lot but also enjoys her part-time jobs

As can be seen in Figure 5, Tamami maintained very high Attitudes to Learning English (AttL), although she did not attest to high Ideal L2 Self (Ids) or Criterion Measures (Mot).

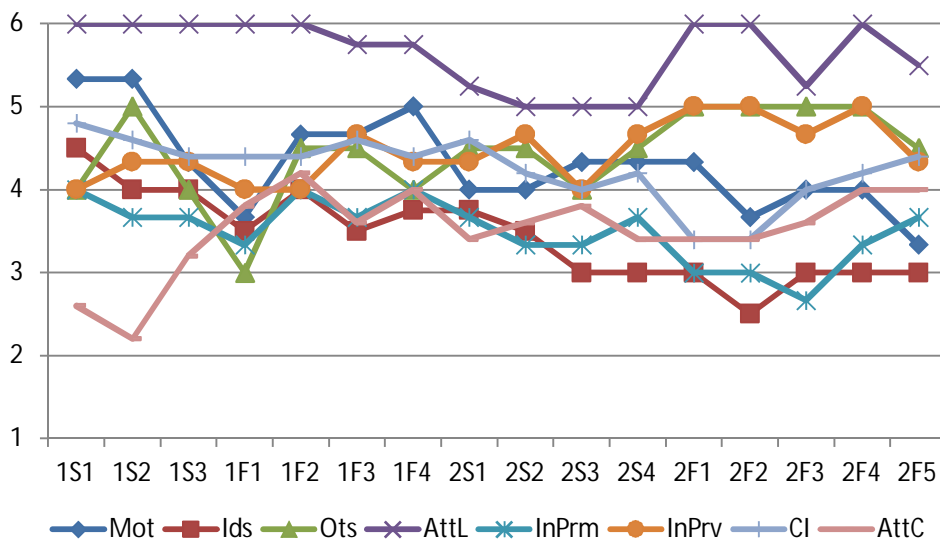


Figure 5 Tamami's motivational changes in spring and fall semesters over two years

The important event during the two years in terms of L2 experience was that she went to Canada to attend a language school for two weeks with a group from the university including Yuki, in March. After coming back, however, she said in April that she felt that she did not want to study abroad anymore. She said that she did not have any bad experiences in particular, but she just felt that way. Over two years, on the other hand, she kept working part-time at a big clothing store in Yokohama and a Japanese pub in her neighborhood. During the interview, asked to share anything that she was highly motivated to do, she stated:

*Well, I can think of my part-time jobs first. Then I'd say assignments are next. I have many places that I want to go and things I want to buy. I want to move to a new place. That's why my part-time job has a high priority. English is not a priority. With the part-time job, I've got the feeling that I have to do it and I want to do it, too. With English, hmm, I have the feeling that I've got to do it. I don't have the feeling that I want to study. (Tamami, October [2], p. 4)*

From this interview excerpt above, one can probably notice her strong passion for her part-time jobs. English is something that she does not have a strong feeling to

study. In another interview, she also stated: "I like English very much, but I don't want to use English for work. Because I like English so much, I wonder why not. I want to think of how I can take advantage of English" (Tamami, December [2], p. 3).

