

# Motivation as a Process in the Field of Language Learning and its Implication to EFL Classrooms

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## Abstract

In this paper, motivation “as a process” is examined from the viewpoint of language learning. The paradigm shift from a L2 community-specific orientation to concepts applicable to motivation in learning English as a global languages is overviewed, followed by a detailed examination of application of L2 motivation research to classroom situations in view of Japanese university EFL settings. Capturing the three concepts of Dörnyei's *L2 Motivational Self System*, a process of language learning for Japanese university EFL settings is proposed.

**keywords** : motivation, language learning, L2, EFL

## 1. Introduction

As in the field of educational psychology, motivation research in language learning covers a variety of concepts. Researchers “disagree strongly on virtually everything concerning the concept” (Dörnyei, 2001). Thus, it is important to focus on specific concepts and constructs that are beneficial to language learning and teaching. In this paper, I would like to overview how L2 (another term of a second language) motivation research has developed from a L2 community-specific concept to more general application of motivation in learning English as a global language. Following this, an application of L2 motivation research to classroom situations, especially Japanese EFL settings is examined.

## 2. An overview of L2 motivation research: The paradigm shift from a L2 community-specific orientation to concepts applicable to motivation in learning English as a global language

In this section, I briefly provide an overview of how L2 motivation research has developed and shifted according to changes in English language use within an increasingly globalized world. In addition, I will examine the implications of this shift to English learning and teaching of EFL.

The main theoretical discussion in L2 motivation research has long been dominated by Gardner's (1985) identification of two motivational orientations: *integrative* and *instrumental*. The integrative orientation concerns the desire to learn a language to interact with, or become, similar to members of that community. The instrumental orientation concerns the

desire to learn a language for its practical value, such as getting a better job. In his Socio-Educational Model (Gardner, 1985), integrativeness is further divided into three components: integrative orientation, attitudes towards the learning situation, and motivation. Integrativeness refers to a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to interact with the other language community. Attitudes towards the learning situation reflect attitudes towards any aspect of the situation in which the language is learned. Motivation refers to the driving force in any situation. According to Gardner (2001), the truly motivated individual displays effort, desire, and affect (p.6).

In the last two decades, the emphasis on integrativeness in L2 learning motivational orientation has provoked debate. Crookes and Schmidt (1991) proposed that Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1985) is limited by its narrow perspective on motivation, suggesting that L2 motivation researchers should consider non-L2 approaches to motivation:

Discussion on the topic of motivation in second-language (SL) learning contexts has been limited by understanding the field of applied linguistics has attached to it. In that view, primary emphasis is placed on attitudes and other social psychological aspects of SL learning. This does not do full justice to the way SL teachers have used the term motivation. Their use is more congruent with definitions common outside social psychology, specifically in education (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991, p. 469).

Addressing the need for wider vision of motivation, Tremblay and Gardner (1995) expanded the Socio-Educational Model with new elements derived from the psychological literature: expectancy-value and goal theories. The new model includes elements such as goal salience, valence, and self-efficacy. Their research suggests that “specific goals and frequent reference to these goals lead to increased levels of motivational behavior”, “higher levels of motivational behaviour result when learning is valued”, and “self-efficacy influences motivational behavior”(p. 515). In this way, they demonstrated the possibility of incorporating additional variables into their Socio-Educational Model without damaging its integrity.

A problematic issue however remains. This is that the concept of integrative orientation as motivational orientation means very little to some language learning environments, namely, that of the EFL.

A growing amount of research demonstrates dissatisfaction with the concept of integrative motivation. The empirical findings have not always supported Gardner's interpretation of the notion (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006, Ushioda, 2006, Yahima, 2000, 2002). Ushioda (2006) has questioned the need for an “integrative” attitude in increasingly globalised language environments where there is no specific target reference group of speakers. She explores the idea of language motivation as an “investment”, discussing the Council of Europe's active promotion of “plurilingualism” (or full and partial competences in more than one language) (p. 151). In the perspective of learning language as an investment, language is viewed as a symbolic and material resource that will enhance “cultural capital”, identity,

and desires (p. 153).

Nakata (1995) found an important individual difference variable among Japanese learners, an “international orientation”, which involves a general cosmopolitan outlook, suggesting that learners with international orientation study English as a means of communication while retaining their own identity as an international person. Nakata (2006) argues that integrative motivation is not necessarily effective for Japanese learners of English, stressing that “the notion of international orientation may be more effective for these learners” (p. 170). In a similar manner, Yashima (2002) postulates the concept of “international posture” as an important motivational construct in her study of Japanese students in an EFL context. “International posture” includes “interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and ... openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude towards different cultures, among others” (p. 57). The results of her study demonstrated that international posture influences motivation and predicts proficiency and L2 communication confidence.

