

LEARNING MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS STUDYING SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT TAIWANESE UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Globalization and economic growth have led to a trend of increasing travel to experience different cultures and caused continued expansion of the tourism industry. The economic benefits of inbound and outbound tourism are extensive. The tourism industry is the one of fastest-growing sectors in Taiwan and has a high economic output. Not only is English compulsory in Taiwanese universities, but second foreign languages (SFLs), especially Japanese, have also become popular elective courses. In this study, we employed a learning motivation questionnaire that had 275 respondents, of whose responses 252 were valid. The statistical results revealed that 75.8% of the students were studying Japanese language, which was the most popular SFL. These participants intended to learn an SFL not only for their careers but also for travel purposes.

The results indicated that of seven aspects, students' main learning motivations for SFL were self-efficacy and task value. Students who majored in humanities and social sciences expressed stronger work ethics and were motivated by higher expectations of success. In addition, students who had not yet passed the requirements of foreign language had strong test anxiety. The method of channelizing students' learning motivations for teaching and learning SFLs is an important concern. Through this study, it is hoped that the attention of SFL educators can be focused on students' learning motivations.

Keywords: Second Foreign Language (SFL), Learning Motivation, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

INTRODUCTION

The trend of globalization and economic growth has caused people not only to recognize the importance of foreign languages for their careers but also to be more willing to travel and experience different cultures and lifestyles. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has analyzed the trends of global tourism. In 2016, international tourist arrivals (overnight visitors) increased by 3.9% to reach a total of 1,235 million worldwide, an increase of 46 million over the previous year. This was the seventh consecutive year of above-average growth in international tourism following the 2009 global economic crisis. However, Asia and the Pacific exhibited the highest growth in 2016, with a 9% increase in international arrivals, followed by Africa (+8%) and the Americas (+3%) (UNWTO, 2017). In Taiwan, the tourism industry has exhibited impressive growth. In 2014, the total number of visitors to Taiwan was 9.91 million, followed by 13.18 and 14.59 million in 2015 and 2016, respectively. The total number of inbound tourism increased to 10.69 million in 2016.

The importance of English for promoting internationalization in higher education cannot be overemphasized. In 2004, Taiwanese universities established a threshold of English standard for graduation, and more than 90% of the schools adopted this standard. However, an

increasing number of studies have demonstrated that setting an English graduation threshold is unreasonable. These studies provide extensive discussions on foreign language teaching and learning. Many studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have emphasized the importance of student motivation and teaching methods (Li, Lin, & Lin, 2007; Wu, 2009; Wu, Chang, & Lo, 2009; Wu & Lin, 2009; Tsau & Hao, 2010). However, considerably fewer studies have been conducted on second foreign languages (SFLs). A Chinese electronic journal service database query indicated that 654 articles on "English learning" and 109 articles on "learning motivation" have been published since 2011. By contrast, 230 papers have been published on "second foreign language learning" and 19 studies on "learning motivation." Evidently, studies on SFL are relatively limited in Taiwan.

Foreign language learning and teaching are important courses in Taiwan's higher education. In 2008, the Ministry of Education established the Information Centre for International Cooperation and Exchange to promote students' foreign language ability. The 'New Southbound Policy' promotion plan is a new educational policy that differs from previous education industry initiatives that have aimed to attract students to Taiwan. It emphasizes the development of Taiwan from an agricultural and industrial society to a modern society with information technology and service industries. The policy also developed a series of innovative ideas and programs to lead Taiwanese educational institutions to initiate exchanges with South Asian countries (MOE, 2016). Thus, it anticipates increased English learning. The purpose of this study was to explore the foreign language learning motivation and SFL learning needs of college students in Taiwan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Second Foreign Language Education in Taiwan

Globalization has profoundly influenced the social conditions and educational systems of countries around the world. The interrelationships between countries have formed the "global village." For education, the basic international elements are information capability and language skills. In addition to the international common language, the cultivation of the SFL ability is also negligible. Senior high schools in Taiwan have included SFLs in elective courses since 1983. However, the Ministry of Education began to promote the strengthening of SFL education programs for senior high schools in 2010. Moreover, in 2004, Taiwanese universities established a threshold for English graduation. The adoption of standardized English Language Proficiency (ELP) tests as a tool for assessing students' English competence for graduation has become increasingly common in Taiwan's higher education. Currently, more than 90% of the schools in Taiwan have a graduation threshold for foreign languages.

