Abstract

Motivation, attitudes and persistence were the focus in an Australian study that investigated what keeps learners going to reach an advanced level of Japanese while so many give up along the way. The study used Robert Gardner’s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (1985) to measure motivation/attitudes, while focus group interviews provided triangulation. The possible synthesis of L2 motivational models (by Dörnyei, Gardner, Noels, and Ushioda) proposed in Dörnyei’s L2 Motivation Self System (2005) provided the theoretical framework.

This paper will demonstrate a link that exists between passion and motivation, associated with persistence in learning Japanese. It will be shown that L2 motivation can be defined in terms of passion. However, a passionate activity is inherently self-defining, in the sense that someone passionate about writing songs may eventually see themself as a songwriter. This implies a certain level of motivation and degree of persistence. Some advanced learners seemed to have developed a self-image as speakers of Japanese. Highlighted by outcomes of the investigative study, a connection is made between the self-defining aspect of a passionate activity and persistence in the formal study of Japanese. The paper concludes by drawing a connecting thread between passion and persistence, motivation and language identity.

Keywords

L2 motivation, persistence, language identity, Harmonious Passion

1. Introduction

I have been part of a research team investigating what keeps some learners of Japanese going to reach an advanced level of the language while many give up along the way. This paper is based on the findings of a study that is part of that project. The focus of the study was second language (L2) motivation using Robert Gardner’s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (1985) as the measure of motivation/attitudes, with focus group interviews providing triangulation. This paper will demonstrate a link that exists between passion and motivation, associated with persistence in learning Japanese. It will be shown that L2 motivation can be defined in terms of passion.

Using findings from the study, in this paper, I intend to focus on two issues:

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• That Passion and L2 motivation can be linked theoretically
• That developing a self-image as a speaker of the L2 as Dörnyei (2005) proposed can also be linked with passion.

The possible synthesis of four major L2 motivational models proposed in Dörnyei’s L2 Motivation Self System (2005) provided the theoretical framework for my research, and I became especially interested in the possible convergence of Dörnyei’s and Gardner’s theories of motivation.

2. Background

Dörnyei has proposed a synthesis of four influential L2 motivational models in the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005). The components of each of the models fall into three main divisions. Firstly, each of the models appears to agree that L2 motivation consists of an educational component. Dörnyei’s Learning Experience and the Intrinsic category of Noels’ (2003) Orientations Model are related to the Actual Learning Process (consisting of Language-Related Enjoyment/Liking, Positive Learning History, Personal Satisfaction) of Ushioda’s (2001) Dimensions Model. It is the attitudes (Attitudes Toward the Learning Situation) that are stressed in Gardner’s Socio-Educational model (of Second Language Acquisition).

Secondly, the four models include a pragmatic/utilitarian aspect, one that illustrates pressures external to the learner. Dörnyei’s Ought-to L2 Self corresponds to Gardner’s Instrumentality (and Motivation). Both are grouped with Extrinsic types of orientations in Noels’ model, together with the second cluster of External pressures/incentives from Ushioda’s model.

Thirdly, in contrast with the pragmatic dimension, the four models involve some kind of integrative, or inter-group aspect. Initially, Gardner and Lambert (1959) proposed that learning an L2 involves this social/cultural aspect, which they called ‘integrativeness’. Integrativeness is grouped with Noels’ Integrative component and a broadly Integrative cluster from Ushioda’s model consisting of Personal Goals, Desired Levels of L2 Competence, Academic Interest, Feelings about L2 Countries/People.

Gardner’s scientific approach to motivation and the sophisticated level of statistics used in his tests of motivation and outcomes is awe-inspiring, particularly in times pre-dating the personal computer. On the other hand, Ushioda’s (2001) stance against so much quantitative research is understandable, not least because some of the most illuminating material in this study came from focus group interviews. Moreover, the data supports Dörnyei’s (2005) concept that a learner may eventually define themself as a speaker of the target language, as part of their identity. Incorporating the possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986), Dörnyei theorised that, if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, we would be strongly motivated to reduce the discrepancy between our actual self and our Ideal Self (Dörnyei, 2005). It would seem that, developing a language identity implies a certain degree of persistence, and, level of motivation.
3. What is motivation?

