Full Length Research Paper

The effects of motivational factors on Japanese learners of English

Matthew Rooks

Kobe University, Kobe, Hyōgo, Japan. E-mail: rooks@maritime.kobe-u.ac.jp. Tel/Fax: +81-78-431-6319.

This paper presents a synopsis of the Japanese educational system and the inherent effects it has on Japanese learners of English as a necessary background for understanding how these learners have been conditioned as they enter their university studies. By replicating a study first performed by Sugita in 2008 on the effects of academic events on the motivations of secondary school "English as a Foreign Language" (EFL) students, this study seeks to shed light on whether or not similar effects can be found in university EFL students. Journal surveys were utilized to collect data concerning students recorded internal and external influences in regards to their English studies. The results showed marked differences between Sugita's secondary students and the university students from this study, namely in the levels of intrinsic motivations with regards to their English study, a reduced role of tests and other academic events as motivators for studying, and an overall lower level of motivational strength regarding English learning despite reporting a similar amount of study time per week as Sugita's secondary students.

Key words: Motivation, entrance examinations, Japan, autonomous learning.

INTRODUCTION

Japan has been criticized for being a country that spends massive amounts of time, money, and human resources on English education with decidedly mixed results. Japanese students currently have compulsory English education from primary through secondary school, yet still score consistently lower on a variety of standardized English proficiency tests than most other Asian countries (ETS, 2009; Li and Haggard, 2011), many of whom allocate substantially less time and resources on English education than Japan does. Although many Japanese students start studying English at a very young age (English recently became a required subject for all 5th and 6th grade primary students) and are typically enthusiastic about the endeavor, research has shown a dramatic decrease in reported levels of motivation (Koizumi and Matsuo, 1993; Nakata, 2001; Kimura et al., 2001) and retention abilities (Coulson, 2012) after students enter high school. This decline in performance, attitude, and motivation coincides with a period when studying for high-risk entrance examinations becomes tantamount to all aspects of secondary education, and

teaching and studying strategies adjust to meet these important, often stressful demands.

The negative role that entrance examinations have played in the handling of Japanese English education is well documented (Brown, 1996, 1998; Brown and Yamashita, 1995; Cave, 2001; Eckstein and Noah, 1989; Fox et al., 1999; Gorsuch, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2001; Hayes, 1997; Johnson and Johnson, 2010; Kikuchi and Brown, 2009; Kodaira, 1996; Koike and Tanaka, 1995; Law, 1995; Marchesseau, 2006; McConnell, 1995; Miller, 1998; National Institute for Education Research, 1991; Pomatti, 1996; Rohlen, 1983; Takeuchi, 1993). The adverse effects of entrance examination washback, which Messick (1996: 243) describes as "the extent to which the test influences language teachers and learners to do things that they would not necessarily otherwise do", is readily apparent in various instances. The list of ways the examinations shape English education varies: examples range from an overemphasis on linguistic knowledge at the expense of teaching linguistic skills to the internal and external pressures and expectations teachers and

students experience readying themselves for the exams. This high-pressure examination phenomenon is so prevalent in Japanese culture that the special term jukensei has been coined for students who spend a year (and sometimes more) preparing solely for entrance examinations (Takeuchi, 1997). In Gorsuch's (2001: 10) survey asking 876 high school teachers to list the strengths of various influences on their teaching styles and objectives, entrance exams was number 3 on the list, just behind number of students in class, and students' English speaking abilities.

Marchesseau (2006: 172) says it has become clear that "the high stakes University entrance exams have a considerable impact on English teaching in Japanese schools". Yakudoku, explained by Nishino (2008: 30) as "a favored teaching method used to help students pass university entrance examinations which have mainly evaluated reading skills and grammatical knowledge," is still prevalent in Japan's English educational system despite being a rather antiquated and ineffectual learning strategy. The most commonly-occurring forms of yakudoku (or as it is more commonly known, the "grammar-translation method") are exercises involving students reading sentences in English and translating them word-for-word into Japanese, and vice-versa. The reason for yakudoku's tenacious grip on English education in Japan lies almost solely in the fact that university entrance exams heavily rely on this type of skill for the majority of English questions found in the examinations.

Japanese entrance exams suffer from a multitude of other problems as well. In 1995, Brown and Yamashita published a study regarding the readability of college entrance exams which showed that the reading passages found in university entrance exams were exceedingly difficult. Despite subsequent reports of overhauls to the university entrance exam system, with aims to permit more exam-item differentiation and include more focus on subjective knowledge in the form of essays (Doyon, 2001), various researches have shown that readability and test-item difficulty had changed little (Kikuchi, 2006; Kikuchi and Browne, 2009). Other studies by Browne (1996, 1998) have shown that high school reading textbooks used to prepare students for entrance exams suffer from similar levels of disproportionate difficulty, with readability levels (in terms of vocabulary and grammatical structure) far exceeding texts used by native speakers in the same age group. This degree of difficulty most likely contributes to the decreased levels of student motivation and attitudes high school students feel towards English education.

In a set of numerous reformative measures over the last 20 years, the Ministry of Education has been officially advocating a shift towards communicative language teaching (CLT). To achieve this shift, the Ministry has urged universities to place more importance on a standardized "Center Test" rather than on unique,

specialized entrance exams for each university, and hire more foreign assistant language teachers (ALTs) to increase opportunities of meaningful, intercultural communication with native speakers (Gorsuch, 2008; Nishino, 2008). As an ALT from 2001-2004, the author witnessed firsthand the power entrance examinations held, as CLT quickly took a backseat during months of the year when mid and final-term exam seasons drew near. This exam-driven system is not only prevalent in high schools, but junior high schools as well, where students and teachers are concerned with gaining access to top-ranking high schools that would prepare them for the next round of entrance examinations. The Ministry of Education initiatives have had minimal effects, largely due to factors like grammar-based test-items and resulting yakudoku teaching strategies, high-stakes entrance exams, and the entailing washback that affects both teacher and student preconceptions and expectations for language instruction which ultimately has "hindered the reform of Japanese English education" (Nishino, 2008: 30).

One major impediment to the implementation of the Ministry of Education's initiatives are high school English teachers themselves, who are overwhelmed with pressure to conform to their curricula, content, and teaching styles to correspond with the rigorous preparation students' need to succeed on entrance exams. Butler and Iino (2005) mentioned that although the Ministry's goals to make English education more communicative were a step in a positive direction, the plan remains largely ineffective due to directly conflicting with a systemic ideology that refuses to deemphasize the importance of university entrance exams.

It is evident that there are multiple factors working against students' perceptions of the utility, enjoyment, and success of studying English as a foreign language in Japan, but what happens when they have passed their examinations, and move on to the surprisingly lower-stress, lower-stakes academic environment at university? How can university language educators re-engage their students and revive their enthusiasm and motivation for learning English? Perhaps, by investigating the reported motivational influences of university students concerning English education, implications can be uncovered that will help to improve the Japanese English education system. In order to take the initial steps towards addressing these issues, this study aims to identify changes in motivation and attitude over an 8-week period of university study, and to compare these findings with another study done with high school students.

Study aims

In her 2008 study: On the motivational influences that cause positive EFL learning outside the classroom, Maya Sugita sought to discover the motivational influences that Japanese EFL learners have toward learning outside of

the classroom. She also sought to examine changes in the perceptions of student motivational influences according to academic events, and study the differences in these changes between higher and lower proficiency groups with the aim of finding better ways to motivate high school EFL students in Japan. This current study replicates Sugita's model, but focuses on university-level EFL students in Japan in order to compare how motivational factors may change for students after they leave the grueling, exam-driven educational system found in secondary schools. By uncovering differences and similarities between the two studies, perhaps new insight can be provided into how student attitudes towards English education change after running the examination gauntlet, and whether their drive to study, and goals for learning go through any modifications at the next level of education. Before discussing details of the replication, however, a brief overview of motivational influences and their place in language theory will help to frame the analysis of the study's aims, methodology, and results. The general outline of both the study and this paper itself closely follow Sugita's structure, with a few changes, the most notable being that this study was conducted with university students, while Sugita's study focused on high school students.

