



Engagement, gender, and motivation: A predictive model for Japanese young language learners



W.L. Quint Oga-Baldwin ^{a, b, *}, Yoshiyuki Nakata ^c

^a Fukuoka University of Education, Department of English Language Education, 1-1 Akama Bunkyo Machi, Munakata, Fukuoka, 811-4192, Japan

^b Waseda University, School of Education, Department of English Language and Literature, 1-104 Totsukamachi, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 169-8050, Japan

^c Doshisha University, Japan

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 19 February 2016
Received in revised form 7 January 2017
Accepted 9 January 2017
Available online 30 January 2017

Keywords:

Engagement
Motivation
Self-determination
Elementary school
Gender
External triangulation

ABSTRACT

A culture of engagement may help to build and sustain young children's motivation to learn a new language. In this study, we sought to investigate the link between engagement and motivation over the course of a semester in a naturally occurring Japanese elementary school classroom environment. Four-hundred and twenty-three fifth-year students in public elementary schools in western Japan agreed to participate in the research. Students completed surveys at two time points, first at the beginning of the semester regarding their in-class engagement, and again at the end of the semester regarding their motivation. A structural equation model was constructed using engagement and gender as predictors and motivational regulations as outcome variables. Observer rating of each class was used to triangulate. Engagement strongly predicted more adaptive intrinsically regulated motives and negatively predicted more extrinsic motives. Male students showed a tendency toward lower engagement, lower internally regulated motives, and higher externally regulated motives. Observer rating showed that students' reported engagement was visible to outside observers. Findings indicate that students' in-class engagement may be an important variable when investigating the long-term dynamics of foreign language learning in a classroom setting. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Teaching foreign languages to children is an active process, full of energy and positive emotion. Children express this energy through their engagement with the learning tasks. Engagement is a concept to describe students' behavior, cognition, and emotions while in class, representing the multifaceted intersection between action and motive (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). It is a key step in the process of foreign language learning (Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015; Svalberg, 2009), and may prime future motivation (Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012; Reeve, 2012; Reeve & Lee, 2014).

Engagement in foreign language classes is a central issue now in teaching English to children in Japan. According to the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT), a major goal of the current national

* Corresponding author. Fukuoka University of Education, Department of English Language Education, 1-1 Akama Bunkyo Machi, Munakata, Fukuoka, 811-4192, Japan.

E-mail address: quint@waseda.jp (W.L.Q. Oga-Baldwin).

curriculum for teaching foreign language to elementary school students is to build long-term motivation to learn English by engaging in communicative activities (MEXT., 2008). As a construct, engagement has been used in many motivational frameworks, most notably the self-determination theory of human motivation (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Reeve, 2012). In the Japanese elementary school environment, self-determination theory may offer a framework for promoting positive motivation for learning a new language (Noels, 2013; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2014). Prior studies have drawn on SDT to document Japanese elementary students' motives for foreign language learning (Carreira, 2012; Nishida, 2010); some notable studies include motivation as an outcome of English language instruction (Carreira, Maeda, & Ozaki, 2013). While this previous work has included self-determined motivation, it has not considered the potential influence of students' engagement in foreign language class. In order to build on the previous work in the Japanese elementary setting, we seek to integrate the concept of classroom engagement with foreign language motivation in order to demonstrate how active behavior, emotion, and cognition influence students' motivation for learning a new language.

2. Engagement, motivation, and gender

Given the importance of engagement for promoting achievement, learning, and long-term motivation (Hyland, 2003; Reeve & Lee, 2014; Reeve & Tseng, 2011), we aim to confirm the link between engagement and motivation to learn a foreign language in Japanese elementary schools. The curricular goal of promoting interest and motivation through active learning (MEXT., 2008) gives practical relevance to this investigation. Here, we introduce the general literature on engagement, connect the concept to motivation as understood according to self-determination theory, consider the influence of gender, and examine how these factors together may relate to elementary school foreign language learning.

2.1. Engagement and motivation: a reciprocal relationship

Engagement is a topic of interest to most teachers. When students are optimally engaged in their studies, they are on task, thinking, and enjoying the learning process. This is what teachers hope to see; when teachers talk about a desire to motivate students, they may actually be discussing the desire to help students actively engage. Outlined by Fredricks et al. (2004), engagement is a multifaceted concept describing what and how students think, act, and feel in a classroom setting. Theorists distinguish engagement from motivation as the point where students act, drawing on the energy and direction of motivation to put thought and feeling into deed (Fredricks et al., 2004). Specific to the language classroom setting, Svalberg (2009) defines motivation as internal feelings of autonomy and purpose, related to positive affect for the topic. Engagement contains all these elements, in addition to cognitive and social components such as attention, agency, action, and interaction. Engagement is thus a state and process involving alert focus, positive orientation toward the language, and willingness to initiate social language use.

These definitions are consistent with ideas from educational psychology, where motivation represents the invisible, conscious, and subconscious desires that regulate learners' behavior, while engagement represents the signs of cognitive and emotional activity that stem from their desires, evidenced by students' active participation and visible enjoyment of the learning process (Reeve, 2012). Similarly, motivation is specific to the individual student, while engagement occurs at the intersection of the student and classroom situation (Fredricks et al., 2004). Engagement may be like a Rubicon moment, priming students toward future motivation and action (Heckhausen, 1991; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2012). Theoretical and empirical work has shown a relationship between individuals' actions and their resulting internal states, including ability beliefs and motivation (Bandura, 1986; Reeve & Lee, 2014). Engagement may result from individuals' existing motivation and environment, but through continuous active learning may also help students develop real ability (Hyland, 2003), leading to greater motivation (Bandura, 1997). By engaging with language learning material, research has shown that motivation likewise increases (Lo & Hyland, 2007). Positive engagement predicts academic achievement in general education settings (Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012), as well as positively influencing the teaching environment (Reeve, 2013; Skinner, Furrer, Marchand, & Kindermann, 2008). Engaged students are more likely to receive positive teacher attention, creating a virtuous cycle (Skinner & Belmont, 1993), potentially leading to the development of positive motivation (Skinner et al., 2008; Reeve & Lee, 2014).

Theoretical and empirical work indicates that there are overlapping aspects of engagement: behavioral, social, emotional, and cognitive (Fredricks et al., 2004; Reeve, 2012; Svalberg, 2009). These categories describe the interrelated ways that students may act, feel, and think in class. *Behavioral engagement* describes how students pay attention, listen carefully, and work to complete classroom tasks. In many ways, this aspect of engagement is the one that most concerns teachers, and is positively influenced by classroom procedures and methods for promoting on-task behavior (Good & Brophy, 2008). Another component of behavior may include *social engagement*, which specifies how learners use language as a tool for interaction (Svalberg, 2009). *Emotional engagement* also has both internal and external manifestations. An emotionally engaged student enjoys the learning materials, finds pleasure in the tasks, and does not suffer negative affect during class. When teachers create a positive environment, they may promote students' emotional engagement (T. Kim & Schallert, 2014). *Cognitive engagement* refers to how students actively think about the learning material by puzzling out meanings, making connections, solving problems, committing concepts to memory, and answering questions. This aspect also overlaps with behavior to some extent, and may encompass strategies (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/4941376>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/4941376>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)