Wen (2008) noted that establishing thresholds for English tests in universities had a negative effect on English learning effectiveness and failed to address the problems associated with students learning English. A study of English graduation thresholds conducted by Tsai and Tsou (2009) included 520 college students and found that only 21% supported English graduation thresholds, 44% did not support them, and 35% withholding their opinion. There was a significant negative attitude toward ELP tests among students who felt high pressure in English language learning compared with students who felt medium or low pressure. The researchers concluded that motivation, rather than pressure, are the key to determining whether the new assessment policy of the graduation threshold requirement can succeed in promoting the quality of foreign language education in higher education institutions in Taiwan. In a review of the English graduation threshold policy in Taiwanese universities, Her et al. (2013) noted that standardized ELP tests can place considerable pressure on students

learning English and contradict the autonomy of universities' decision-making about foreign language education. Her et al. (2013) argued that the Ministry of Education and universities should reexamine the policy of English graduation thresholds and return to focusing on education, committing to reform and enhance English education at the universities. Hence, an increasing number of higher education institutions have adopted a wider standard for foreign language studies regarding students' graduation thresholds, including SFL learning.

Learning Motivation for Foreign Languages

Motivation has an important role in foreign language learning and has been found to support student engagement and enhance the attainment of learning outcomes (Pintrich, 2003). Motivated students devote effort to performing learning tasks, persist when they encounter problems, and regulate their learning (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Bomia et al. (1997) noted that learning motivation "refers to a student's willingness, need, desire and compulsion to participate in, and be successful in, the learning process." Motivation causes students to engage in academic activities, ensures that they persist when encountering difficulties, and determines how much they learn.

Pintrich, Smith, Garcia, and McKeachie (1991) created a self-report instrument entitled the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ). This instrument comprises two parts, the first measuring the six aspects of motivation and the second measuring nine types of learning strategies (e.g., rehearsal, organization, elaboration, and peer learning). The MSLQ is one of the most widely used instruments for measuring students' academic motivation and learning strategies (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005). The MSLQ questionnaire was translated by Taiwanese scholars Wu and Cheng (1992). They validated the MSLQ and divided learning motivation into seven aspects:

- i. Intrinsic goal orientation: Goal orientation refers to students' perception of the reasons for engaging in a learning task. Intrinsic goal orientation concerns the degree to which students perceive themselves to be participating in a task for reasons such as satisfying curiosity, achieving mastery, or wishing to be challenged.
- ii. Extrinsic goal orientation: Extrinsic goal orientation complements intrinsic goal orientation and concerns the degree to which students perceive themselves to be participating in tasks for reasons such as grades, rewards, performance, evaluation by others, and competition.
- iii. Task value: Task value differs from goal orientation and refers to students' evaluation of how interesting, important, or useful a task is.
- iv. Control of learning: Control of learning refers to students' beliefs that their efforts to learn will result in positive outcomes. It concerns the belief that outcomes are contingent on individual effort, in contrast to external factors such as the teacher or other students.
- v. Self-efficacy: Self-efficacy involves self-appraisal by students of their ability to master a task. Self-efficacy includes judgments about personal ability to accomplish a task and confidence in possessing the skills to perform that task.
- vi. Expectancy for success: Expectancy for success refers to performance expectations and relates specifically to task performance.
- vii. Test anxiety: Test anxiety has been found to be negatively related to expectancies as well as academic performance.

Many studies on EFL learning motivation in Taiwan have applied the MSLQ. These studies have validated the questionnaire and emphasized the importance of student motivation or teaching methods (Wu, 2004; Li, Lin, & Lin, 2007; Wu, 2009; Wu, Chang, & Lo, 2009; Wu & Lin, 2009; Tsau & Hao, 2010). Wu and Lin (2009) noted that English learning motivation is a mediator of English learning environment and English learning strategies. Wu (2009) explored the relationship among English learning motivation, action control, meta-cognition, and the learning performance of college students and found that college students' learning performance is significantly influenced by action control and meta-cognition. Fan and Feng (2012) discussed learning motivation theory perspectives and provided strong evidential support for behavioral theory. Their study indicated that learning experiences affect learning motivations.

Motivation is a crucial factor in the effectiveness of language learning and teaching. Gardner and Tremblay (1995) found that achievement in second language learning has a positive correlation with motivation. Dornyei (1994) argued that motivation is one of the main factors determining achievement in second language learning. In addition, Oxford and Shearin (1994) found that motivation determines the extent to which individuals actively engage in second language learning. Van Raay (1998) highlighted that students have a positive attitude toward learning language, whether they have a sense of accomplishment.

