



Motivation and gender in the Japanese EFL classroom

Setsuko Mori ^b, Peter Gobel ^{a,*}

^a Faculty of Cultural Studies, Kyoto Sangyo University, Motoyama, Kamigamo, Kita-ku, Kyoto 603-8555, Japan

^b Department of Law, Kinki University, 3-4-1 Kowakae, Higashi Osaka, Osaka 577-8502, Japan

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Abstract

In the field of SLA, there have been various attempts to define second language learning motivation and to discover relationships between motivation and gender. Using two well-known motivational models: Expectancy-value theory, and Gardner's Socio-educational model, the present study sought to (1) first define foreign language learning motivation in a particular EFL setting and (2) then explore differences in motivational sub-constructs based on the variable of gender. A previously tested motivational scale was administered to 453 second-year non-English majors. Factor analysis of the results revealed a multidimensional construct comprised of Integrativeness, Intrinsic value, Amotivation, and Attainment value, together explaining 54.4% of the variance. A MANOVA was then performed with gender as the independent variable. The results of the MANOVA indicated a significant difference in Integrativeness based on gender, with females scoring significantly higher on those items. The results are discussed in relation to both the Socio-educational model and Expectancy-value theory, and with reference to their relevance in the EFL classroom.

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: setsukomori@mac.com (S. Mori), pgobel@cc.kyoto-su.ac.jp (P. Gobel).

1. Review of the literature

1.1. Cognitive psychological approaches to motivation

1.1.1. Expectancy-value theories

One can find a great deal of literature on motivation in the field of mainstream psychology. Although there are disagreements regarding the very nature of motivation, many of the recent educational psychological theories on motivation stress the cognitive aspects of motivation to learn. In inquiring about motivation along this line, many researchers (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Battle, 1965, 1966; Crandall et al., 1962; Eccles, 1983, 1984; Eccles et al., 1983, 1984, 1989; Feather, 1982, 1988, 1992; Schunk, 1991; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield and Eccles, 1992) include Expectancy and/or value constructs of motivation in their models. Among those theories, we would like to focus on the Expectancy-value theory proposed by Eccles and Wigfield (Eccles, 1983; Eccles et al., 1983, 1984, 1991; Eccles and Wigfield, 1995; Wigfield, 1994; Wigfield and Eccles, 1992) as it is most closely related to the theoretical framework of this study.

Eccles and Wigfield (1995) claim that achievement behaviour is predicted by two constructs: expectancy for success in a given task and the value the individual associates with success in that task. Expectancy in their model denotes students' expectancy for success on a certain task, which in turn can be determined by their perceptions of task difficulty and expectations of their ability to perform that task.

Other researchers (Covington, 1984; Harter, 1982, 1985; Weiner, 1979) also incorporate personal beliefs about ability as an integral part of their models, arguing that objective task difficulty is only one of the factors that influences expectancies. For instance, attributional theory (Weiner, 1979, 1986, 1992, 1994) claims that students' past experience is strongly related to their expectancy for success. Weiner argues that individuals attribute their success and failure to ability and effort, and the degree to which they strive for achievement in the future is determined by their perceptions of what the cause of success or failure was: ability or effort, and whether the cause was stable or unstable, internal or external, or uncontrollable or controllable. Eccles and Wigfield (1995) also contend that the task-specific self-concept of ability and perceptions of task difficulty are dependent upon how students interpret past events, and how they perceive their significant others' attitudes and expectations.

Expectancy has been also discussed within self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1993), which argues that students' judgment of their abilities and competence to carry out certain tasks plays an important role, and makes a distinction between outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. The former refers to the expectations for the outcome that can be produced by a given behaviour whereas the latter refers to the expectations for the outcome which can be produced by the individual. It is the latter that is most closely related to expectancy for success in Eccles and Wigfield's Expectancy-value theory.

As to the value the individual associates with success in that task, Eccles and Wigfield (1995) hypothesize that such value is composed of four components: Attainment value, Intrinsic value, Extrinsic utility value, and Cost. Attainment value refers to the individual's perceived importance of success in a given task. The importance of success in a task is consciously determined by the individual, with reference to their perception of how significant a task is to their self-schema or identity. The concept of such value is based on the assumption made by Rokeach (1979) that human behaviour abides by universal values that act as

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