Defining motivational influences

Motivation as it relates to language learning has been defined in various ways over the last several decades. Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued the case for two types of language learning motivation: integrative motivation (that is, using language to integrate with a target culture) and instrumental motivation (that is, using language to achieve a specific purpose, like to pass a test or get a job). For EFL learners, who may have few chances of actually integrating with the target language culture or community, instrumental motivation almost always becomes the focal point for research (Dörnyei, 1990; Oxford, 1996).

In Sugita's (2008: 83) study, she defined motivational influences as:

… influences that positively affect learner's motivation at the moment learners are confronted with English learning outside the classroom (the actional phase of the process model). They include all the internal factors (for example, goal-setting, beliefs) as well as the external factors surrounding the FL learners (for example, people surrounding them, tasks, and environment).

The "process model" Sugita refers to was originally suggested by Dörnyei and Otto (1998); it describes motivation as a dynamic process that changes over time. Motivational changes are divided into three main phases: the "preactional phase," when a course of action for learning is chosen; the "actional phase," when learners

confront their learning tasks; and the "postactional phase," where learners critically reflect on how their learning process went. All of these phases consist of motivational influences that fuel the behavioral process (Dörnyei, 2001; Sugita, 2008). These influencing factors range from teacher performance to quality of materials to sense of autonomy. Dörnyei later argued that motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate learning in the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process (Dörnyei, 2005: 65).

Other research combined psychology with language learning theories and started similarly classifying motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic branches. Intrinsic motivation entails a desire to learn things for the sake of personal, or internal rewards, like improved self-confidence, competence, and determination, whereas the definition of extrinsic motivation precludes an eagerness to learn things for the sake of external rewards that happen "outside of and beyond the self" (Kimura et al., 2001: 49). Later researchers would insist that motivation is not a notion diametrically opposed, but rather a continuous spectrum that may have combined elements of motivational parameters found in different areas of the spectrum (Brown, 2007; Dörnyei, 1994; Hayamizu, 1997; Williams and Burden, 1997).

Whether or not motivational influences are dichotic or more fluid in terms of their makeup, research has shown that for long-term retention of the target language, intrinsic motivators tend to be more effective than external ones (Brown, 2007).

Madrid et al. (1992: 21), drawing on Gardner (1985), came up with a simple list of "sources of motivation": classroom methodology, teacher qualities, family background, English as an academic subject, integrative desire with English-speaking communities, and the instrumental importance of English in society.

One of the early influential models of motivation in language learning (which was later coined the Socio-educational Model) was advocated by psychologist R.C. Gardner, who posited that second language motivation is predicated upon the "extent to which an individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (Gardner, 1985: 10). Learners in homogeneous societies like island-nation Japan, however, may fall more in line with the instrumental orientation model, which has a "more utilitarian orientation that refers to learners' desire to learn the language in order to accomplish some non-interpersonal purpose such as to pass an exam or to advance a career" (Ghanea et al., 2011: 459). In the study of Ghanea et al. (2011), they found that there was a statistically significant relationship between the instrumental motivation and English proficiency levels among EFL learners at Shiraz Azad University. In their 2011 survey, Johnson and Johnson (2011: 52) discovered that external/instrumental motivational influences played an overwhelming part in their Japanese engineering

Table 1.   Major academic events during the data collection*.

1st week	2nd week	3rd week	4th week	5th week	6th week	7th week	8th week
Normal activities	Presentation	Short essay	Mid-term report	Listening test	Normal activities	Short essay/midterms	Major report

students' reasons for learning English; entrance exams, standardized tests like the TOEIC, career preparation, and attaining university credits accounted for the largest amount of motivational factors for studying English.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of 137 Japanese University students in four separate classes participated in this study. Each class consisted of students with common majors, although these differed from class to class (Literature, Maritime Science, Physics, and Psychology). All of them were second-year students at a national university in Kobe, Japan who demonstrated an ability to consistently record their weekly studying information in journals (that is, only students who completed their weekly journals were used in this study). In addition to the analysis of all participants' recorded data regarding their study contents, habits, motivations, and attitude levels, correlations between student proficiencies and their motivational influences were also investigated. Sixty two students had previously taken the TOEIC test, and thus were divided into high and low proficiency groups. The mean TOEIC score of the high proficiency group was 632, and that of the low proficiency group was 435. At-test confirmed the two groups' mean TOIEC scores to be statistically significant (df = 60, t = -10.392, p < 0.01r =0.80). However, the alpha coefficient of the TOEIC is α = 0.82-0.88.

Instruments and procedure

By breaking down the complex language learning process into short, definable segments, data analysis of perceived motivations and influences becomes much more manageable (Dörnyei, 2002). Learner motivation levels are in a constant state of flux, and can vary between activities within a single lesson. Long-term variations can be even more dramatic, which is why the process-approach can be used to help measure the fluctuations of motivation over time (Dörnyei, 2005).

By viewing academic events that happen within stretches of time that coincide with how students study outside of the classroom, patterns of what influence student learning may begin to emerge, and insight into the effectiveness of classroom activities, curriculum design, and their effects on students' attitudes toward learning may be brought to light.

Following Sugita's (2008) study, a journal survey was chosen as the tool to collect data regarding student-reported motivational influences. These data were then plotted along a timeline matching academic events (Table 1) that took place during the duration of the data-recording period. Dörnyei's (2003) preference for coding open-ended questions into data for analysis was based on the idea that detailed examples and illustrative descriptions can offer greater insight into factors that may be influencing learners that were not anticipated by the researchers, and this concept was utilized for this study. The study journals were mandatory for each student over an eight-week period, and were checked for completion by the teacher each week. Although the work was mandatory, the content of the journals was not graded, and the students were instructed to be honest about their study habits, attitudes, study time, etc., in each entry. It was made clear to the students that any descriptions made in the students' journals would in no way affect their grades for the course (Appendix 1).

In the journals, the students were required to write down details for the following: 1) English study content outside of class; 2) The motivating factors, or reasons for studying the English content outside of class; 3) The English study time outside of class for the week. Each of these points was carefully explained to the students in class to ensure they understood the concepts. The final piece of data collected in the weekly journals was the students' self-evaluated strength of motivation for the week via a five-point Likert scale, ranging from: 1) "I had a very negative attitude towards studying English this week," 2) "I had a somewhat negative attitude towards studying English this week," 3) "I had neither a negative or positive attitude towards studying English this week," 4) "I had a somewhat positive attitude towards studying English this week," 5) "I had a very positive attitude towards studying English this week," concerning both classroom and outside the classroom English learning. The students were given the option of writing their journals in English or Japanese (74% of entries were recorded in English).

The journal surveys were conducted with the written consent of the students and with permission from the university. Because all of the participants were second year students, they were all at the same point of their

Table 2. Main category groupings.

External factors			Internal Factors	
Other people	Tests	Materials	Self-Motivating strategies	Demotivating influences

university academic careers. The data were collected during the Spring Term of 2012, from mid-April until mid-June. The academic events listed in Table 1 happened in class, and were determined by the teacher. Each class met once per week for 90 min.

It should be noted here that there are a variety of differences between the students used in Sugita's study and the participants in this one. High school and university students are different in many ways: cognitive maturity levels, focus of study (general education versus focused major studies), time spent in class (high school students typically spend 4-5 h per week in English class, while the university students in this study only had 3 contact hours per week), and of course the main incentives for studying English (entrance exams versus credits for graduation).

Data analysis

In Sugita's 2008 study, the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) was used to analyze data collected in the journal surveys. GTA codes reported information in an attempt to "determine conceptual categories in data, relationships between categories, and core categories to explain/account for the relationships" (Nakata, 2003: 40). The GTA consists of three main steps: the open coding step, where the researcher codes respondent information in order to identify general categories of data; the axial coding step, which takes a more detailed look at the categories and codes in order to identify patterns, relationships, between the codes; and the selective coding step, which combines identified groups into core categories (Nakata, 2003). All of the motivational influences listed in the student-reported information were identified and categorized using this method, and were done so chronologically (in weekly units) so that changes in reported motivational influences, study times, and motivational strength (determined by the Likert-scale responses) could be compared with major academic events that occurred during the surveys (Table 1). Sugita's model was used as a basis for coding student responses, and although most core-categories matched up between the sets of data, there were several micro-categories listed by the university students that were not found in Sugita's high school student data, and vice-versa. A second coder checked 20% of randomly-selected sample responses to determine the effects of categorization subjectivity. The inter-rater reliability was

88%.