Numerous studies have examined learning motivation and EFL study; however, relatively few studies of SFL have been conducted in Taiwan. A study by Lu (2011) was based on examining the Japanese learning of students from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at Providence University and evaluated the relationship between motivations and strategies of Japanese language learning. Mo and Ko (2011) noted that SFL has become more important in Taiwan due to the global village and the prosperousness of the tourism industry, which have both increased the numbers of language learners. To characterize SFL learners' motivation more precisely, the present study addressed the following three research questions:

1. What motivational constructs play a role in the SFL learning of Taiwanese college students?
2. What are the SFL learning needs and learning motivations of Taiwanese college students?
3. Do SFL learning motivations differ in accordance with the different situations of Taiwanese college students?

METHODOLOGY

Survey Administration and Sampling

The aim of this study was to understand SFL students' learning motivation and compare the learning motivation of students in different situations. In this study, the learning motivation scale for SFL was obtained from Wu and Cheng (1992), who translated the MSLQ developed by Pintrich, Smith, and McKeachie (1991). This scale was tested and verified in Taiwan by Wu and Cheng (1992) and subsequent scholars (Wu, 2004; Wu, 2009; Li, Lin, & Lin, 2007; Wu & Lin, 2009; Fan & Feng, 2012; Feng, Fan, & Yang, 2013), displaying good quality and validity. The test comprises 35 items and is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all true of me*) to 5 (*very true of me*).

The research sample comprised the authors' classrooms at National United University, Taiwan. The participants of this study were 252 students enrolled in general education

courses. National United University was established in 1969 mainly for industry-related technologies. The university has now expanded to six colleges, Engineering and Science, Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Management, Hakka Studies, Humanities and Social Sciences, and the College of Design.

Data Analysis

A questionnaire was used for data collection. The data were analyzed using the Statistics Package for Social Science (SPSS). Statistical measures included confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), descriptive statistics, and the *t* test. Hoyle (2000) indicated that factor analysis is a family of statistical strategies used to model unmeasured sources of variability in a set of scores. CFA, otherwise referred to as restricted factor analysis, structural factor analysis, or the measurement model, is typically used in a deductive mode to test hypotheses regarding unmeasured sources of variability responsible for the commonality among a set of scores. Therefore, CFA was performed to identify the underlying constructs in participants' SFL learning motivation. Descriptive statistics were calculated not only for the participants' demographics but also to reflect the mean scores and standard deviations of the motivational factors affecting their learning. The *t* test was applied to investigate the significance of differences in learning motivation.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

This research focused on SFL study. The participants had SFL course experience. The participants of this research totaled 252 students after 23 students' were rejected because of incomplete questionnaires. A total of 214 (84.9%) students were enrolled in the undergraduate system and 38 (15.1%) in the extension system. A total of 140 students majored in humanities and social sciences (55.6%), and 112 students majored in other fields. Students who had already achieved the necessary foreign language standard to pass the graduation threshold numbered 94 persons. The demographic profile data of the respondents are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant demographics (N=252)

| <i>Demographics</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| System | | |
| Undergraduate system | 214 | 84.9% |
| Extension system | 38 | 15.1% |
| Field major | | |
| Humanities and Social Sciences | 140 | 55.6% |
| Management and Design | 22 | 8.7% |
| Science and Technology | 90 | 35.7% |
| Graduation threshold | | |
| Yes | 94 | 37.3% |
| Not yet | 158 | 62.7% |

Table 2. Second foreign language elective intent (N=252)

| <i>Items</i> | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percentage</i> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Second foreign language | (Multiple choice) | |
| Japanese language | 191 | 75.8% |
| Korean language | 78 | 31.0% |
| Southeast Asialanguages | 35 | 13.9% |
| French language | 91 | 36.1% |
| German language | 74 | 29.4% |
| Europe languages | 64 | 25.4% |
| After graduation needs in job | | |
| Yes | 208 | 82.6% |
| Unclear | 40 | 15.9% |
| No | 4 | 1.5% |
| After graduation needs in life | | |
| Yes | 207 | 82.1% |
| Unclear | 28 | 11.1% |
| No | 17 | 6.8% |

In Taiwan, the formal education system with English as the main foreign language study, there were still 191 students who intended to study Japanese language in the future, accounting for 75.8% of the total 252 students. A total of 78 people intended to study Korean language. Only 35 students wanted to study Southeast Asian languages, despite the Taiwanese government promoting the New Southbound Policy. In addition, 36.1% and 29.4% of the students intended to study French or German languages. A total of 64 students (25.4%) intended to study other European languages. These data indicate that college students who want to learn Japanese language collectively have substantially higher resource requirements than those studying other second foreign languages.

Table 2 shows that college students consider SFL to be necessary for work and their general life after graduation. A total of 82.6% students answered “yes” regarding employment, and 82.1% of students answered “yes” regarding use in their general life. Evidently, college students consider learning SFLs to be important and are very willing to study them.