Conducting and analyzing a large-scale investigation in Hungary, Dörnyei (2005) proposed a new motivational system, the *L2 Motivational Self System*, suggesting a reinterpretation of integrativeness as an *Ideal L2 self*. The validity of this reinterpretation of integrativeness is derived from the empirical findings of Dörnyei's longitudinal survey conducted in Hungary (Dörnyei et al., 2006). Apart from integrativeness, they measured several other motivational and attitudinal dimensions, such as *Instrumentality* (i.e., the pragmatic utility of learning the L2), *Direct contact with L2 speakers* (i.e., attitudes towards actually meeting L2 speakers and traveling to their countries), *Cultural interest* (i.e., the appreciation of cultural products associated with the particular L2 and conveyed by the media, e.g., films, TV programmes, magazines and pop music), *Vitality of the L2 community* (i.e., the perceived importance and wealth of the L2 communities in question), *Milieu* (i.e., the general perception of the importance of foreign languages in the learner's school context and in friends' and parents' views), and finally, *Linguistic self-confidence* (i.e., a confident, anxiety-free belief that the mastery of an L2 is well within the learner's means) (Dörnyei, 2009a, p.26).

Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) work indicates that *Integrativeness* plays a key role and mediates the effects of all other attitudinal/motivational variables on two criterion measures, language choice and intended effort to study the L2. Additionally, the research indicates that the immediate antecedents of *Integrativeness* were *Attitude toward L2 speakers/community* and *Instrumentality*. Dörnyei came to the conclusion that integrativeness can be reinterpreted as an ideal language self-image (the *Ideal L2 Self*).

Looking at 'integrativeness' from the self perspective, the concept can be conceived of as the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self: if our ideal self is associated with the mastery of an L2, that is, if the person that we would like to become is proficient in the L2, we can be described in Gardner's (1985) terminology as having an integrative disposition. Thus, the central theme of the emerging new theory was the equation of the

motivational dimensions that has traditionally been interpreted as 'integrativeness / integrative motivation' with the *Ideal L2 Self* (Dörnyei, 2009a, p. 27).

Dörnyei (2009a) also explains the connection between *Integrativeness* and its immediate antecedents of *Attitudes toward members of the L2 community* and *Instrumentality*. Firstly, *Attitudes toward members of the L2 community* are closely related to an ideal self image language. A self-interpretation of *Integrativeness* is compatible with the concept of *Attitudes toward members of the L2 community*. Secondly, learners' *Ideal L2 Self* includes success images, such as being professionally successful or obtaining better jobs using L2. Therefore, instrumental motives are linked to the *Ideal L2 self*.

Dörnyei (2009a) further mentions that there are two sides to *Instrumentality*. One is “ideal self-guides” that concern hopes, aspirations, advancements, growth, and accomplishments. The other is “ought-to self-guides” that focus on regulating the absence, or presence, of negative outcomes, as well as concern with safety, responsibility, and obligations. For example, if students learn English to get better jobs, they have instrumental motives with a promotion focus, whereas if students learn English for fear of failing an exam, they have instrumental motives with a prevention focus.

Dörnyei's *L2 Motivational Self System* consists of the three components: *Ideal L2*, *Ought-to L2 Self*, and *L2 Learning Experience*. If learners want to be proficient in L2, the *Ideal L2 Self* motivates learners to learn L2, because learners try to reduce the gap between their actual selves and their ideal selves. The *Ought-to L2 Self* refers to less internalized, or more extrinsic, types of instrumental motives concerned with duties, responsibilities, or obligations, to avoid possible negative outcomes. If learners learn English so they do not get scores below average, they have an *Ought-to L2 Self*.

The *L2 Learning Experience* refers to situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience. These motives are derived from various elements in the learning environment and experiences such as proper autonomy support, peer group support, appropriate curriculum, and past successful experiences.

The challenge and possibility of this new reinterpretation of *Integrativeness* lies in how language teachers help learners *construct their Ideal L2 Self*. Dörnyei (2009a) suggests that teachers can provide awareness-raising and guide selection from the multiple aspirations, dreams, and desires that learners have already entertained in the past.