RESULTS

Categories identified from journal entries

In the study of Kimura et al. (2001: 59) on the motivation characteristics of Japanese ELF learners, they noted that learners' observed motivations were "complex, consisting of intrinsic, integrative, and instrumental subscales", suggesting that there are multiple factors working together among Japanese EFL students, a sentiment echoed in other studies (Koizumu and Matsuo, 1993; Matsukawa and Tachibana, 1996). Data collected from the students in this study further supports this idea, although at the university level, it is seen that some different patterns start to emerge than the ones Sugita identified with her high school students.

A total of 1,879 individual descriptions of motivational influences were collected from the student journal surveys. Using the GTA method, 22 micro-components were identified, and grouped into the following five core categories: 1) motivational influences originating from other people such as teachers, parents, classmates, tutors, etc. (henceforth referred to as "Other People" or OP); 2) motivational influences that originated from the students themselves (henceforth, "Self-motivating Strategies" or SMS); 3) motivational influences brought about by tests (in class or proficiency tests, henceforth "T"); 4) motivational influences coming from teaching materials (worksheets, homework, textbooks, class handouts, etc., henceforth "M"); and 5) demotivating factors like being sick, tired, sleepy, etc. (henceforth "DF"). These five categories could be further broken down into two larger groupings, "internal" and "external," as illustrated in Table 2.

In Table 3, the quantitative results for each core category and micro-component are listed. Out of the five core categories, "Self-motivating Strategies" (SMS) accounted for 49% of all student descriptions. This core category consisted largely of students' descriptions of study time outside of class spent improving specific skills like speaking, writing, vocabulary, and focusing on improving studying skills. Because these specific skill sets were not tested in class via exams or tests, and students did not list other people as motivating factors behind them, these responses were categorized as SMS. The second most frequently occurring type of reported

Table 3. Comparison of core category percentages with Sugita's 2008 study.

University students		High school students	
SMS	49%	SMS	13%
M	25%	M	2%
OP	9%	OP	49%
DF	11%	(Other)	4%
T	6%	T	32%

influences were "Materials" (M), which accounted for 25% of student descriptions. These responses detailed students' reviewing content from class notes and handouts and doing practice exercises from the textbook. The next major core category was "Demotivating Factors" (DF), which usually detailed how students were too tired, sick, or sleepy to study. This group accounted for a total of 11% of all explanations. These descriptions explained why students did not study as long as they had hoped to. In her study, Sugita had a separate "other" category for miscellaneous responses, but since virtually all of the "other" responses in this study fell under this category, the "DF" grouping was created. "Other People" (OP) accounted for just 9% of all student responses. This core category consisted of responses detailing time spent studying English for reasons that originated from other people (almost exclusively teachers, peers were very rarely mentioned, and parents were not referenced at all). The OP category usually dealt with students doing homework, presentation preparations, or work on reports or class projects, which were assigned by and checked by the teacher, thus differentiating them from tests. The core category with the least amount of responses was "Tests", which only accounted for 6% of total student responses. Most of these detailed studying for school quizzes, mid-term exams, or upcoming TOIEC tests. These last two core category percentages varied greatly from Sugita's 2008 study regarding high school students. Table 3 lists the different statistical breakdowns for comparison, while Table 4 lists the various descriptions students reported in their journals, as well as the overall percentage of responses for each respective micro-component.

Before comparing how academic events affected the student motivations in this study with Sugita's, it is apparent that the types of answers the high school students in Sugita's study gave differ greatly from the university students in this study. While instances of OP account for almost 50% of high school student descriptions, they make up only 9% of the university student responses. T is responsible for 32% of overall high school responses, but only 6% of university data. High school SMS descriptions accounted for only 13% of total answers, but 49% of university responses. M, which had a very meager showing with only 2% of all high school descriptions, had a much stronger showing in the university journals, making up 25% of total responses.

Student perception of motivational influences

In Sugita's (2008: 88) study, "quantitative counts of journal entries by each academic event enabled this study to show clear changes in the students' perception of [sic] motivational influences". Sugita's data showed sharp trade-offs in reported data coinciding with a term exam, namely in instances of "Tests" and "Other People" motivational influences. "Tests" rose sharply just before the exam week, then dramatically fell off immediately afterwards, while "Other People"-related influences showed the opposite effect. In this study with university students, however, a different picture was found. Figure 1 illustrates that despite some comparatively minor fluctuations in M, OP, and SMS descriptions, T responses show almost no change throughout the 8-week period. OP and T never saw the same trade-off pattern found in Sugita's study, but there was a convergence between SMS and M right before a mid-term report, followed by a separation in weeks 5 and 6. A slight trade-off between OP and DF can also be observed around week 4, which may indicate increasing student fatigue as the semester wore on. SMS shows an uptick after week 3, which continues up until a test and short essay were due in week 6. Interestingly, T remains relatively constant (and shows very low frequency) throughout the 8 week study, while OP responses gradually decline after a slight surge in week 2. Figure 2 shows Sugita's high school students' data.

Learning time and strength of motivation

Figure 3 shows changes in weekly student-reported study time outside of the classroom. Although the average

Table 4. Summary of student-reported motivational influences.

Core-categories	Micro-component	Sample descriptions	%
Tests	Study for quiz	I have to take a listening/vocabulary quiz.	0.1
	Study for test/exam	I have a mid-term test.	1.2
	Study for TOEIC	I will take the TOEIC test.	4.7
Materials	Review class materials	I wanted to review what we learned in class.	3.8
	Review textbook	I want to review/preview text material/topics.	21.5
Demotivating factors	Tired, sleepy, sick	I was too sleepy/sick to study.	3.0
	Busy with job/social	I traveled with friends/worked at a part time job.	3.7
	Busy with other schoolwork	I had a laboratory report to finish.	4.2
Other people	Class homework/ assessment	The teacher assigned homework./ The teacher checks my homework	6.3
	Presentation/project/report preparation	The teacher assigned presentation practice.	2.6

Figure 1. Changes in motivational influences in relation to academic events.

study times for all students who participated in the study show no variation for the first 4 weeks, some interesting fluctuations were found in the high and low proficiency student study times. Between weeks 4 and 6, average study times do uniformly rise (+18 minutes for all students, +54 minutes for high proficiency students, and +30 minutes for lower proficiency students) in week 6, right before the midterm report and test. These data are in stark contrast with Sugita's data, for which only the average study time of all students is available (Figure 4). Sugita's data showed a much greater increase (+50 min) in the 2-week lead-up time before the term exam. Overall, the university students averaged slightly more study time

per week (119.25 min) than the high school students in Sugita's study (107.1 min).