Learning Motivations in SFL Study

Seven factors related to participants’ motivation were extracted from the questionnaire responses, and these explained approximately 75% of the variance. Factor loadings of less than 0.3 were deleted, leaving 30 items classifying seven factors. The reliability coefficients [Cronbach’s alpha (α)] ranged from 0.549 to 0.837, which were considered acceptable values for this reliability test. Table 3 presents a summary of the measurement scales and content of the items related to each factor in order of descending factor loading.

The three items ($\alpha=0.549$) related to the first factor, intrinsic goal orientation, appear in Table 3. The second motivational factor, extrinsic goal orientation, is reflected by four items ($\alpha=0.665$). Task value is reflected by six items ($\alpha=0.800$). The factor of control beliefs about learning is reflected by five items ($\alpha=0.585$). Self-efficacy is reflected by 6 items ($\alpha=0.837$). Expectations of success is reflected by three items ($\alpha=0.683$). Test anxiety is reflected by four

items ($\alpha=0.671$). This shows that in order of importance, the factors affecting students' learning motivation are self-efficacy, task value, expectations of success, test anxiety, extrinsic goal orientation, control beliefs about learning, and intrinsic goal orientation.

These items suggest that learners are motivated to learn SFL through self-appraisal of their ability to master a task, judgments about their ability to accomplish a task, and confidence in their skill in performing that task. However, valuable motivations are their self-evaluations of how interesting, important, and useful a task is. In conclusion, students who evaluated SFL as being important in their future job or life and were able to master a task were more motivated to learn a foreign language.

Table 3 (Part-I). Summary of learning motivations

| <i>Factors</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Cronbach's α</i> |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Intrinsic goal orientation</i> | 3.703 | 0.831 | 0.549 |
| It is important for me to learn what is being taught in this class. | 3.74 | 0.862 | |
| I expect to perform very well in this class. | 3.66 | 0.799 | |
| I was most satisfied with the foreign language course content as possible to thoroughly clear. | 3.71 | 0.833 | |
| <i>Extrinsic goal orientation</i> | 3.475 | 0.951 | 0.665 |
| When I achieve good grades, I am most satisfied. | 3.81 | 0.857 | |
| The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade. | 3.01 | 1.093 | |
| Compared with others in this class, I think I am a good student. | 3.79 | 0.871 | |
| I work hard to obtain a good grade even when I do not like the class. | 3.29 | 0.982 | |
| <i>Task value</i> | 3.858 | 0.732 | 0.800 |
| I think I will be able to use what I learn in this class in other classes. | 3.83 | 0.679 | |
| Even when study materials are dull and uninteresting, I continue working until I finish. | 3.93 | 0.682 | |
| I think that what we are learning in this class is interesting. | 3.68 | 0.824 | |
| I think that what I am learning in this class is useful. | 4.14 | 0.728 | |
| I like what I am learning in this class. | 3.60 | 0.758 | |
| Understanding this subject is important to me. | 3.96 | 0.719 | |
| <i>Control beliefs about learning</i> | 3.678 | 0.768 | 0.585 |
| If I adopt the right approach, I can learn foreign languages more effectively. | 3.98 | 0.691 | |
| If I do not know the contents of the foreign language class, it is because I am not studying hard. | 3.60 | 0.804 | |
| I always try to understand what the teacher is saying even if it does not make sense. | 3.62 | 0.807 | |
| If I study sufficiently hard, I will understand the content of the English class. | 3.87 | 0.708 | |
| When I study, I put important ideas into my own words. | 3.31 | 0.828 | |

Table 3 (Part-II). Summary of learning motivations

| <i>Factors</i> | <i>Mean</i> | <i>S.D.</i> | <i>Cronbach's α</i> |
|---|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Self-efficacy</i> | 3.096 | 0.776 | 0.837 |
| I am certain I can understand the ideas taught in this course. | 2.89 | 0.818 | |
| I know that I will be able to learn the material for this class. | 3.41 | 0.840 | |
| My study skills are excellent compared with others in this class. | 2.94 | 0.791 | |
| Considering the degree of difficulty of the foreign language class, the teacher, and my personal skills, I will perform well. | 3.17 | 0.772 | |
| I am sure I can master the skills taught in foreign language class. | 3.07 | 0.658 | |
| <i>Expectations of success</i> | 3.307 | 0.769 | 0.683 |
| I think I will receive a good grade in this class. | 3.20 | 0.725 | |
| I expect to do very well in this class. | 3.19 | 0.833 | |
| I am sure I can perform excellently in overcoming the problems and completing the tasks assigned for this class. | 3.53 | 0.749 | |
| <i>Test anxiety</i> | 3.095 | 1.044 | 0.671 |
| When I take a test, I think about how poorly I am doing. | 2.88 | 1.029 | |
| I worry a great deal about tests. | 3.30 | 1.091 | |
| I feel uneasy and distressed when I take a test. | 3.00 | 1.039 | |
| I am so nervous during a test that I cannot remember the facts I have learned. | 3.20 | 1.015 | |