In this section, I reviewed how L2 motivation research developed from a rather narrow interpretation of *Integrativeness* as a motivational orientation to a more adaptable notion of a *L2 Motivational Self System*. For learning and teaching of EFL, this paradigm shift is extremely meaningful, because I have long been wondering how to understand the real meaning of Gardner's integrativeness for a learning situation where there is no target language community. Nakata's (1995) suggestion of “international orientation” and Yashima's

(2002) “international posture” are meaningful and realistic alternatives to integrativeness, considering the increasingly globalized English use in contemporary times. Dörnyei's *L2 Motivational Self System* seems to be a “magic wand” that can change motivational and attitudinal dimensions to fit almost all language learning environments.

This ability arises because the language learner self-perception is always conducted by the language learners themselves, not by anything or anyone else in any environment. In this sense, a motivational system, where the central part consists of self-related concepts, can be seen as a universal idea. A number of problems remain inherent when we try to apply this idea to the learning and teaching of EFL. Some of the students in Japanese University EFL setting may have extremely limited motivation without any real experience or contact with L2 speakers. In actual fact, three components of the *L2 Motivational Self System* cannot easily be applied to my students at the beginning stage of the instruction.

However, hope can be found in the process-oriented concept of motivation examined in the next section. It would demonstrate that students' motivation can gradually develop in the process of language learning. In this sense, self-determination theory (SDT) (Deci and Ryan, 1981, Ryan and Deci, 2002) can be seen as a useful concept. Capturing the three concepts of Dörnyei's *L2 Motivational Self System* in a SDT framework, I would like to propose the following process of language learning:

1. Start with an *L2 Learning Experience*

It is suggested to provide students with learning opportunities with various autonomy supports, making sure students have a successful learning experience.

2. Move onto *Ought to L2 Self*

With past successful learning experience, students can build confidence to learn English as well as learning habits, although some of them still have introjected motivation (i.e., from pressure or sense of obligation) in the framework of SDT.

3. Self-determined motivation as an *Ideal L2 Self*

With the accumulation of the successful learning experience and metacognitive awareness, students move on to an integrated motivation in the framework of the SDT.

In the next section, views of motivation as a process in the field of language learning are examined.

### **3. The view of motivation as a process in language learning**

As reviewed in the previous section, motivation-related research focusing on language learning has primarily been dominated by social psychologists. Gardner and his associates (e.g., Gardner, 2001, Gardner, Masgoret, & Mihic, 2004) examined the general motivational dispositions from a social perspective. Dörnyei (2009b) called this perspective “macro-social-psychological,” (p. 210) claiming that Gardner and his associates were not necessarily successful in focusing on a “micro-level” learning environment, such as language classrooms. From the language teaching classrooms, the demand of research on actual progression, or the development of motivation, was raised. How motivation is generated and how it fluctuates

and further develops over time became important issues to be examined (Dörnyei, 2000).

Dörnyei (2000) emphasized the importance of the “time” dimension of motivation for two reasons:

1. Motivation to do something usually evolves gradually, through a complex mental process that involves initial planning and goal setting, intention formation and task generation, and finally, action implementation and control.
2. In sustained long-term activities, such as the mastering of a school subject, motivation does not remain constant, but is characterized by regular appraisal and balancing of the various internal and external influences that the individual is exposed to, resulting in a somewhat fluctuating pattern of effort and commitment (p. 524).

In the intention of taking the “time” dimension of motivation into account, Dörnyei and Otto (1998) formulated a *Process Model of L2 Motivation*. This model was made up of two dimensions: *Action Sequence and Motivational Influences*. *Action Sequence* contains the behavioural process of initial wishes, hopes, and desires. These are transformed into goals and then into intentions, actions and evaluations. *Action Sequence* was further divided into three phases: the preactional phase, actional phase, and the postactional phase. *Motivational Influences* include energy sources and motivational forces that underlie and fuel behavioural process.