A simple definition of motivation by Keller states that “Motivation refers to the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort they will exert in that respect” (1983:389 in Crookes & Schmidt, 1991:481). Keller’s model of motivational design (ARCS, 1983) identified four major determinants of motivation that give the model its name: attention (interest), relevance, confidence (expectancy), and satisfaction (outcomes). The second of these, relevance, is necessary for “sustained motivation [and] requires the learner to perceive that important personal needs are being met by the learning situation” (Keller, 1983:406).

Motivation consists of seven aspects, according to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), some of which are internal to the learner, such as interest in the language. Other aspects, including persistence over time, are external. Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) suggests that motivation is a continuum ranging from a lack of motivation, or amotivation at one extreme through to somewhat more self-determined forms of extrinsic motivation, to the most self-determined form of intrinsic motivation at the opposite extreme. Intrinsically motivated refers to an action that is rewarding in itself, rather than one undertaken as a means to an end that is rewarded or satisfied (‘extrinsic’ motivation).

If the whole person were not engaged in learning the L2 of his/her own volition typically they would be less persevering with their study, according to both the Self-Determination theory (Noels, 2000; Ramage, 1990), and Gardner. To Gardner, motivation is “a total state of the individual, not a simple interest in the language or a desire to please a teacher or parent, or to pass an exam” (Gardner, 1985:10). Motivation is attitudinal, and is a combination of three elements that differentiate between learners who are more motivated and those who are less motivated: the desire to learn the language, combined with positive attitudes towards learning the language, and effort expended to learn the language. Moreover, motivation is subject to change through “reinforcement associated with the act of learning” (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993:4).

“One of the prime characteristics of motivation is that it ebbs and flows” (Garcia, 1999:231). To account for such changes in motivation over time, a model of L2 motivation as a process with three distinct motivational stages was developed (by Dörnyei & Otto, 1998), although identifying the boundaries of each proved difficult. Nevertheless, to motivational psychologists, how one thinks about aspects such as one’s abilities, past performance, and the benefits or goals to be attained is a crucial aspect of motivation (Dörnyei, 2005:74).

The initial concept of L2 motivation came from social psychology and Robert Gardner (1985), where Motivation is one of three main components in the Socio-Educational Model of SLA. Figure 1 shows the basic model of the role of aptitude and motivation in second language learning. Motivation and language aptitude have a direct influence on language achievement (shown by the arrows of direction). In turn, Motivation is influenced by Integrativeness and Attitudes toward the Learning Situation, which play supportive roles. Not only is the relationship between motivation and achievement seen as dynamic, but also the motivational construct itself since motivation is subject to change through “reinforcement associated with the act of learning” (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993:4). It was apparent that motivation might be altered through the changing of attitudes. Here, discussion will concern only the Motivation component.
Motivation consists of three subcomponents: effort or motivational intensity, desire to learn the L2, and attitudes toward learning the L2. These are the measures of Motivation in Gardner’s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which themselves consist of a number of items, and were used in this study.

Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) asserts that individuals are driven to explore their environment; consequently they engage in a number of activities, and only a few will be seen as important, or to have some “resonance” with how people see themselves. “From these few activities one or two will eventually be preferred and engaged in on a regular basis and turn out to be passionate” (Vallerand, 2012:3). The Dualistic Model of Passion (Vallerand et al., 2003) distinguishes between Obsessive Passion and Harmonious Passion. Harmonious Passion (or HP) is defined as “a strong inclination toward a self-defining activity that people like (or even love), find important (valuable), and in which they invest time and energy” regularly (Vallerand, 2012:3). These three elements that define HP are shown on the right in Figure 2. Gardner’s three measures of Motivation can be seen on the left, and refer to the individual’s total drive to learn the L2: motivational desire to learn the L2, motivational intensity or effort, and positive attitudes toward learning the L2.
Comparing them simply: Someone who shows strong *motivational desire* probably sees the activity to be *valuable*. *Motivational intensity* or effort indicates *regular effort*. Positive attitudes toward learning reflect *enjoyment or love*. Therefore, by extension, an individual who scores highly on these three AMTB measures might be considered to be not only highly motivated but passionate about the learning activity as well.