Table 3 indicates the relative strength of each of the seven motivational factors in the students' motivation to learn SFL. Task value has the highest mean score ($M=3.858$) and the lowest standard deviation ($SD=0.732$), demonstrating that students' responses to the items measuring self-actualization were highly concentrated around the mean score. This implies that most students agreed that their desire to obtain a sense of task value or achievement was the most influential motivation for their learning SFL. Intrinsic goal orientation was the second most dominant factor in students' SFL learning motivation ($M=3.703$, $SD=0.831$), followed by control beliefs about learning, extrinsic goal orientation, expectations of success, self-efficacy, and test anxiety.

Table 4. Difference analysis of learning motivations (N=252)

| <i>Items</i> | <i>Field major</i> | <i>Learn before</i> | <i>Graduation threshold</i> |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| Intrinsic goal oriented | 1.545 | -1.622 | 0.930 |
| Extrinsic goal oriented | 1.264 | 0.203 | 0.594 |
| Task value | 3.824*** | -2.017* | 0.343 |
| Control beliefs about learning | 1.075 | -0.140 | -0.768 |
| Self-efficacy | 1.375 | -1.084 | -1.679 |
| Expectations of success | 1.950* | -1.566 | 1.796 |
| Test anxiety | 1.056 | 0.293 | -3.404** |

* $p<0.05$; ** $p<0.01$; *** $p<0.001$

Analysis of Learning Motivations between Student Characteristics

Table 4 presents the differences in learning motivations among students in various situations. Intrinsic and extrinsic goal orientations were not significantly different in any situations. For task value, the differences in the field of major ($t=3.824$) and previous learning experience of an SFL ($t=-2.017$) were statistically significant. Students who majored in humanities and social sciences perceived a higher task value. This implies that these students believe that SFL will improve their career skills. However, the students who had not previously studied an SFL perceived a higher task value. Large statistically significant differences in field of major ($t=1.950$) were also evident for expectations of success. Students who majored in humanities and social sciences exhibited higher expectations of success in SFL learning. As expected, students who did not pass the foreign language graduation threshold exhibited considerably higher measures of test anxiety ($t=-3.404$).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Encouraged by the Ministry of Education, the majority of Taiwan's universities have adopted an English benchmark policy for graduation. After numerous scholars criticized the adoption of standardized ELP tests as a graduation threshold, a wider standard of foreign language studies was adopted. In addition, economic growth and globalization have caused people to be more willing to learn SFLs. This study involved examining 252 students through a questionnaire. A total of 191 respondents (75.8%) intended to study Japanese language, followed by 91 students for French, 78 for Korean, 74 for German, 64 for other European and American languages, and 35 students for other East Asian languages. This result indicated that a considerably higher number of college students had studied or expected to study Japanese than other SFLs. This suggests that the New Southbound Talent Development policy of the Taiwan MOE is not having an impact in schools. All students intended to learn SFL not only for their careers but also for travel.

However, based on CFA, in order of importance, students' learning motivations for SFLs were self-efficacy, task value, expectations of success, test anxiety, extrinsic goal orientation, control beliefs about learning, and intrinsic goal orientation. The results indicate that of the seven aspects, students' learning motivations for SFL were mainly self-efficacy and task value. A study by Lu (2011) found that students' main motivations for learning Japanese were "the teacher anticipation", "independent study", "the nature of language learning", "study characteristics" and "uneasiness". The results indicate that students' learning motivations for SFL were self-efficacy and task value-oriented with respect to future careers. It is that learners are motivated to learn SFL through self-appraisal of their ability to master a task, judgments about their ability to accomplish a task, and confidence in their skill in performing that task.

However, those students who majored in humanities and social sciences courses perceived higher task values and had higher expectations of success. In addition, students who had not yet passed the foreign language standard for graduation exhibited strong test anxiety levels. Channelizing the students' learning motivations for teaching and learning SFLs is an important concern.

Higher education institutions should establish relevant SFL courses based on students' learning requirements (future career or life requirements) and characteristics. This study suggests that teachers should understand the learning motivation and learning strategies of students in order to inspire learners with the desire to learn.

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