The students also recorded their motivational strength based on a five-point Likert scale for each week of the study, which can be seen in Figure 5. For the first 7 weeks of the study, the strength of motivation hovered just below 3 on the Likert scale, which was listed as "neither positive nor negative motivation." Week 8 saw a slight jump in motivation scores, marking the first time averages scored higher than a 3. Average motivation scores averaged a full 1 point lower for the university students than for Sugita's high school students (Figure 6), indicating an overall lower level of motivation. Data for
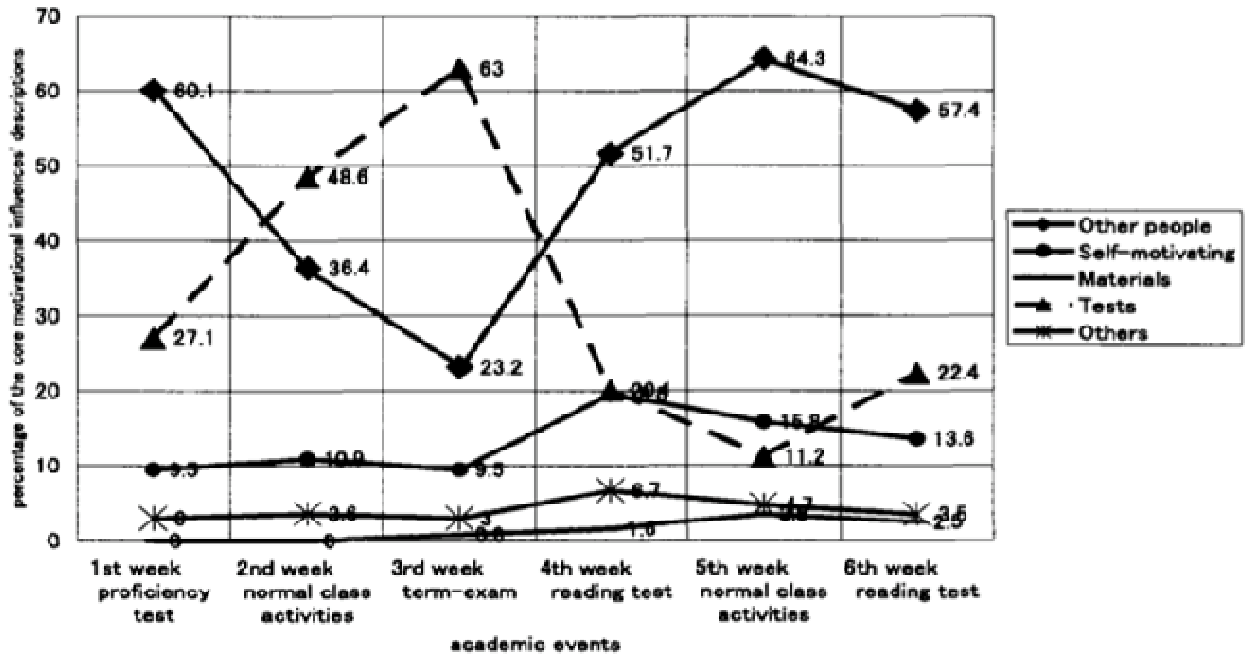
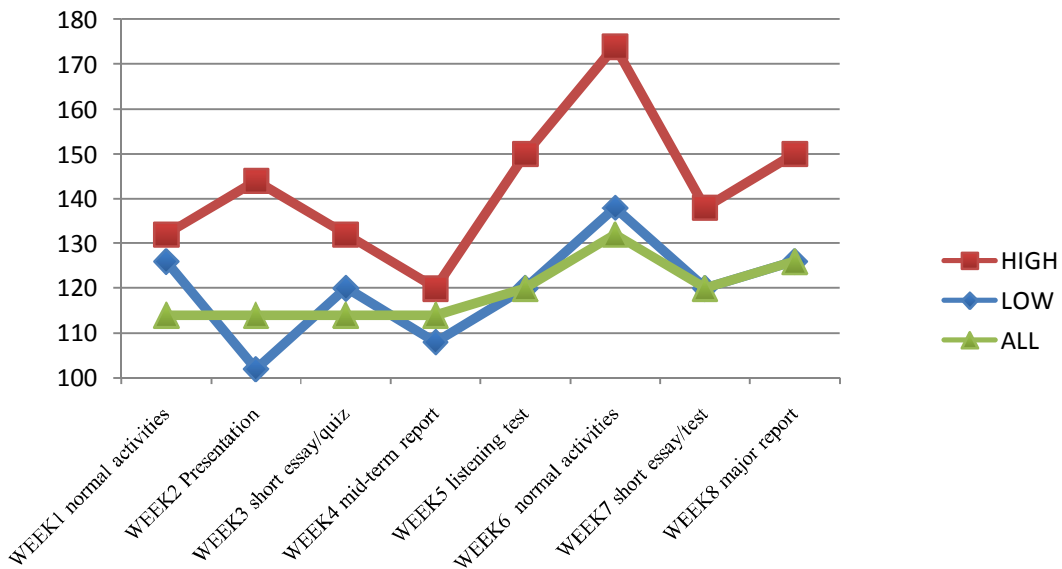**Figure 2.** Sugita's changes in motivational influences in relation to academic events.

Figure 3. Change in weekly English time (in minutes) outside the classroom.

in-class motivation were not available for this study.

Correlations with proficiency levels

It is certainly no surprise that motivation and proficiency are important factors for effective language acquisition. Ellis (1994) claims that motivation and language aptitude are strongly responsible for the variance found in L2 learner proficiencies.

Various researches have shown links between learner proficiency, motivation, and learner strategies (Park, 1997; Sheorey, 1999; Bruen, 2001; Glenn, 2000). Oxford (2003) created and implemented the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which measures
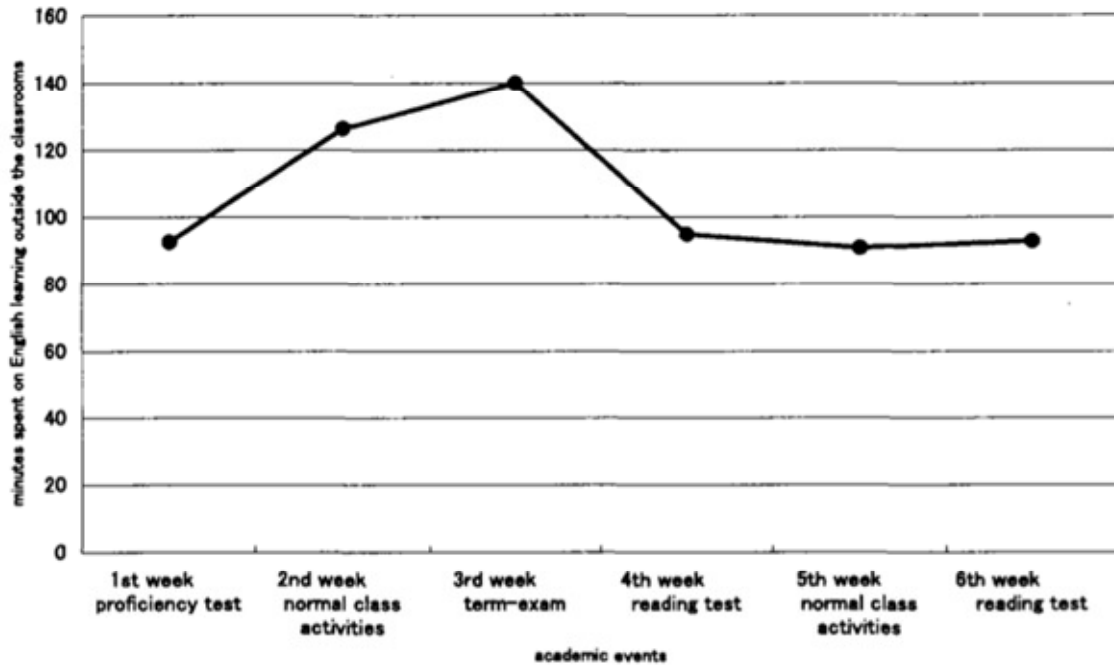
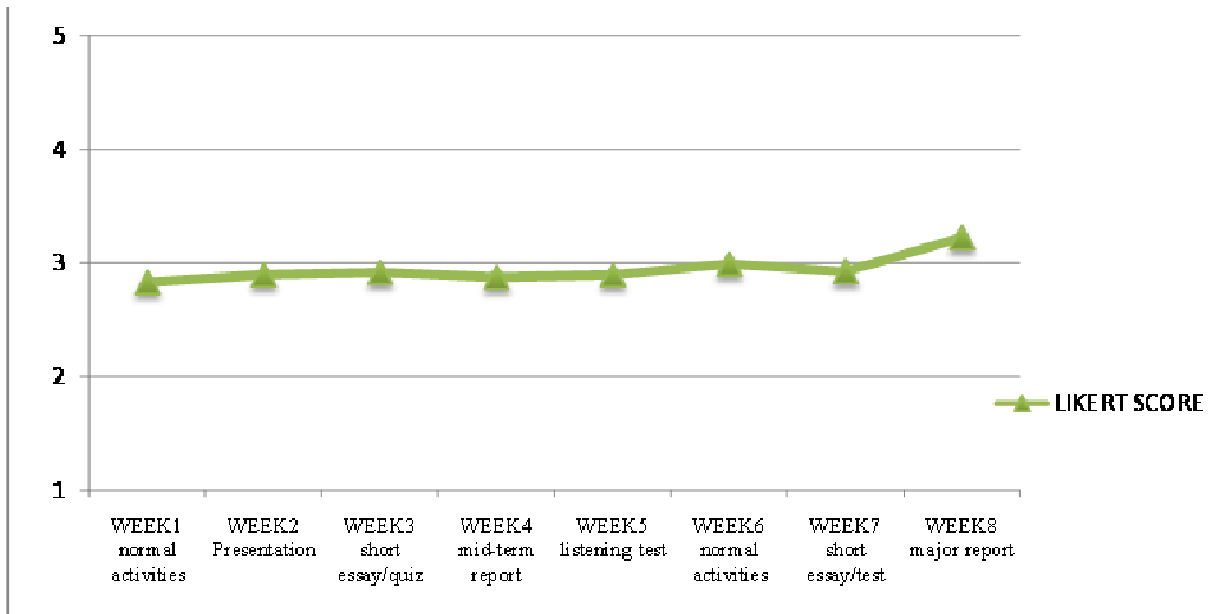**Figure 4.** Sugita's changes in weekly English time (in minutes) outside the classroom.