Although a detailed explanation of the *Process Model of L2 Motivation* is not the intention of this section, the introduction of detailed motivational influences that Dörnyei and Otto described in the original *Process Model of L2 Motivation* (1998) are considered to have practical value for the present study. These motivational influences are summarized as follows:

1. Motivational influences on goal setting
  - Subjective values and norms
  - Incentive value of goal-related actions, outcomes and consequences (instrumentality)
  - Perceived potency of potential goals
  - Environmental stimuli, action possibilities: family expectations
  - Language/Language-related attitude (integrativeness)
2. Motivational influences on intention formation
  - \*Expectancy of success/perceived coping potential
    - Self-efficacy/self-confidence
    - Perceived goal difficulty
  - Amount of expected support
  - L2 anxiety
  - Perceived L2 competence
    - L2 contact
  - Causal attributions
  - \*Relevance (personal and setting related), cost-benefit calculations
    - Need for achievement and fear of failure
    - Degree of self-determination (type of regulation)
  - Goal properties

- Goal specificity
  - Goal proximity
  - Goal harmony/conflict
  - Level of aspiration
  - Availability of task opportunities and options
  - Learner beliefs about L2 learning, knowledge of learning strategies, domain-specific knowledge
  - Urgency, external demands, unique opportunity
3. Motivational influences on the initiation of intention enactment
- Action vs. state orientation
  - Perceived behavioural control
  - Distracting influences and obstacles, number and strength of competing action tendencies
  - Perceived consequences for not acting
4. Executive motivational influences
- Selective sensitivity to aspects of the environment
  - Quality of internal model of reference
    - Novelty
    - Pleasantness
    - Goal/need significance
    - Coping potential
    - Performance standards
  - Perceived contingent relationship between action and outcome, perceived progress
    - Success
    - “Flow”
  - Sense of self-determination/autonomy
  - Teacher's and parents' motivational influence
    - Autonomy supporting vs. autonomy controlling
    - Affiliative motive
    - Direct socialization of motivation
    - Modelling
    - Task presentation
    - Feedback
  - Performance appraisal, reward structure, classroom goal structure (competitive, individualistic, cooperative)
  - Influence of learner group (goal-orientedness, cohesiveness, norm and role system, peer role modelling), classroom climate, and school environment
  - Task conflict, competing action tendencies, other distracting influences, availability of action alternatives
  - Cost involved and natural tendency to lose sight of goal and get bored/tired of the activity
  - Knowledge of, and skills in, using self-regulatory strategies
    - Language learning strategies
    - Goal setting strategies
    - Action maintenance strategies
  - Perceived consequences of action abandonment
5. Motivational influences on post actional evaluation
- Attributional factors: attributional style and biases, prior knowledge about “scripted” events
  - Self-concept beliefs: self-confidence/self-efficacy, self-competence, self-worth, and prior performance history

- Evaluational/attributional cues, feedback
- Action vs. state orientation

As Dörnyei (2000) himself mentioned, his construct does not offer new insights or novel motivational factors, but instead attempts to synthesize various influential conceptualizations of motivation in a systematic process-oriented framework (p. 524).

The previous list of motivational influences covers the most expected influences relating to the process of learning. For EFL classrooms, some of the motivational influences are very meaningful and can be incorporated into teaching strategies to enhance motivation. The influences important for the intention formation stage include self-efficacy/self-confidence, the amount of expected support, relevance, degree of self-determination, knowledge of learning strategies and external demands. The influences important for designing autonomy-supportive instruction include the perceived contingent relationship between action and outcome, sense of self-determination/ autonomy, teacher's autonomy support, reward structure, cooperative classroom climate, and the students' knowledge of, and skills in, using self-regulatory strategies.

Although it is beneficial for motivation researchers and educators to understand the model integrating various motivational factors using “time” as an organizing principle, Dörnyei himself acknowledged two weaknesses of the model (Dörnyei, 2000). One of the major weaknesses is that the actional process occurs in relative isolation, without any interference from other ongoing activities the learner is engaged in. In real language learning contexts, the process does not necessarily occur as the described procedure of the model. For example, the “choice” phase of one actional step may occur simultaneously with the executive phase of another. In this sense, the model is not the process in a strict sense.

Another weakness is multiple engagements in a number of different activities at the same time. For example, students may engage in new action, while the success of the previous action is evaluated. In my view, although this model offers insights and a variety of useful ideas in designing teaching strategies, it is very difficult to “use” this model in real language learning settings, because it is too complicated to apply. In addition, each classroom has a variety of different conditions and characteristics in terms of language competence and motivation levels.

Since the motivation process is cyclical rather than a one way process, it is not realistic to define goal setting as the first process of learning. Some students may set their own goals before engaging in actions, but other students may start learning and then set their learning goal. Therefore, in the real EFL classrooms, the cyclical process would be used, rather than the one way or linear process.

The three stage non-linear process of motivation was advocated by Williams and Burden (1977). The three stages include reasons for doing something, deciding to do something, and sustaining the effort or persisting. Their principled view is that motivation is more than

simply arousing interest. Sustaining the interest and investing time and energy into putting in the necessary effort to achieve certain goals are also important considerations.

