

# **Orientations of Motivated and Less Motivated EFL Learners :A study of Japanese University Students**

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## **1. Introduction**

In the field of research in second language learning motivation, there are a number of studies on reasons or purposes for learning a second language, which are usually referred to as 'goal' or 'orientation' (Yashima, 2003). Research on *integrative* and *instrumental orientation* conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972) is one of the most well-known early studies on orientation. *Integrative orientation* concerns a positive disposition toward the L2 (second language) group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community (Dörnyei, 2001: 49), while *instrumental orientation* is defined as the degree of effort a learner puts into learning an L2 as a result of the desire to achieve some functional goal (e.g. to pass an exam or to get a better job or a higher salary) (Ellis, 1997: 140). The authors claimed that *integrative orientation* had more impact on the L2 learners' performance than *instrumental orientation*. The significant role of integrative motivation in L2 learning was thus emphasized and the concept of the integrative/instrumental dichotomy in research in second language learning motivation was the most influential and dominant until the 1990s. Some researchers, however, began to question the notion that integrative motivation has a strong connection to success in language learning because a number of research findings contradicting Gardner's were reported

by researchers (e.g. Chihara and Oller, 1978, Savanes, 1978, and Oxford, Talbott, and Halleck, 1989). Attempting to account for these different research results, Au (1988) raised the issue of the context in which these studies were conducted. Oxford and Shearin (1994: 15) point out the difference between second and foreign language environments as one of the main focuses of the issue of context; integrative motivation is much more meaningful for second language learners than for foreign language learners. Dörnyei (1990) suggests that instrumental motivation affects foreign language learners, especially at an intermediate proficiency level and below, while integrative motivation might play a role in going beyond the intermediate level in foreign language learning. Accompanied by a great deal of confusion and disagreement between researchers regarding classification, other scholars raised questions about the dichotomous model of L2 motivation; some cases seem to be difficult to classify into either integrative or instrumental motivation (Au, 1988). For example, Clement and Kruideniet (1983) point out that motivation of L2 learners who want to make friends among the target language people can be classified as either instrumental or integrative. It was also pointed out that orientations of second language learners are so diverse that the dichotomous model might be unable to cover all of their orientations. Based on research investigating 218 American high school students learning Japanese, Oxford and Shearin (1994) suggest that L2 learning motivation theory emphasizing integrative and instrumental aspects might not cover all possible kinds of L2 learning motivation. They found approximately twenty distinguishable motivation categories including integrative and instrumental orientations.

A number of studies on orientations of Japanese learners have also been carried out. In the study of foreign language motivational components among 288 Japanese university students, Nakata (2006) found a component involving a general cosmopolitan outlook and labelled it as *international orientation*, while Yashima (2000) named a similar component *international friendship* in the study of orientations of 389 Japanese college students which showed the highest correlation with motivation, second only to *instrumental orientation*.

In this paper, I seek to investigate the respondents' reasons/purposes

for learning English as a foreign language in Japanese socio-educational environment (hereafter referred to as orientations). The focus of my study is, however, not on the general nature of the L2 learners' orientations as in the case of most researchers so far. Rather, the study focuses on the differences between motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations. The goal of this paper is firstly to identify the general nature of orientations of the respondents as a whole group and, then, to identify the profiles of 'motivated' learners with regard to motivational orientations by comparison with 'less motivated' learners. To this end, the study explores the following research questions:

1. What constitutes the respondents' orientations?
2. What orientations did motivated learners and less motivated learners agree with most?
3. Is there any difference between motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations?
4. How different are motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations?

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Participants**

The participants were 350 first to fourth year Japanese university students (first year: 261; second year: 18; third year: 52; and fourth year: 19) from four faculties: education (165), social and information (41), engineering (67) and medicine (77) at a coeducational university (male: 148; female: 202) in one of the prefectures in the Kanto district (( ) indicates the number of participants). They studied English as a compulsory subject at the first and second year of the university. 52 of the participants from the faculty of Education majored English.