Figure 5. Changes in weekly motivational strength to study outside the classroom.

relationships between proficiency and learner strategies, and has been utilized in numerous subsequent studies investigating the link between these variables. Ghavamnia et al. (2011: 1160) in their study showed consistencies with earlier language learning strategy studies (Green and Oxford, 1995; Magogwe and Oliver, 2007; O'malley and Chamot, 1990) finding that there is "more overall use of language learning strategies by more proficient and motivated students".

When looking at the higher and lower proficiency group data sets, Sugita found that "the same trade-off relationship between 'Tests' and 'Other people' was found in both the higher and lower proficiency groups", with more dramatic fluctuations found in the higher proficiency group. Sugita said that this may indicate that higher proficiency students were "more sensitive" to these
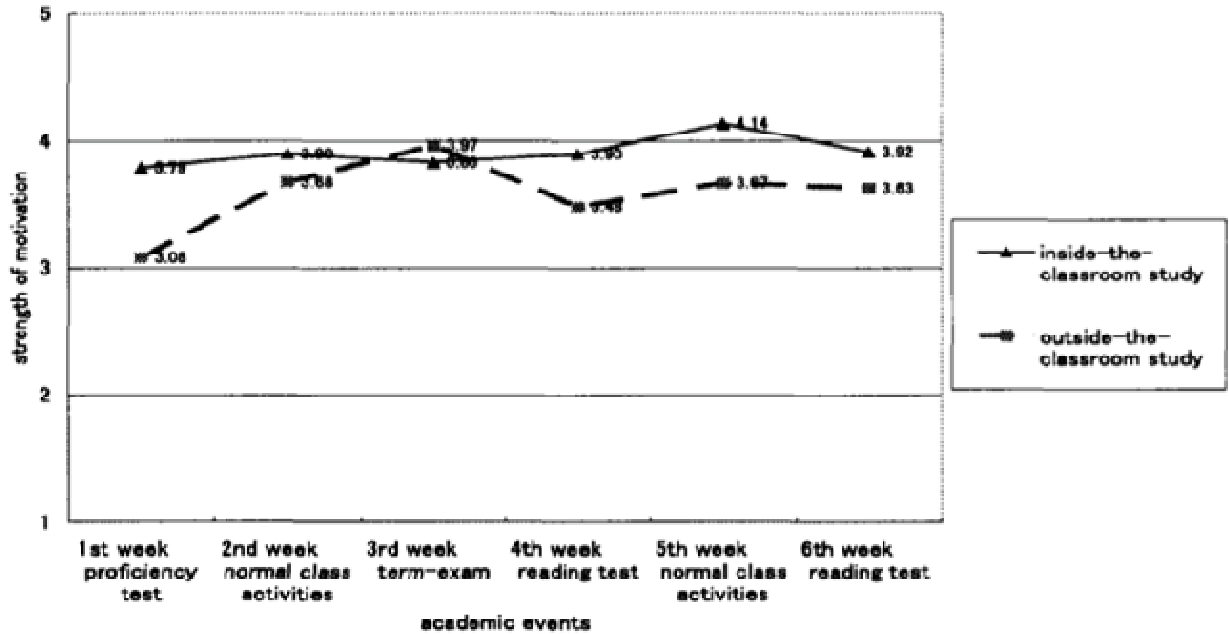
Figure 6. Sugita's changes in weekly motivational strength to study outside the classroom.
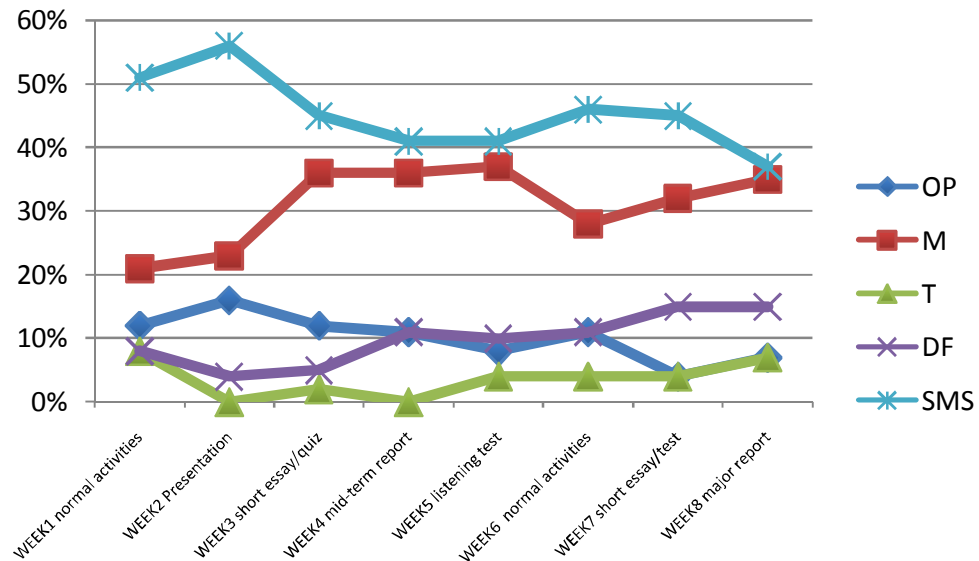

Figure 7. Percentage of motivational descriptions in higher proficiency group.

influences. In this study (Figure 7), however, an interesting pattern emerges: in the high proficiency group, an inverse relationship is seen between "Materials" and "Self-motivating Strategies," which are the two most common responses for the high proficiency group. M makes a rather dramatic climb from week 1 to week 5, then experiences a drop-off after the listening test, indicating that students may have been studying the