However, a passionate activity is not simply an activity that one sees as valuable, loves, and engages in regularly. The activity “becomes an inherent part of who the person is” (Vallerand, 2012:3). A passionate activity may come to define the person, in the sense that those passionate about playing piano, or writing songs, come to see themselves as pianists, or songwriters. Passion (or HP) might be expressed as:

\[
\text{Passion} = \text{Motivation} + \text{Identification}
\]

Regularly engaging in activities that are enjoyable might lead to a passion towards these activities, which can become incorporated into a person’s identity. This could tie in with the concept of a learner developing a self-identity as a speaker of the L2 (Dörnyei, 2005; 2009). The self-defining aspect of a passionate activity may develop with respect to an Ideal L2 Self (or Ought-to L2 Self).

In relation to the present study, a passionate activity could be not only the learning of Japanese but also engagement in Japanese Popular Culture (J-pop).

4. The study

Participants in this study attended ten senior high schools (n=464) and four universities (n=164) in the Sydney area (see Table 1). The school study consisted of Years 10, 11 and 12, the equivalent of senior high school (*kōtōgakkō*) in Japan. There was a second round of data collection in the university study.
The study used a mixed methods research design, consisting of a number of questionnaires as quantitative measures and focus group interviews as triangulation, as detailed in the following.

### 4.1 Questionnaires

(i) The demographics questionnaire gathered data about the participants. It also contained an *Intention to Continue* measure, which allowed the sample to be divided into two groups: those who intended to continue formal study of Japanese (the *stay-ins*), and those who intended to discontinue (the *drop-outs*).

(ii) The *Motivation and Attitudes* questionnaire consisted of 30 items selected from the Attitude/Motivational Test Battery (AMTB; Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997), which used a 7-point Likert format.

(iii) A learner autonomy questionnaire asked how often participants engaged in a number of autonomous learning activities. The first section, *Habits*, specified learning activities both in the classroom and *out* of the classroom. The second part, *Activities*, identified activities initiated by participants themselves outside the classroom. SPSS (17) was used for analysis of all surveys.

### 4.2 Interviews

Questionnaires were augmented with focus group interviews involving another 43 university learners. Interview 1 revealed autonomous study habits and activities among eight beginners.

Interview 2 involved six students considered to be of advanced-level, as all had completed Third Year Japanese, and three had proceeded to an Honours course requiring a fourth year of Japanese study and research. [Interviews 1 and 2 are discussed in some detail in Northwood & Thomson, 2012]. Interview 3 involved 29 learners of various levels of Japanese proficiency.
5. Results and Discussion

All participants were currently, or had been learners of Japanese who volunteered to take part. Possibly due to the voluntary nature of the study, it was found that the majority intended to continue their study of Japanese. Nevertheless, differences between the two overall groups of stay-ins and drop-outs proved to be significant as shown in Table 2.