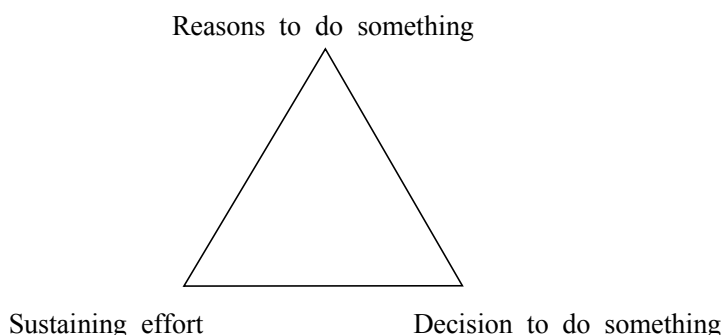


Figure 1. Williams and Burden's (1977) interactive model of motivation

Their model is valuable in that providing the process implies the relationship between stages. For example, reasons for doing something will affect persistence, while the very act of sustaining effort can provide a rise to further reasons for action (p.122). Although this model is not cyclical, each stage can affect each other. Thus, it can provide a useful basic idea of a motivational process.

The developmental nature of motivation was demonstrated in Ushioda's study (1996a). She found motivation not only as a possible cause of language learning success, but also as a product of the learning experience. She defines motivation as a dynamic cyclical relationship with learning experience and success. Ushioda (1996b) also focused on motivational evolution over time, conducting a longitudinal qualitative interview investigation. Based on her findings, she proposed a theoretical framework with two different learner conceptions of motivation. One is motivation derived from experience and the other is motivation directed towards future goals. For example, Learner A's motivational rationale is dominated by the positive impact of the learning experience, while goal-directed patterns of thinking play a minor role. In contrast, Learner B's motivational rationale is goal-directed, rather than derived from the past experience. This theoretical framework allowed the learners' motivational thought structure to develop as personal goals developed.

Ushioda (2001) also warned us of the damaging implication of the cause-and-effect relationship, with success for the poorly motivated unsuccessful language learners, because they might be trapped in a vicious circle of negative learning experiences and negative motivation. Ushioda's view of the developmental nature of motivation is very useful for university EFL classrooms, especially in the introduction level, because many students have experienced a failure in learning English during the past six years, do not set clear goals and have a limited motivation at the beginning of the course.

Motivational changes, or the developmental nature of motivation, have been documented with both negative and positive directions of development by several researchers. A combined quantitative and qualitative investigation into the motivation of secondary school students in England was conducted by Williams, Burden, and Lanvers (2002). They found a clear negative trend with age in terms of the students' integrative orientation, their feeling about the competence of their teachers, as well as the perceived importance of learning a foreign language. This negative trend was found between Years 7 and 9 cohorts. Students in Year 7 with enthusiasm to learn a foreign language at the beginning were found to be less motivated in Year 9.

Williams et al. (2002) also found that perceived success, perceived proficiency, and the amount of effort decreased significantly over the first three years at secondary school. They concluded that learners were found to become more external in their attributions for success and failure in learning a foreign language as they grew older (Williams & Burden, 1999, Williams et al. 2002). However, they did not investigate why this negative trend had happened, as well as in what way and when.

A more detailed longitudinal investigation into the mechanism of motivational development, including exactly when, why and how students' perception of learning changes over time, is required in order to apply the findings of the study to the classroom teaching.

In a university setting, a motivational change over a period of one academic year was observed by Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant, and Mihic (2004). They postulated the socio-educational model, proposing that language learning is a dynamic process, as opposed to a static one, in which an affective variable influences language achievement, the level of language achievement and the experience of learning a language. They found that there is a general tendency for the scores on the measures of language attitudes, motivation, and anxiety to decrease from the fall to the spring semester. Their investigation of individual change assessed in terms of the analysis of the different scores demonstrated that the possibility of change is not great, but is larger for variables directly associated with the classroom environment than for more general variables, such as instrumental orientation or integrativeness. This result is important to investigate why and how this negative tendency for the scores of the measure on motivation appear in a university setting.

Qualitative research to determine what motivates students to choose to study Spanish as a second language and remain in the programme past the usual two years was conducted by Shedivy (2004). She conducted a taped interview with five participants; these interviews were between two and four hours in length. Through the analysis of the data, she found several motivational components of L2 learners, also discussed by Gardner and MacIntyre (1993): desire, effort, satisfaction, integrativeness, and attitudes towards culture and the learning situation.

