

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ENGLISH PROFICIENCY: THE IMPACT OF MOTIVATION

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This study focused on motivation, which teachers and researchers have long recognized as an important factor in second language acquisition. The major purposes of this study were (a) to find out the characteristic motivational factors among Japanese university students, (b) to determine contributory factors that lead to increased proficiency, and (c) to find the most effective instructional strategies that will increase proficiency.

A questionnaire addressing motivational factors was used to measure students' motivation to learn English, and the Test of English for International Communication scores and students' academic scores were used to measure their English proficiency. The tests were conducted with a sample that consisted of 198 1st- and 2nd-year students from three different Japanese universities.

The results of this study show that the motivational factors in English language learning among Japanese students are complex, combining instrumental and integrative characteristics. A total of six motivational factors were extracted: (a) *Bicultural*, (b) *Studying English for its own sake*, (c) *Studying English for career advancement*, (d) *Self-esteem-reward-practice orientation*, (e) *Fulfillment-training orientation*, and (f) *Relationship orientation*. The motivational factor, *Studying English for its own sake*, had a significant positive correlation with English proficiency, and the motivational factor *Relationship orientation*, had a negative correlation. Hence, a student who likes or enjoys studying English for its own sake can achieve higher proficiency than a student who studies English just because everyone else studies English.

Furthermore, the study has important implications for why Japanese university students cannot achieve high English proficiency. The primary reason for students with low English proficiency is not a lack of motivation, but inappropriate teaching methods. Especially, for students who live in Japan, learning English is limited to the classroom, and quantitative communication opportunities are lacking. In addition, studies have shown that Japanese language (more so than others) creates strong barriers to people learning English.

The imperative task for English teachers is to seek an effective teaching method to overcome both the quantitative lack of communication opportunities and language barriers. When teachers can successfully overcome these barriers, students will become more motivated and more proficient in English.