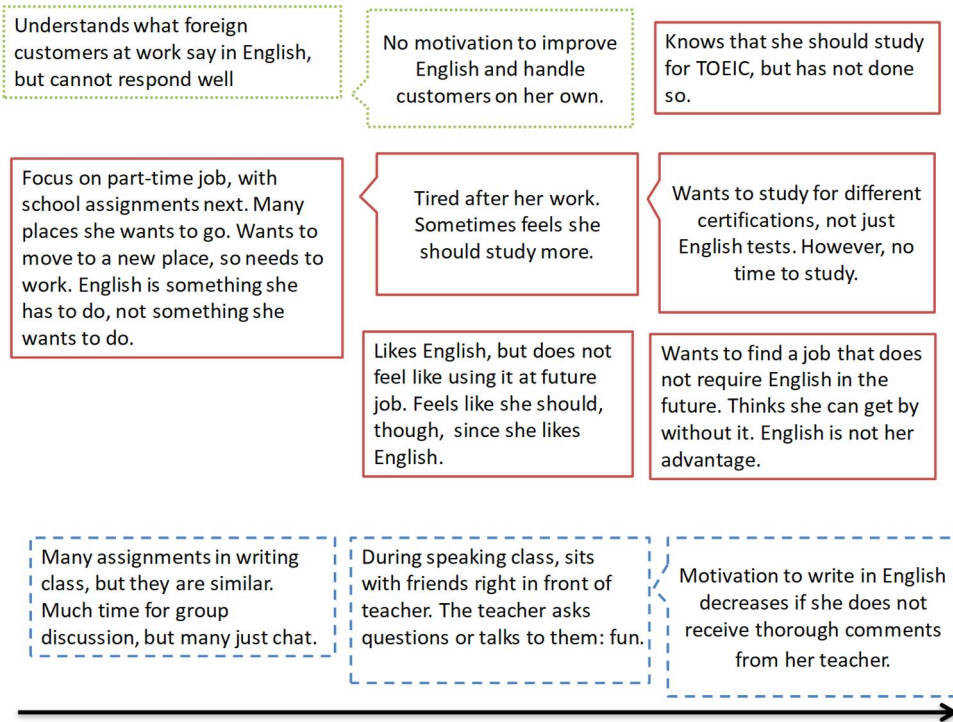


Figure 6 Cognitive map for Tamami's dynamic system in the fall semester of her second year

Even though she said she liked English very much, English became something that she liked just towards the end of her second year. While she maintained very strong attitudes towards learning English, as seen in Figure 6, her focus was on a part-time job that she did *only* three or four times a week. Even though she wanted to study for certification tests such as the TOEIC, she said that she did not have time. In fact, throughout the two years, she sometimes canceled her interview, or looked very tired. She mentioned that her clothing shop, her part-time job, has peak seasons and off-seasons. She told me that she got stressed out and tired during the peak seasons, needing to work a lot, while she could relax during the off-seasons. While she was a full-time college student, her time for study was based on how busy her part-time job was at the time. Her two weeks in Vancouver in March and the fact that she liked English did not become motivators for studying English, while the job satisfaction and money that she received became motivators to work three or four times a week.

#### 4.4. Yuki: A learner who is rather stable in motivational dynamics

Compared to the other learners, we can see that Yuki's response to the questionnaire was constant, as seen in Figure 7. She maintained fairly high Attitudes to Learning English (AttL) and Ideal L2 Self (Ids) while had lower scores for Ought-to L2 Self (Ots) and Attitudes to the L2 Community (AttC). Like Nana, she attended the ESS club. With Tamami, she went to study abroad for two weeks. While she had these L2 experiences, it was notable that she did not develop her ideal L2 self or motivation to study English.