## **2.2. Measuring orientations**

To investigate different types of orientations in the questionnaire in the present research, a preliminary survey was first administered at two different universities to the one where the main study was conducted. The number of participants was 104 (second year: 35; third year: 67; and fourth year: 2). In that preliminary study's questionnaire in an open-ended question, the participants were asked to indicate all the reasons or purposes for studying English for each period of junior high school, high school, and university. On the basis of those answers, lists of orientations consisting of 28 statements were created (See Appendix) for a new study. In the questionnaire of this new and present study, the respondents were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with the 28 statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'very much', although 27 of them were used for the analysis of this paper. (Statement 19 which was not applicable for university students was deleted).

## **2.3. Identifying 'motivated' and 'less motivated' learners**

'Motivated' learners in the study were identified by the questionnaire, more specifically, the respondents' perceived intensity of willingness to learn English (hereafter referred to as Perceived Intensity of Motivation). In the questionnaire the participants were asked to rate to what extent they perceive they are willing to learn English on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = 'not at all' to 5 = 'very much'. In the study, the learners who rated 4 = 'quite a lot' or 5 = 'very much' are described as 'motivated' learners and those who rated 3 = 'so-so', 2 = 'not really', or 1 = 'not at all' are identified as 'less motivated' learners. Of the 350 participants for the questionnaire, 116 were identified as motivated learners of English at university, while 234 were less motivated learners.

### 3. Results and Analysis

#### 3.1. What constitutes the respondents' orientations?

In order to identify the construct of the interrelation between the 27 statements referring to the respondents' orientations for a period of study at university, a principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed. In determining the number of factors to be extracted the following criteria were taken into consideration:

1. Minimum eigenvalues of 1.0;
2. Each factor contains individual items with a minimum loading of 0.4. (Koyano, 1988);
3. Factors can be well interpreted. (Oshio, 2004).
4. Eigenvalues appear before the decrease of eigenvalues level off on the screeplot. (Mori & Gobel, 2005)

As a result, a five-factor solution was chosen, which accounted for 64.3% of the total variance. All the statements got a loading greater than 0.55 except statement 23: '(I study English) because I want to gain a job in which English competency is required in the future' which belonged to Factor 1. The loading of statement 23 was 0.466 and may not necessarily be low enough as a factor loading threshold. Koshio (2004) suggests that a factor loading should be at least above 0.4 or 0.35. The figure, however, was the lowest of all the statements. Moreover, the statement did not always match well the other statements in Factor 1 for interpretation. The item was thus determined to be excluded from Factor 1. Factor 5 was defined by only two items. Matsuo and Nakamura (2002) suggest that a factor should be related to at least three items. As far as interpretation is concerned, however, these two items seemed to match each other well and as Koshio (2004) suggests, a well interpreted factor is an important criterion in determining factors. As a result, Factor 5 was determined as being one not to be excluded.

To examine the reliability of a scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. The results were Factor 1: 0.93, Factor 2: 0.85, Factor 3:

0.87, Factor 4: 0.59, and Factor 5: 0.39, Factor 4 and 5 indicated quite low Cronbach values; ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be above 0.7 (Pallant, 2001). With short scales (e.g., scales with less than ten items), however, it is common to find quite low Cronbach values (Pallant, 2001). Factor 4 was defined by 4 items whereas Factor 5 was only defined by 2 items. Pallant (2001: 85) points out that 'in this case it may be more appropriate to report the mean inter-item correlation for the items'. The mean inter-item correlation for the items in Factor 4 and 5 was thus calculated. The result of Factor 4 was 0.29 and that of Factor 5 was 0.24. It was within an optimal range for the inter-item correlation of 0.2 to 0.4 which Briggs and Cheek (1986) recommend.

Table 1 shows the results of factor analysis (principal component analysis with varimax rotation) of orientation statements:

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**Table 1: A factor analysis of statements referring to orientations: principal component analysis with varimax rotation**