The findings illustrate that the desire to integrate grew over time. Shedivy's study focused

attention on the integrativeness of the target culture as a motivational component. The language learning situation of Japanese university EFL is not that of a second language, the language which plays an important role in the community, or the society, but of a complete foreign language students, without L2 community around them.

It will be assumed that integrativeness would rarely appear as a motivational component of our students. However, this study is instructive in two senses. Firstly, the study illustrates the possibility of the investigation of motivational development over a longer time period in the way of a lifelong story. Secondly, the study demonstrates the usefulness of an in-depth interview of a limited number of participants.

Furthermore, Shedy commented that:

A qualitative study can more directly refer to the students' thoughts, and may show how students differ in the way they value and interpret their goals. These thoughts can illustrate how differences in motivational thinking may affect their involvement in learning. Likewise, the story of my participants is a picture of a journey or path that led to some very accomplished Spanish speakers. A chart or a table does not capture the story, but it is my hope that the descriptions and interpretations have shown the spark, the immersion, and the desire to blend in as a new frame around an old picture (p.117).

In the Japanese university setting, Nakata (2006) conducted a longitudinal and qualitative investigation of motivational development. In Japanese university settings, learners are usually demotivated by their learning experience in junior high school and high school and by learning English for the entrance examination to universities. In addition, the Japanese English learning setting is not that of L2, but of EFL. Thus, integrativeness and attitudes postulated by Gardner (1985) are not expected among Japanese learners.

Nakata proposes *an early-stage model of motivational development* that is well suited to Japanese learners. Nakata's model emphasizes the existence of the autonomy threshold, a barrier for the learners to cross to become an autonomous learner, in a real sense. Nakata (2006) describes such learners as:

Learners who pass this threshold are able to see the whole learning process clearly while considering learning at school as part of their learning, understand the meaning of learning and why they are learning, actively take responsibility for their learning and set goals, and thus ready themselves for individual learning in the long term. Such learners study not only because it is fun but also because they think it is meaningful (pp. 136–137).

In Nakata's model of the early stages of motivational development, the intrinsic motivation of students who have been exposed to grammar-translation, rote-memorization, and/or the teacher-centred approach, commonly used methods in Japanese high schools, may be damaged. However, through the social interactive process, with a more communication oriented learning environment, students' intrinsic motivation can be revived. With motivation

empowered by a social interactive process, such as group learning, self-expression, discussions, and freedom of choice, students can cross their autonomy threshold.

Nakata considers motivation to be a necessary impetus that helps students to pass over the threshold, thus, cognitive and motivational self-regulation is crucial in language learning at the personal level. However, social interaction between students in the learning environment plays a major role in enhancing students' intrinsic motivations.

Nakata (2006) collected qualitative data from five open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires over one academic year from five university students classified into five different learner types: a goal-directed learner, a hard-working learner, an intrinsically motivated learner, a more confident learner, and a reflective learner. Students learn by focusing on social interactions, including cooperative work, discussions with the topic of a students' choice, self-expression opportunities, both in writing and in speaking, computer-mediated learning, essay writing and oral presentations. Based on the qualitative data, Nakata found that the learners can enhance both their affective and cognitive aspects of motivation by interacting with others and internalizing the significance of learning. He also found that students' conceptions of, and attitudes towards, English and the process of learning English changed when they realized the usefulness of being in situations in which they could learn the language by using it. He mentioned that students' confidence increased when they employed English as a genuine means of communication and self-expression (first through writing and then through speaking).

## **Conclusion**

I have overviewed how L2 motivation research has developed from a L2 community-specific concept to more general application of motivation in learning English as a global language that has a possibility for application to EFL learners in Japan. In addition, I have examined the motivation research in focusing on actual progression, or the development of motivation as a process in language classrooms. My past teaching experience led me to be in line with Nakata's finding, because I have found that most Japanese students failed to have motivation to learn English caused by the fact they had not been offered real opportunities and environments where they used English as a genuine means of communication and self-expression. At the same time, I assume it is not easy for many Japanese higher education settings to offer these opportunities for students who have not reached the level of proficiency to “use” English in the practical sense and enjoy this kind of opportunity. As Nakata (2006) mentioned, the motivational threshold is “not one that learners with weak motivation can easily pass over, for a certain level of motivation is necessarily required to achieve autonomy” (p.137). For the learners who have limited motivation, cognitive and motivational self-regulation, stronger autonomy support to achieve this “certain level of motivation” should be provided.

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