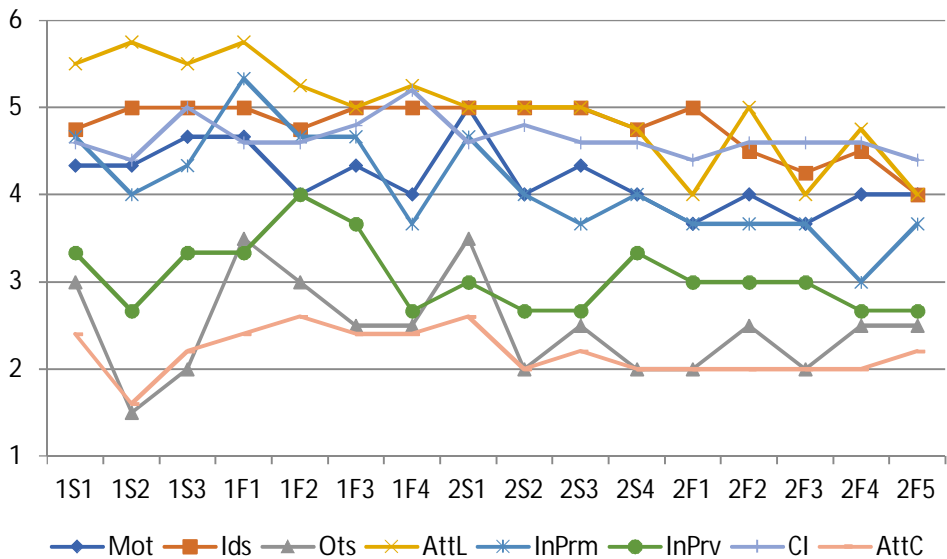


Figure 7 Yuki's motivational changes in spring and fall semesters over two years

When she was asked to share her views about her L2 ideal self, she provided the following comment:

*I don't want to go abroad, and that's not going to be my main thing. When I work in the future, I may want to use English a bit. That's not going to be my main issue. If you ask me to imagine it, perhaps I can see myself using English a bit. (Yuki, December [2], p. 6)*

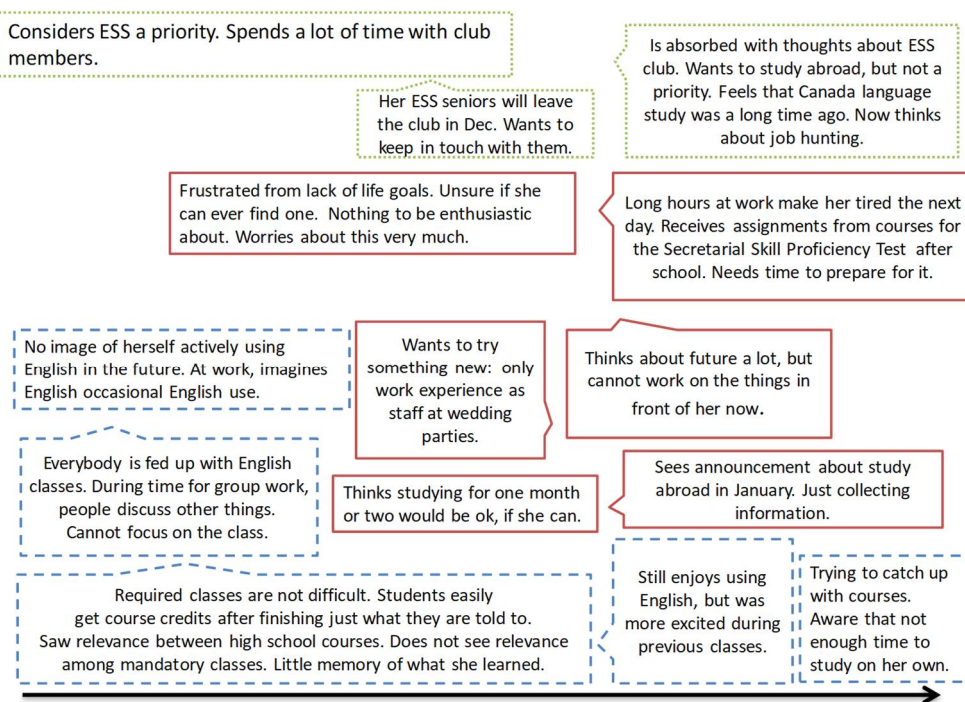


Figure 8 Cognitive map for Yuki's dynamic system in the fall semester of her second year

After coming back from Vancouver, Yuki said that she had already participated in short-term study abroad two times, including once when she was in her high school. She told me that it was enough. As expressed in the interview excerpt above, she developed the image that she probably would not use English in the future very much. As seen in Figure 8, a cognitive map describing her fall semester during the second year, she felt that English classes were easy and were not structured like in her high school. She thought she was more excited about English then, but not in college. While her time with the ESS club became a drive for her in college, she shared her feelings in another interview:

*When I was in high school, I devoted myself to the brass band club. In my junior high school, I wanted to go to a certain senior high school. I had a certain goal to achieve, and I was trying hard to accomplish it. That's why I was eagerly and positively working on things. However, right now, I don't have any concrete goals and I think about many things. I feel anxious then. (Yuki October [2], p. 10)*

While she worked very hard organizing the ESS club and had a part-time job on the weekend, she shared her anxiety about her future. Like Asako, not having a goal for the future seemed to bother Yuki while she was actually busy with her club activities and part-time job.