#	Statements (I study English)	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
16	Because I am interested in British or American culture	.746				
4	Because I am interested in foreign events and cultures	.740				
17	Because I am interested in English-language music or films	.715				
20	Because English is useful when we travel abroad	.711				
6	So that I can broaden my view	.666				
10	Because I want to be able to communicate with foreign people	.645				
11	Because I want to go or study abroad in the future	.606				
7	Because I want be able to speak English	.582				
3	Because being good at English is cool	.581				
24	Because I want to deepen my knowledge	.556				
14	Because I can obtain a good job in the future		.727			
12	Because English will be necessary in the future		.709			
5	Because English will be useful in the future		.703			
8	So that I can get a certificate such as EIKEN or TOEIC		.645			
22	Because I can make a success in international society in the future		.566			
27	Because I am good at English			.767		
1	Because studying English is fun			.689		
13	Because I like English			.683		
26	Because English teachers are good			.639		
28	Because of interest in or curiosity about English as a language			.560		
25	Because English is a compulsory subject				.740	
18	Vaguely without any specific purposes or reasons				.650	
21	Because English is the subject required for tests or entrance exams				.604	
2	Because I want to gain a good grade				.572	
9	Because my parents tell me to study English					.810
15	Because I am influenced by friends					.565
	Variance explained	6.28	4.07	3.66	1.99	1.36
	Proportion of variance explained	23.26	15.07	13.55	7.37	5.04
	Cumulative proportion of variance explained	23.26	38.32	51.88	59.25	64.28

Factor 1 obtained appreciative loading from ten items. The factor may be characterized by several elements, but most of the items that loaded the factor have something to do with foreign cultures, matters, and people. Statement 4: '(I study English) because I am interested in foreign events and cultures', statement 16: '(I study English) because I am interested in British or American culture', and statement 17: '(I study English) because I am interested in English-language music or films' are concerned with interest in foreign events and cultures including British and American cultures. Statement 20: '(I study English) because English is useful when we travel abroad' and statement 11: '(I study English) because I want to go or study abroad in the future' are related to travelling, staying, or studying abroad. Statement 7: '(I study English) because I want to be able to speak English' and statement 10: '(I study English) because I want to be able to communicate with foreign people' have something to do with interaction or communication with foreign people. As for statement 3: '(I study English) because being good at English is cool', when Japanese students describe someone who is good at English as cool, it often refers to communicative competency such as being able to speak English fluently, rather than ability to be able to get good scores in the tests. Thus, statement 3 may be also concerned with the aspect of English communication with foreign people just like statement 7 and 10. Statement 6: '(I study English) because I can broaden my view' and statement 24: '(I study English) because I want to deepen my knowledge' may not seem directly to be connected to interest in foreign cultures or people. However, taking into consideration that one of the best ways to broaden our views and deepen our knowledge may be considered to travel or study abroad or to study foreign cultures or languages or to meet people we are not familiar with, these statements may also suggest the connection with interest in foreign cultures, events, or meeting with foreign people. Judging from the profiles of these elements, it may be appropriate to describe Factor 1 as *interest in foreign cultures and people*.

Factor 2 is defined by 5 statements. Statement 5: '(I study English) because English will be useful in a future job', statement 12: '(I study



English) because English will be necessary in the future', statement 14: '(I study English) because I can obtain a good job in the future', statement 22: '(I study English) because I can make a success in the international society in the future'. All these statements are related to the recognition or perception of necessity and usefulness of English competency in the future. Moreover, statement 8: '(I study English) so that I can get an English certificate such as EIKEN or TOEIC' is also assumed to be based on the same recognition. That is, the reason why they want to gain English certificates such as EIKEN or TOEIC is they recognize or perceive these certificates will be useful in obtaining a good job or their promotion in the future. The statements which loaded on Factor 2 could thus be labelled as *recognition of future usefulness/necessity*.

All of the statements that loaded on Factor 3 are associated with intrinsic value of studying English. Statement 1: '(I study English) because studying English is fun' and statement 13: '(I study English) because I like English' are indicative of students' positive feeling of studying English and of gaining enjoyment from it, which would enhance intrinsic motivation. Statement 27: '(I study English) because I am good at English' is associated with the learners' perception of their English-language abilities. People with high self-efficacy for learning something are usually expected to have intrinsically more positive involvement in it. Self-efficacy beliefs influence task choice, effort, persistence, resilience, and achievement (Bandura, 1997). Statement 28: '(I study English) because of interest in or curiosity about English as a language' is concerned with interest which has been considered to be an implicit aspect of intrinsic motivation (Deci, 1992). Statement 26: '(I study English) because English teachers are good' suggests students' positive feelings of and approval for the person who is engaged in teaching English. The feeling could be assumed to make the students more intrinsically motivated to be involved in English classes. Factor 3 is thus described as *intrinsic orientation*.