textbook before the test, which prepares the students with content related to listening. Of course, M could be more of a strategy choice than a motivational one for students, who may have chosen other methods to study for the listening test. Again, OP experiences a gradual decline over the remainder of the study. The DF value slowly increases throughout the 8 weeks period, indicating mounting fatigue as the semester wears on. The SMS
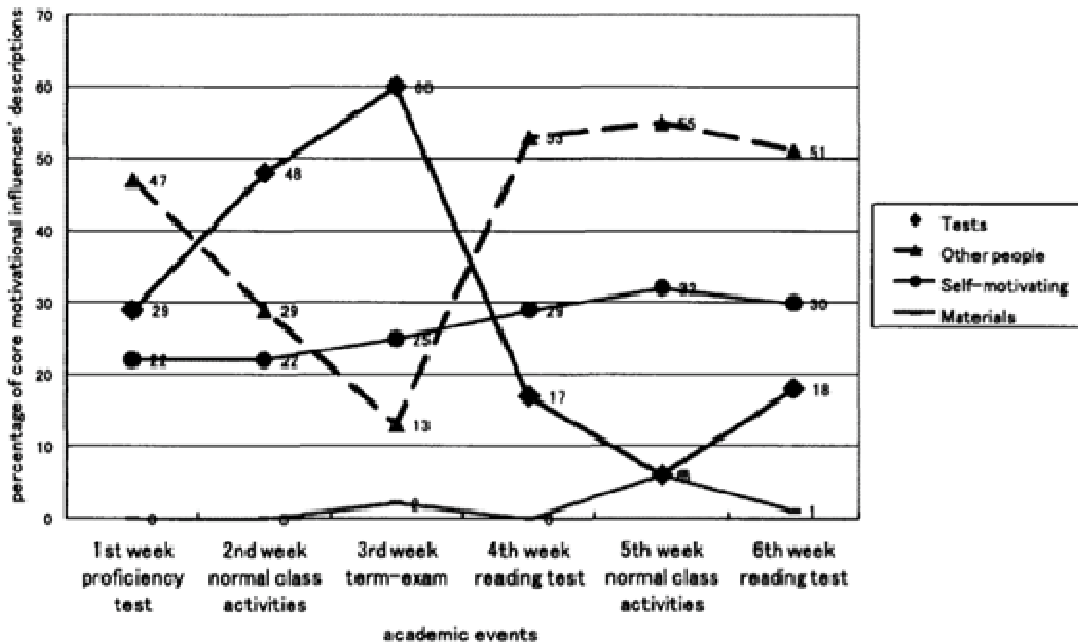
Figure 8. Sugita's changes of motivational influences in higher proficiency group.
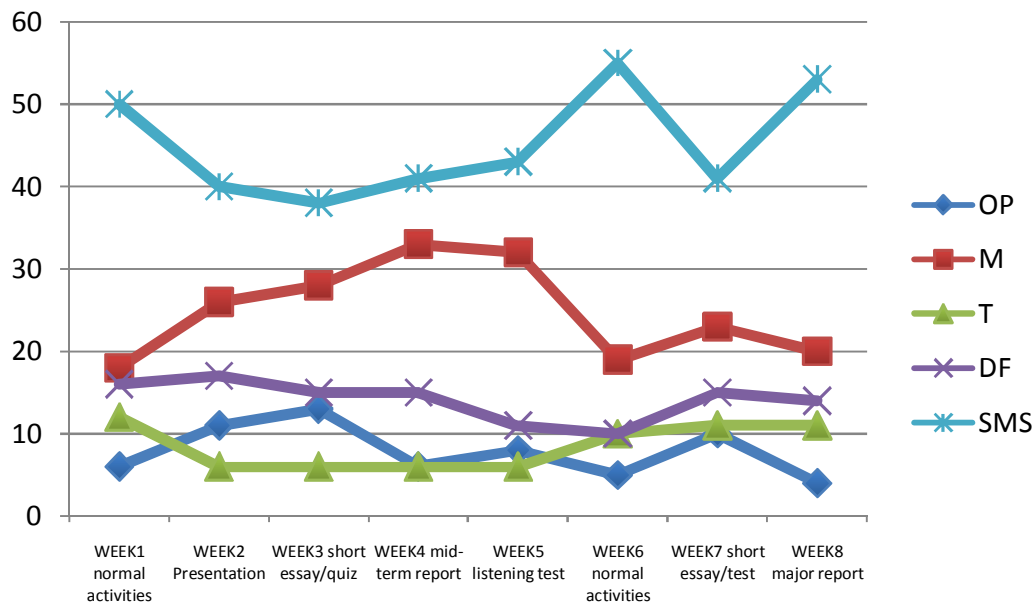

Figure 9. Percentage of motivational descriptions in lower proficiency group.

descriptions also see a decline at the end of the study, leading into the deadline for a major report. Although there are some interesting patterns evident in this study's data, the amount of T responses show little fluctuation, or correspondence to academic events, which is a stark contrast to the T and OP trade-off patterns found in Sugita's data (Figure 8).

The lower proficiency group data reveals patterns similar to the higher proficiency group's reported information (Figure 9), although a spike is seen in SMS descriptions after the week 5 listening test. With the exception of the inversely-related SMS and M categories, the other core-categories are relatively stable when compared to Sugita's study (Figure 10), where again a
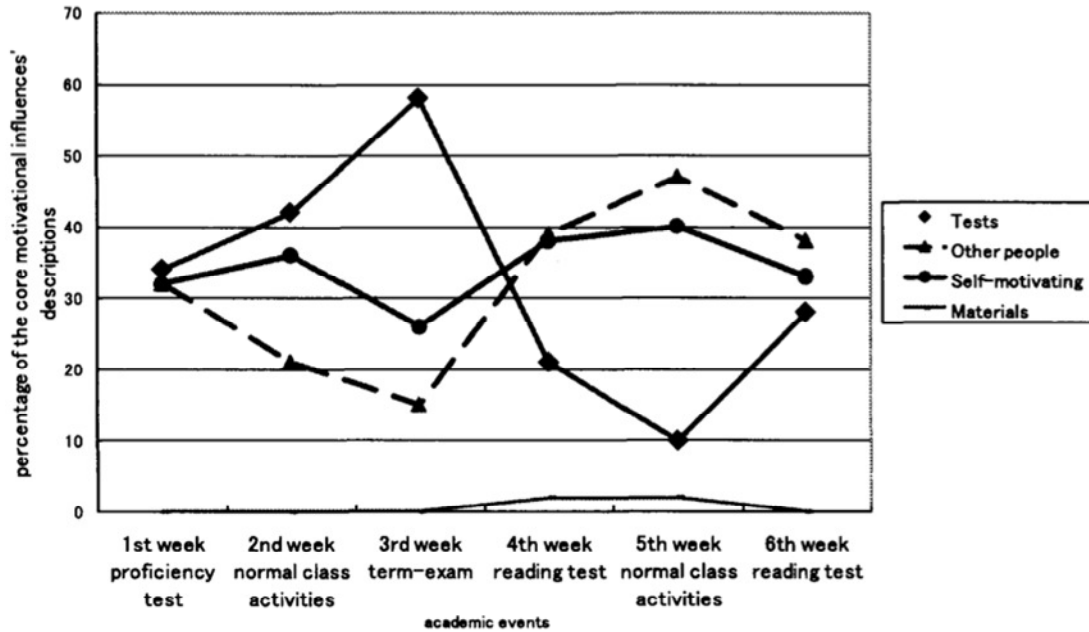
Figure 10. Sugita's changes of motivational influences in lower proficiency group.

noticeable trade-off pattern is seen between T and OP. Although there are slight declines in T after the events in weeks 3 and 7, the overall reported instances are dwarfed by the amount of M and SMS responses.

DISCUSSION

A comparison of data between Sugita's 2008 study dealing with the motivational influences of Japanese high school students and the current study, which focused on Japanese university students, reveals some similarities, as well as stark differences in the patterns that emerged from the respective sets of data. Although the core-categories of student responses were very similar in both studies, the instances of each reported core-category varied greatly, as did the types of changes and events that corresponded with them. Because the actual coders differed between both studies, the inter-reliability cannot be determined, and coder differences could be a possible explanation for differences in the findings. The fact that the types of core-categories found in both studies broke down into similar groupings does suggest that common influences and study strategies exist between both groups.

A very noticeable difference is found in the large increase in SMS values for the university students, which accounted for 50% of the overall responses, yet only 13% of those in the Sugita study. Another very important difference between the two studies data sets may lie in the reported instances of "Tests" as a motivational influence. 32% Sugita's high school student responses listed "Tests" as a major influence, while only 6% of

university student responses in this study listed T as a motivational factor. These two major differences may suggest that university students, who are now free from the constraints of grammar-translation study regimens in preparation of entrance exams, have started to explore different, more independent ways to improve their English proficiency, which is typical of university education.

Another interesting contrast between the two studies is found in the average reported Likert scores for strength of motivation. Sugita's participants averaged a 3.5 on the 5-point scale, while the university students in this study averaged 2.94, a full half and a point lower. Past studies have shown major drop-offs in intrinsic/integrative study motives in students transitioning from junior high school to high school (Kimura et al., 2001), indicating changes in study goals and their coinciding learning strategies to more extrinsic/instrumental influences. The data collected in this study seems to indicate a return to more intrinsic/integrative motivational influences after students leave high school and no longer have to worry about studying for entrance examinations, but interestingly, university students are not as motivated to study English in university as they were in high school, or perhaps that their major subjects have taken precedence over English study. The absence of high-risk examinations that Japanese students have been conditioned to rely on for their academic motivation could be a major factor in this shift away from English study in university. So what can be done to alleviate the effects at the university level after students have emerged from their rigorous examination-based education? This study did not explicitly investigate how students perceive English education in their post-

exam academic careers, an investigation of the long-term after-effects of entrance examinations on student attitudes towards learning, motivation, and effectiveness of study seems warranted.

The Japanese Ministry of Education itself has noted the "serious negative impact" of entrance exams on secondary school education, and began to promote ideas of utilizing a centralized examination system, new entrance selection parameters, and more importance placed on references as part of the admission process (MOE, 1995). In its 1997 Chukyoshin report, the Monbusho advocated de-emphasized high school and university entrance exams and more diversified selection methods such as essays, interviews, reports, and school recommendations, thus recognizing the need for a more inclusive evaluation process (Cave, 2001; Monbusho, 1997). The progressive suggestions from the 1997 report have gone largely ignored in a pragmatic sense, and entrance examinations are still used as the main determiner for a student's admission into higher education, who feel enormous pressure to study English for the sole purpose of passing high-risk exams.