## 5. Discussion

By analyzing the four participants' motivational change, the general tendency that can be observed is that all learners have different trajectories for the motivational components of the L2 self system. In general, the mean of each construct stays somewhere between 3 (*somewhat not true for me*) and 4 (*somewhat true for me*). For all students but Nana, who became demotivated, the mean score stayed generally above 4 for Instrumentality–Promotion (InPrm) and Attitudes to Learning English (AttL). This can imply that many of the participants kept their instrumental motivation and attitudes towards learning English. It is also notable that both Asako and Yuki kept their Ideal L2 Self (Ids) generally high, with means of more than 4.

By analyzing the cognitive maps, including others not shown for lack of space, which depict their attractor states as well as experiences both in and outside the university, it was noted that at the beginning of each school year, many participants appeared to be excited about their new teachers and courses. However, all participants settled into an attractor state in which they focused on their club activities or part-time jobs. Before Tamami and Yuki participated in a short language program in March of their first year, they experienced attractor states in which they worked hard on English in the study abroad preparation course. Asako experienced an attractor state after she came back from Cebu, trying to find something that she was interested in studying. However, these attractor states did not last long. Many of the participants felt that the university classes were not interesting without any concrete course objectives. They were more attracted by part-time jobs in which they could get money and job satisfaction, or by club activities in which they played a certain role. In short, the language learning experiences did affect some of these learners, especially the ones who experienced the short study abroad program, but they did not seem to affect their dynamic system for a long time.

Over a decade ago, Irie (2003) published a review of studies of English language learning motivation in Japan, and observing the recurring patterns she concluded that “Japanese university students are likely to appreciate the instrumental value in learning English for exams and a career, and also to have an interest in making contact with native speakers of English and visiting their countries” (p. 97). Even now, this observation applies. Some of the participants were interested in a long-term study abroad program, but they got to the state that it might be good enough if they could use English for a job later in their life, so they focused on proficiency test preparation.

## 6. Conclusion

From the four case studies of female college students presented in this paper, one can notice that the university classes that they were taking probably did not give



them rich L2 experiences. Each participant had experiences outside of school. Asako went to Cebu, and Tamami and Yuki went to Vancouver to attend short English language programs. Nana saw people from other universities talking in good English. However, all of them had a hard time motivating themselves to find good language learning experiences in their daily lives. Why is that? While motivation is commonly regarded as an individual attribute, Lamb (2016) states:

it is important to recognize that it is also a social construction; that is, we come to strive for certain things in life as a result of our socialization in a particular community or society, and the extent to which we can act on our desires is also constrained by our social environment. (p. 324)

As presented in the four cognitive maps above, all of the students found that their classmates' motivation or the teacher's motivation affected them, and often negatively. Of course, we should not only be blaming classmates or teachers. Notably, the interaction of each individual's motivation with their classmates' and with their teachers' is clearly important. One might ask what motivates or demotivates Japanese learners of English. I hope that it is clear that we cannot easily answer these questions since each one of them is struggling to learn English in a particular community or small society, and interacting with a variety of people who are also a part of it.

Admittedly, this case study is merely focused on two years of language learning experiences shared by four female students who attended a private university and were majoring in international studies with the original intention to study abroad only for a short time. More studies are needed to understand the rich experiences of English use in the daily lives of different kinds of Japanese students. For instance, future studies might include participants who are not interested in studying abroad. It would be interesting to study a group of different genders, as well.

This paper attempted to answer the call from Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) for research into language learners' reasons for studying, their lengths of sustained study, and their intensity of study. It was notable that without continuing rich L2 experiences and a personal goal to use English, learners in EFL situations have a hard time finding reasons to study; thus, they do not study hard for great lengths of time.

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