Statement 2: '(I study English) because I want to gain a good grade' is related to instrumental motivation. Statement 18: '(I study English) vaguely without any specific purposes or reasons' indicates the situation in which

students could not find any meaningful connection of their life to learning English or find any goal for learning English. The item seems to suggest students' lack of motivation to learn English or even 'amotivation'. Statement 21: '(I study English) because English is the subject required for tests or entrance exams' and statement 25: '(I study English) because English is a compulsory subject' are associated with extrinsic motivation. Factor 4 is thus best termed as *instrumental/extrinsic orientation*.

Statement 9: '(I study English) because my parents tell me to study English' and statement 15: '(I study English) because I am influenced by friends' have something to do with influence by people who are very close to them such as parents or friends. Factor 5 is thus labelled as *influence of parents/friends*.

### 3.2. What orientations did motivated and less motivated learners agree with most?

Table 2 indicates top five statements referring to orientations motivated learners agreed with most.

**Table 2: Top five statements referring to orientations 'motivated' learners agreed with most**

	Statement number	Statements: I study English	Mean scores (S.D.)
1	7	Because I want to be able to speak English	4.28 (0.98)
2	12	Because English will be necessary in the future	4.19 (0.95)
3	5	Because English will be useful in the future	4.17 (0.98)
4	10	Because I want to be able to communicate with foreign people	4.03 (1.20)
5	13	Because I like English	3.78 (1.12)

Among these top five statements motivated learners agreed with most, two of the statements: statement 7 and 10 belonged to Factor 1: *interest in foreign cultures and people*, other two of them: statement 5 and 12 were in Factor 2: *recognition of future usefulness/necessity*, and one of them: statement 13 was in Factor 3: *intrinsic orientation*. This result revealed that motivated learners had a positive feeling of English and were intrinsically motivated to

learn English. They were very interested in using English, especially speaking English, to communicate with foreign people. They recognize necessity and usefulness of English in the future. They study English because they feel great interest in using English and to prepare for the future.

Table 3 shows top five statements referring to orientations the less motivated learners agreed with most.

**Table 3: Top five statements referring to orientations 'less motivated' learners agreed with most**

	Statement number	Statements: I study English	Mean scores (S.D.)
1	25	Because English is a compulsory subject	3.90 (1.21)
2	12	Because English will be necessary in the future	3.00 (1.22)
3	2	Because I want to gain a good grade	2.99 (1.23)
4	18	Vaguely without any specific purposes or reasons	2.85 (1.29)
5	21	Because English is the subject required for tests or entrance exams	2.83 (1.50)

Four of the statements less motivated learners agreed with most: statement 2, 18, 21, and 25 were components of Factor 4: *extrinsic/instrumental orientation* and one of them: statement 12 was in Factor 2: *recognition of future usefulness/necessity*. Most of the top five statements were thus the components of Factor 4. They were thus extrinsically and instrumentally motivated to learn English. They study English because they feel they have to. Feeling of obligation or necessity pushed them to study English. It is assumed that they were not interested in English and did not gain any pleasure or fun from it.

Out of the top five statements motivated and less motivated learners agreed with most, statement 12 was the only one both motivated and less motivated learners had in common, which indicates a contrastive difference between the two groups in the content of reasons and purposes for learning English. It is interesting that whether they were motivated or less motivated, they felt the necessity of English in the future. Another noteworthy aspect is that the mean scores of motivated learners were higher in 25 of the 27 statements than those of less motivated learners. Two statements of the less

motivated learners whose mean scores were higher than those of motivated learners were statement 18: '(I study English) because vaguely without any specific purposes or reasons' and statement 25: '(I study English) because English is a compulsory subject', both of which belonged to Factor 4: *Instrumental/extrinsic orientations*. Moreover, the mean scores of motivated learners were above 3.00 in 23 of the 27 statements, while those of the less motivated learners were above 3.00 in only two statements: statement 25 and 12 which were the top two of the top five statements.

All these results suggest that motivated learners were likely to have not only clear but also various and complex reasons and purposes for learning English, while the less motivated learners generally had vague orientations and their orientations were comparatively simple; instrumental and extrinsic orientations were dominant.