After students pass their entrance examinations, and advance into university, their attitudes towards English education are not instantly restored. In Kikuchi and Browne (2009: 180) survey of 112 Japanese EFL students from 3 different universities, they discovered that 79% of respondents did not agree that they were taught English in a way that helped them to have a more positive attitude regarding studying English. 94% of respondents said they did not agree that they were taught English in a way that helped them to better convey their ideas in English, which seems to support the low OP and M occurrences, and elevated levels of SMS reported by the university students in this study. Hayes (1997: 11) offers an interesting take on why university-aged students may be turned off to learning English (or any serious learning, for that matter) after going through juken-jigoku, a specially-coined term that means 'entrance examination hell':

"The nature of the admission exam system itself, with its emphasis upon objective questions, stresses memorization and rote learning, an approach that does not stimulate creative intellectual activity. Having spent so much time, effort and money in getting into college, it is not surprising there is little enthusiasm for further academic effort while there. Moreover, student learning energies have been constrained by the standardized exam system, which tends to retard the development of those aspects of intellectual ability concerned with inspiration, innovation and creativity."

Fox et al. (1999: 13) offer further insight into the malady that students fall into after entering university:
"Entrance to a particular university is considered a measure of intelligence, determines the level to which one may rise in government or industry, and serves as a marriage certificate. This is why Japan has been termed a gakurekishakai – an education-credential society. However, once an accredited pinnacle has been reached, students often rest on their laurels and coast through school, their accessible future social, business, and bureaucratic tracks already decided."

The overall goal of Japanese higher education is largely viewed as receiving the brand name of a university in order to secure a company position, rather than receiving an education and skills which can be used in society. As Takeuchi (1997: 195) states: "what is learned or which career to pursue are not of concern. Getting into a better school becomes an end itself. The hidden agenda is the formation of a bureaucratic personality that matches the personality expected by large Japanese companies". Negishi (1993: 107) succinctly noted that although Japanese education had played an unmistakable part in spurring the remarkable growth of the Japanese economy, "the cultivation of humanity within the individual - the original purpose of education - got left behind".

But why is it that the educational system does not take more assertive steps to alleviate the problems caused by over-emphasized entrance examinations? The underlying powers that facilitate the exam-based system may not all be educational ones, as Law (1994: 100) notes:

"It is possible to argue that the companies and corporations which continue to recruit graduates on the basis of the name of the college they enter rather than on what they do while they are there, the universities which organize entrance procedures so as to maximize the income they gain from them, and the examination industry of cram-schools and publishers which feeds off the resultant growth, all conspire to maintain a vicious pyramid of competition which is not in the interests of secondary or higher education."

Until reforms are made at various levels, both inside and outside of the educational system, the importance of entrance examinations, and the structural support systems that profit from them, will continue to adversely affect English education in Japan.

Conclusion

The main findings that can be taken from this study are: 1) Japanese university students for reasons that appear to be more intrinsic in nature than their high school counterparts; 2) tests have a dramatically-reduced role as motivators for students in their English study for university students, where materials appear to take on a greater role; 3) academic events appear to have significantly weaker influence on university student study habits than on high school students, suggesting a lack of perceived

urgency and importance regarding tests, quizzes, reports, and presentations at the university level; and 4) although average weekly study time is relatively similar for both university and high school students, university students show a marked decrease in overall motivational strength in regards to English learning.

By looking at the various motivational influences reported by the students in this study, university teachers can think about ways to pragmatically customize their materials and curricula to be more in tune with student interests in order to capitalize on naturally-occurring motivations found in student learning strategies and preferred study materials.

While entrance examinations and a relatively lax academic atmosphere in university are surely not the only reasons that explain the stark differences between Sugita's 2008 data and this one, they are almost certainly two of the major influencing factors. More research is needed to help determine what long-term motivational and attitudinal consequences the entrance examination-based system has on Japanese EFL learners so that high school and university educators alike can devise ways to reduce the negative effects, and amplify any positive ones.

LIMITATIONS

This study, as well as Sugita's, suffered from a relatively short time period of data collection, and is too limited in scope in terms of determining why students are influenced in different ways, and why they choose the strategies they do. In order to get a more accurate idea of the motivational influences and their respective causes and effects, more students from different schools of varying academic levels and major studies, must be studied over longer period of time. Ideally, a multi-year longitudinal study following the same large group of students spread out over different high schools and different universities would certainly offer more definitive results. This would also help to account for different teachers and their teaching styles, which also must certainly impact student perceptions towards learning English and their motivations for doing so.

Another limitation of the current study was found in the frequency of English classes; second-year university English courses students only met once per week over the 8 weeks period, while Sugita's high school students met 4 times per week. This decreased contact time in English class most likely led to shorter study periods, and may have affected the types of influences reported by university students. This was mitigated slightly in the longer university class times (90 min, as opposed to 50 min high school classes), and the 8-week research period for the current study (Sugita's study was over 6 weeks). Certainly, more replications covering longer stretches of time, and a broader range of students and teachers would help to illuminate the different factors at play

regarding student-perceived motivational influences.

The details in your reports will not be scored, but they will be part of your grade for this class. Please be honest with your reports! You are required to complete at least 8 short reports before June 14th. You can write your reports in English or Japanese, your choice. 日本語で書いても大丈夫です！

REFERENCES

Brown JD, Yamashita S (1995a). English language entrance exams at Japanese universities: What do we know about them? JALT J., 17: 7-30.

Brown JD, Yamashita S (1995b). English language entrance examinations at Japanese universities: 1993 and 1994. In J.D. Brown and S. Yamashita, editors, JALT applied materials: Language testing in Japan, Tokyo: Japan Association for Language Teaching: 86-100.

Brown H (2007).Principles of language learning and teaching (5th ed.). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents.

Bruen J (2001). Strategies for success: Profiling the effective learner of German. Foreign Langue Annals, 34(3): 216-25.

Butler GY, Iino M (2005). Current Japanese Reforms in English Language Education: The 2003 Action Plan. Language Policy 4: 25-45.

Coulson D (in press). Tracking the development of word recognition in East Asian secondary schools. Unpublished manuscript.

Crookes G, Schmidt R (1991). Motivation: Reopening the research agenda. Language Learning, 41(4): 469-512.

Deci EL, Ryan RM (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum Press.

Dörnyei Z (1990). Conceptualizing motivation in foreign-language learning. Language Learning, 40(1): 45-78.

Dörnyei Z (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. Modern Lang. J., 78(3): 273-284.

Dörnyei Z (2002). The motivational basis of language learning tasks. In P. Robinson (Ed.), Individual differences in second language acquisition.Amsterdam: John Benjamins: 137-158.

Dörnyei Z (2005). The psychology of the language learner.Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Dörnyei Z (2003a). Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Dörnyei Z (2003b). Attitudes, orientations, and motivations in language learning: Advances in theory, research, and applications. Language Learning, 52(1): 3-32.

Dörnyei Z, Otto I (1998). Motivation in action: A process model of L2 motivation. Working papers in Applied Linguistics, 4:43-69. Themes Valley University.

Doyon P (2001). A review of higher education reform in modern Japan. Higher Education 41(4): 443-470.

Eckstein M, Noah H (1989). Forms and functions of secondary school leaving examinations. Comp. Educ. Rev., 33: 295-316.

Elliot AJ, McGregor HA, Gable S (1999). Achievement goals, study strategies, and exam performance: A mediational analysis. J. Educ. Psychol., 91(3): 549-563.

Ellis R (1994). Explaining individual differences in second language acquisition. The Study of Second Language Acquisition. Oxford University press.

English Testing Service. (2010). Test and score data summary for TOEFL internet-based and paper-based tests. Princeton, NJ: ETS Publishing.

Fox MH, ShiozawaT, Aldwinckle H (1999). A new system of university tenure: Remedy or disease. The Language Teacher 23(8): 13-15.

Gardner RC, Lambert WE (1972). Attitudes and motivation in second language learning.Rowley, MA: Newbury House.

Gardner RC (1985). Social psychology and second language learning: the role of attitudes and motivation. London: Edward Arnold.

Ghanea M, Pisheh HRZ, Ghanea MH (2011). The relationship between learners' motivation (integrative and instrumental) and English proficiency among Iranian EFL learners. World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology,59: 458-564.