Those who intended to continue, the stay-ins, showed more positive attitudes towards learning Japanese than those who intended to dropout, and higher levels of motivational desire, and motivational intensity. According to Cohen’s guidelines for interpreting the eta-squared value (Cohen, 1988:284-7), large effect sizes (of .26 in the School study) were found for two of three sub-components of Motivation: attitudes towards learning Japanese and motivational desire to learn Japanese, and a moderate effect (.13 School; .07 University) for motivational intensity.¹ These findings, where stay-ins showed considerably higher levels of Motivation compared to drop-outs, are consistent with other studies of motivation and persistence (Ramage, 1990; Clement, Smythe, & Gardner, 1978; Gardner & Smythe, 1975; Bartley, 1970).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMTB Motivation measures</th>
<th>STAY-INS</th>
<th>DROP-OUTS</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Effect size#</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School Study</td>
<td>N=317</td>
<td>N=141</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>35.2 (4.6)</td>
<td>26.8 (7.5)</td>
<td>12.4*</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>36.2 (5.2)</td>
<td>27.4 (7.5)</td>
<td>12.6*</td>
<td>203</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>15.4 (3.2)</td>
<td>12.2 (4.0)</td>
<td>8.3*</td>
<td>227</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Study</td>
<td>N=138</td>
<td>N=24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>35.6 (4.9)</td>
<td>30.2 (5.4)</td>
<td>4.95*</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>36.1 (5.6)</td>
<td>29.9 (5.1)</td>
<td>4.97*</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity</td>
<td>14.9 (3.1)</td>
<td>12.4 (3.9)</td>
<td>3.49*</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Eta-squared >0.14 imply a large effect size, >0.06 imply a moderate effect size.

Table 2. Motivation according to Intention to Continue study of Japanese

Analyses were also undertaken according to Japanese course. Motivation results in the university study, for example, according to Japanese course were similar to those involving year of university and overall. The magnitude of differences between stay-ins and drop-outs for attitudes towards learning Japanese showed a large effect size (.18), while motivational desire (.13) and motivational intensity (.09) indicated more moderate effect sizes. There were also significant differences found when comparing the (Round I) mean scores of the 27 in Round II with the mean scores of the remainder of university learners in Round I. Motivational desire showed the most significant difference (the magnitude indicated an effect size of .12). Analyses involving the group of 27 also indicated more positive attitudes towards learning Japanese and higher motivational intensity when compared to those in Round I, although effect sizes of .02 and .03 respectively were smaller.

¹ Stay-ins (in the overall university sample) showed a significantly higher level of Attitudes towards learning (M=35.6, SD=4.9) compared to the drop-outs group (M=30.2, SD=5.4), t(158)=4.95, p<.001; a significantly higher level of Motivational desire (M=36.1, SD=5.6) compared to the drop-outs group (M=29.9, SD=5.1), t(159)=4.95, p<.001; and greater Motivational intensity (M=14.9, SD=3.1) compared to the drop-outs group (M=12.4, SD=3.9), t(159)=3.49, p<.001.)
These results suggest that the stay-ins were much more motivated than those who intended to drop out. However, due to the strong resemblance between the three elements that define Motivation (Gardner) and the three elements that define Harmonious Passion (HP; Vallerand), it might be said that stay-ins therefore showed a greater passion toward learning Japanese. They were also more persistent.

This interpretation is also supported by university interview data. An interest in J-pop was almost taken for granted among participants according to interview and survey data, but among more advanced learners were those who were passionate about learning Japanese. In Interview 3 for example, two in particular are worth mentioning: Michelle who was particularly passionate about J-pop and about learning Japanese, and Vanessa who travelled to Japan each summer vacation and seemed especially motivated and actively involved in becoming proficient in Japanese. Michelle and Vanessa (pseudonyms) were both in fourth year of university, and had completed Third Year Japanese. Vanessa had attained Level 2 in the Japanese Language Proficiency Test (JLPT). Michelle continued to “sit in on” Japanese classes voluntarily as she had completed Japanese requirements for her Science degree. They seemed highly motivated in Gardner’s terms of desire, effort, and positive attitudes toward learning.

Michelle expressed a passionate interest in J-pop. She described herself as having “too much motivation,” and “loves the Japanese culture and the food, and just wants to learn more.” Michelle wanted to be able to watch Japanese drama/anime without having to continually rely on a dictionary. She was introduced to Japanese manga, anime, pop culture, and drama by her friend, in her first year of university, and describes her motivation for learning Japanese as being prompted by J-pop:

oh, I just loved it so much…So I thought, I’ll push myself and learn Japanese…So it’s just out of interest… I just want to learn more (Michelle interview, 20 Sep 2010).

