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# Motivational influences affecting female long-term learners of English in Japan

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## **Abstract**

This study explores the influences that have affected the motivational development of a group of adult Japanese female long-term learners of English. The participants in this study are representative of large numbers of Japanese women who continue to invest significant amounts of time and money into learning English over many years but whose circumstances mean that they do not appear to fit traditional theories of motivation in which integrative or instrumental factors are central. This study also shows that in order to understand the development of motivation in long-term learners it is necessary to consider the individual within the context of a range of wider social forces. I use the *Life Stages* approach to better understand the way in which the learning situation and experiences of these women have been affected by the reality of their social and domestic roles during different periods in their lives as English students.

This study also supports Dörnyei's theory of the Ideal-L2-Self (2009) as more useful than previous theories of integrativeness, which do not appear to be relevant to the context of these learners, in understanding the motivational development of these women. The study found that the Ideal-L2-Self changed for these women as they moved through the different Life Stages but that it was the Ideal-L2-Self that was able to sustain their interest in studying English despite negative and frustrating learning experiences. The study found that while these women may by some measures not be considered to be serious English students due to the fact that they did not seek to integrate into an English-language community, the experience of being long-term learners of English had been significant in the lives of these women. In particular, as mature students of English, these women have been able to participate in a socially sanctioned activity that allows them to develop an aspect of themselves that is separate to their domestic roles.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>- 1 -</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>- 2 -</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>- 1 -</b>
<b>Table of Figures</b> .....	<b>- 2 -</b>
<b>Table of Appendices</b> .....	<b>- 2 -</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>- 3 -</b>
<b>2 Literature Review</b> .....	<b>- 8 -</b>
2.1 Motivation in SLA .....	- 8 -
2.2 Situating motivation among English language learners in Japan .....	- 18 -
2.2.1 Japanese women learners of English .....	- 24 -
<b>3 Methodology</b> .....	<b>- 29 -</b>
3.1 Refining the Research Questions .....	- 29 -
3.2 Research Questions .....	- 33 -
3.3 Setting .....	- 34 -
3.4 The participants .....	- 35 -
3.5 Research procedures .....	- 37 -
3.6 Analysis procedures .....	- 41 -
3.7 Shortcomings and problems .....	- 42 -
3.7.1 Language .....	- 42 -
3.7.2 Relationship with participants .....	- 43 -
<b>4 Findings</b> .....	<b>- 45 -</b>
4.1 Life Stages .....	- 45 -
4.2 Analysis of motivational influences during the different life stages .....	- 47 -
4.2.1 Child .....	- 47 -
4.2.2 High school student .....	- 52 -
4.2.3 Tertiary student .....	- 56 -
4.2.4 Worker .....	- 61 -
4.2.5 Mother .....	- 65 -
4.3 Ongoing motivational influences .....	- 70 -
4.3.1 Travel .....	- 71 -
4.4.2 A respectable hobby .....	- 81 -
4.5 Using English outside of the classroom .....	- 84 -
4.6 Additional impressions of the place of English in Japan .....	- 90 -

4.6.1	English in Japanese high schools now.....	- 91 -
4.6.2	English in Japanese elementary schools .....	- 94 -
4.6.3	English in the Japanese workplace.....	- 102 -
<b>5</b>	<b>Discussion .....</b>	<b>- 111 -</b>
5.1	Key motivational influences during the Life Stages .....	- 111 -
5.2	Current Motivational Influences.....	- 120 -
5.3	Reflections on the study .....	- 123 -
<b>6</b>	<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>- 126 -</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Works Cited.....</b>	<b>137</b>

### Table of Figures

Figure 2.1	Schematic representation of the structural equation model in Dörnyei et al (2006).....	-12-
Figure 2.2	A process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom (based on Dörnyei 2001).....	-18-
Figure 2.3	Reasons for studying English in the future provided by Japanese men and women (Koisu, 2003).....	-28-
Figure 3.1	Participants in the study.....	-37-
Figure 3.2	Kvale's framework for qualitative research interviews.....	-41-
Figure 3.3	Life stages identified in the study.....	-43-
Figure 4.1	Explanation of Life Stages.....	-47-
Figure 4.2	Life stages of participants at the time of the interview.....	-48-
Figure 4.3	Type of tertiary institution attended by participants and major subject.....	-57-
Figure 5.1	Key motivational influences during the Life Stages.....	-112-
Figure 5.2	Explanation of key motivational influences during the Life Stages....	115-
Figure 5.3	Current motivational influences.....	-122-

### Table of Appendices

Appendix 1	Information for pre-interview task.....	-128-
Appendix 2	Information for participants.....	-134-
Appendix 3	Consent Forms.....	-136-