Ghavamnia M, Kassaian Z, Dabaghi A (2011). The Relationship between Language Learning Strategies, Language Learning Beliefs, Motivation, and Proficiency: A Study of EFL Learners in Iran. JLTR 2(5): 1156-1161.

Gorsuch G(1998). Yakudoku EFL instruction in two Japanese high school classrooms: An exploratory study. JALT J., 20: 6-32.

Gorsuch G (1999a). Exploring the relationship between educational policy and instruction in Japanese high school EFL classrooms. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Graduate School of Education, Temple University, Tokyo.

Gorsuch G (2001). Japanese EFL teachers' perceptions of communicative, audiolingual and yakudoku activities: The plan versus the reality [Electronic Version]. Educational Policy Analysis Archives,9 . Retrieved June 21, 2011, from http://epaa.asu.edu/epaa/v9n10.html

Green J, Oxford RL (1995). A closer look at learner strategies, L2 proficiency, and gender. TESOL Quarterly, 29: 261-297.

Hatch E (1992). Discourse and language education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hayamizu T (1997). Between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: Examination of reasons for academic study based on the theory of internalization. Jpn. Psycholo. Res., 39(2):98-108.

Hayes LD (1997). Higher Education in Japan. Soc. Sci. J., 34(3).

Henrichsen LE (1989). Diffusion of innovations in English language teaching: The ELEC effort in Japan, 1956-1968.NY: Greenwood Press.

Hildebrant N, Giles H (1983). The Japanese as subordinate language group: Ethnolinguistic identity theory in a foreign language context. Anthropological Linguistics, 24:436-466.

Johnson M, Johnson Y (2010). An exploratory study of Japanese engineering students' EFL learning motivation. Hokkaido Lang. Culture Res., 8: 43-56.

Kawakami H (1993). Factors influencing English education in Japanese high schools: A survey of teacher perceptions. Unpublished master's thesis, Brigham Young University.

Kikuchi K, Browne C (2009). English educational policy for high schools in Japan: Ideals vs. reality. Reg. Lang. Centre J. 40(2): 172-191.

Kimura Y, Nakata Y, Okumura T (2001). Language learning motivation of EFL learners in Japan: a cross-sectional analysis of various learning milieus. JALT J. 23(1): 47-65.

Kodaira F (1996). Why not the "Japanese way"?: The traditional approach of learning English as a foreign language at secondary schools in Japan. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Tokyo, Columbia Teacher's College.

Koike I, Tanaka H (1995). English in foreign language education policy in Japan: Toward the twenty-first century. World English's, 14:13-25.

Koizumi R, Matsuo K (1993). A longitudinal study of attitudes and motivation in learning English among Japanese seventh-grade students. Jpn. Psychol. Res., 35:1-11.

Law G (1994). College entrance exams and team teaching in high school English classrooms. In M. Wada and T. Comonos, editors, Studies in team teaching, Tokyo: Kenkyusha: 90-102.

Lens W, Simons J, Dewitte S (2002). From duty to desire: the role of students" future time perspective and instrumentality perceptions for study motivation and self-regulation. In F. Pajares, & T. Urdan (Eds.), Academic Motivations of Adolescents. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing: 221-245.

Li CL, Haggard S (2011). Promoting government employees' English proficiency through a TOEIC training course: A case study of Pingtung County. Proceedings of the 2011 International Conference on ELT Technological Industry; Computer-Scoring English Writing: 34-48.

Madrid D, Ortega JL, Jiménez S, Pérez Ma C, Hidalgo E, Fernández J, Pérez Ma B, García Ma M, Gomis A, Verdejo Ma M, Robinson B (1993). Sources of Motivation in the EFL Classroom, VIII JornadasPedagógicaspara la Enseñanza del Inglés, Granada: GRETA, 18-36.

Magogwe JM, Oliver R (2007). The relationship between language learning strategies, proficiency, age, and self-efficacy beliefs: A study of language learners in

Botswana. System, 35: 338-352.

Marchesseau G (2006). The state of the JET Programme, team teaching and English education in Japan. Research Bulletin of Naruto University of Education, 21: 168-173.

McConnell DL (1995). Japan JETs international: Implementing innovations in educational policy. In Montergomery JD and Rondinelli DA, editors, Great policies: Strategic innovations in Asia and the Pacific Basin, Westport, CT: Praeger: 75-97.

Messick S (1996). Validity and wash back in language testing. Language Testing 13(3): 241-56.

Miller T (1998). Comparing the "fit" between communication-oriented teaching and the ELT landscape in Japan.Paper presented at the Temple University Japan colloquium on Applied Linguistics, Tokyo, Japan.

Ministry of Education (1995). Remaking Universities: Continuing Reform of Higher Education. Japanese Government Policies in Education, Science, Sports and Culture. Tokyo, Japan..

Nakata Y (2001). English learning motivation of Japanese first year college students: a study using qualitiative and quantitative methods. Shakai Bunka KenkyushoKiyou, 48:117-138.

Nakata Y (2003). Japanese learners' perceptions of English language study: A qualitative analysis of English learning experience. Studies in English Language Teaching, 26:33-56.

National Institute for Educational Research (1991). Toward formulating goals, aims, and objectives of secondary education for the 21st century.Tokyo, Japan.

Negishi H (1993). Japanese formal education and industry after World War 2. Asahi Bus. Rev., 8(2): 99-109.

Nishino T (2008). Japanese secondary school teachers' beliefs and practices regarding communicative language teaching: an exploratory survey. JALT J., 30(1): 27-51.

Oller JWJr (1981). Research on the measurement of affective variables: Some remaining questions. In RW Andersen (Ed.), New dimensions in second language acquisition research (14-27). Rowley, Massachusetts: Newbury House Publishers.

O'Malley JM, Chamot AU (1990). Learning Strategies in Second Language Acquisition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford R (1996). New pathways of language learning motication. In R.L. Oxford (ed.), Language learning motivation: Pathways to the new century (1-8). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.

Oxford R (2003). Research on second language learning strategies. Annu. Rev. Appl. Linguist., 13: 175-187.

PintrichPR (1999).The role of motivation in promoting and sustaining self-regulated learning. Int. J. Educ. Res., 31: 459–70.

Pintrich PRandDeGroot EV (1990). Motivational and self-regulated learning components of classroom academic performance. J. Educ. Psychol., 82(1): 33-40.

Pintrich PR, Schunk DH (2002). Motivation in education: Theory, research, and application (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Pomatti D (1996). English language education in the Japanese public schools: Obstacles to a communicative approach and Ministry of Education policies. Unpublished manuscript.

Richards JC, Rodgers TS (1986). Approaches and methods in language teaching.Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rohlen T (1983). Japan's high schools. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Sakui K (2004). Wearing two pairs of shoes: language teaching in Japan. ELT J., 58(2): 155-163.

Sheorey R (1999). An examination of language learning strategy use in the setting of an indigenized variety of English. System, 27: 173–190.

Skehan PandDörnyei Z (2003). Individual differences in second language learning. In C J Doughty andMH Long (Eds.), Handbook of secondlanguage acquisition. Oxford, England: Blackwell: 589-630.

Sugita M (2008). On the motivational influences that cause positive EFL learning outside the classroom. JACET J., 47: 81-93.

Takeuchi Y (1997). The self-activating entrance examination system: It's hidden agenda and its correspondence with the Japanese "salary man." Higher Education, 34(2): 183-198.

Terrell TD, Egasse J, Voge W (1982).Techniques for a more natural approach to second language acquisition and learning. In Blair, R.W., editor, Innovative approaches to language teaching, Rowley, MA: Newbury House Publishers, Inc: 174-175.

Teweles B (1996). Motivational differences between Chinese and Japanese learners of English as a foreign language. JALT J., 18(2): 211-228.

Williams MandBurden RL (1997). Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

APPENDIX 1

Learner progress reports

For 8 weeks this semester, you will be required to keep weekly learner progress reports to track your learning outside of class. The progress reports won't take long!

After studying English outside of class, take 10-15 min each week to write down the following:

1) How long did you study each week?

2) What did you study?

3) Why did you study? What motivated you? You can write about daily tests and homework, other people who influence you, self-motivation, materials, etc.

4) What was your attitude towards English learning that week:
(1 for very negative   ß———à 5 for very positive)