Vanessa seemed to use J-pop for pleasure and as a learning tool. She thought that her listening ability was better than many of her classmates as a consequence of watching Japanese comedy shows, which she particularly enjoys. Vanessa commented, “You just want to be able to understand the drama and anime yourself; you don’t want to wait for a week or two weeks for other peoples’ translation” (Vanessa interview, 20 Sep 2010). Vanessa, undertaking a combined degree of Bachelor of Commerce with Arts, and, bilingual in Chinese and English saw herself using Japanese in a future career, possibly banking. Michelle, on the other hand, thought that the only way she would use Japanese (with her science degree) would be to travel to Japan. This might allow her to further her interest in making traditional Japanese sweets (wagashi).

Harmonious Passion, or HP, contributes to feelings of wellbeing (Vallerand, 2012), which may partly explain the strong interest in J-pop found among participants in this study. Also inherent in HP is the notion of self-identity. The self-defining aspect of HP in respect to an activity such as learning Japanese or engaging in J-pop may be related to Dörnyei’s idea of language identity and possible selves.

Lending support to the concept of language identity and a possible connection with HP were the six advanced students in Interview 2, through their vision of a future that includes Japanese. Using pseudonyms, Pam, for example, became interested in a career path in science research in Japan. Keith, on the other hand, planned to go to Japan on a working holiday.
These learners had to find their own paths in order to continue Japanese. For Jim, this meant that after completing a Commerce degree and thereby satisfying his parents’ wishes, he wanted to go on to postgraduate study in either interpreting or teaching, to be able to use Japanese. For some, continuation meant changing courses, or taking a double degree. Abe was aiming towards a teaching career after changing his major from International Studies to Linguistics and Japanese. It is important to point out that language identity and passion pre-suppose some level of proficiency, which implicates persistence.

6. Conclusion

Persistence was the focus in this study of motivation in Australian universities and senior high schools. Participants who intended to continue their formal study of Japanese, the stay-ins, showed much higher levels of Motivation than those who intended to discontinue, the drop-outs. The higher levels on the AMTB Motivation measures was also taken to indicate higher levels of Harmonious Passion among stay-ins. These quantitative results and interview data suggest that, together with motivation, it is passion that distinguishes the stay-ins from the drop-outs.

The striking similarity between the three elements of HP and Gardner’s three measures of Motivation - suggesting that Passion and L2 motivation can be linked - is one of two issues raised in this presentation. It offers a new slant on the possible synthesis of L2 motivational theories by Gardner and Dörnyei, but further investigation is necessary to determine the possibilities.

Engaging in J-pop, as well as learning Japanese can become passionate activities. The passion for an activity itself may be the driving force in Motivation, according to findings in this study. The J-pop phenomenon is possibly the first time in the history of second language learning where students can take charge of their own learning, formulating their own learning direction, so that foreign language learning increasingly resembles a second language learning situation.

A second issue raised in this presentation is that developing a self-image as a speaker of the L2 as Dörnyei (2005) has proposed, could also be related to Harmonious Passion. A sense of self-identity as speakers of Japanese was evident among more advanced learners in this study. It seems that those passionate about Japanese went to extra lengths to continue their studies, and then aimed towards careers where they would use Japanese.

This paper has demonstrated a link between Motivation and Passion, where Gardner’s AMTB provided the measure of passion. A further connection has been made between the self-defining aspect of HP and Dörnyei’s concept of language identity, using interview data. It seems that the stay-ins are differentiated from the drop-outs in this study due to passion and persistence. It takes more than a love of manga and anime to continue formal Japanese study to an advanced level. Considerable effort is necessary to be able to speak another language, or to play a musical instrument. However, it does seem that passion is a necessary ingredient for persistence.

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References


**About the Author**

**Barbara Northwood** had submitted her doctoral dissertation for examination at the time of the conference, and has now been awarded the degree of PhD. The ideas in this paper are taken from the dissertation. Barbara is particularly interested in L2 motivation, and learning of kanji by those from a non-kanji background. She is keen to undertake further research related to learning an L2.

Barbara describes herself as having a passion for Japanese, having lived in Kyoto for twelve years.