### **3.3. Is there any difference between motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations?**

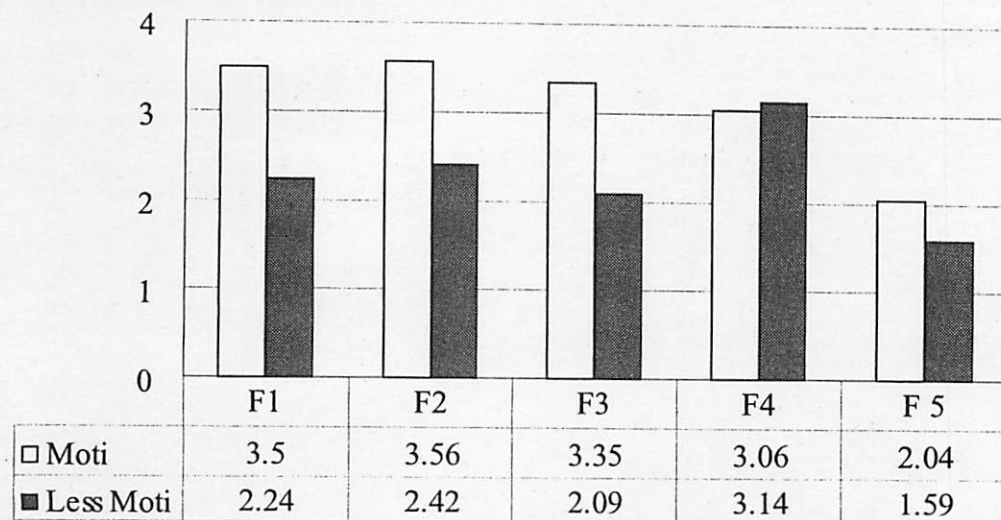
In order to examine whether there is a statistically significant difference between motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations, a T-test was calculated for 27 statements referring to orientations. The results confirmed that there was a significant difference (significant at the 1 % level) between these two groups in 25 of the 27 statements. Two statements which had no significant difference were statement 9: '(I study English) because my parents tell me to study English' and statement 21: '(I study English) because English is the subject required for tests or entrance exams'. This result also revealed a significant difference between motivated and less motivated learners in their reasons and purposes for learning English.

### **3.4. How different are motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations?**

In order to examine how motivated and less motivated learners differ in reasons and purposes for learning English, the mean scores of the statements referring to orientations belonging to each of five factors a statistical analysis

already revealed were calculated. The following table with a bar graph (Table 4) indicates the mean scores of statements referring to orientations of five factors for motivated and less motivated learners.

**Table 4: The mean scores of statements on orientations of five factors for motivated and less motivated learners**



The results indicate that the construct of the reasons and purposes for learning English between motivated and less motivated learners are quite different from each other as well as the previous results. With regard to motivated learners, the absolute value of the mean scores of each factor is quite high except F 5: *influence of parents/friends*, showing that the orientations of motivated learners have multiple aspects; motivated learners studied English at university for various reasons such as interest in foreign cultures and people, recognitions of future necessity and usefulness of English competency, and intrinsic motivation. With regard to less motivated learners, however, while the absolute value of the mean scores of each factor was quite low, that of Factor 4: *extrinsic/instrumental orientation* was much higher than that of the other factors, even higher than that of the motivated learners, indicating that the orientations of less motivated learners were quite simple, that is to say, extrinsic/instrumental motivation-oriented. Less motivated learners of English at university studied merely because they needed the qualification but took little pleasure or interest in learning about

foreign cultures and peoples. They doubted whether English would be useful to them in the future. Another noteworthy aspect is that the mean score of F 4: *influence of parents/friends* was much lower than that of the other factors in both motivated and less motivated learners. As for learning English, the learners were thus much less likely to be influenced by their parents and friends while at university.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Orientations of the respondents who were learning English as a foreign language at university in a Japanese socio-educational context can be summarized by five factors: *interest in foreign cultures and people, recognition of future necessity/usefulness, intrinsic orientation, instrumental/extrinsic orientation, and influence of parents/friends*. With regard to Factor 1: *interest in foreign cultures and people* referring to interest in or positive attitudes toward foreign cultures including British or American cultures or communication with foreign people, Nakata (1995, 2006) named a similar component *international orientation* and Yashima labelled it as *intercultural friendship* (2000) or as *international posture* (2002) in their studies on orientations of Japanese learners of English in an EFL context. Nakata (2006) pointed out the difference between *international orientation* and *integrative orientation* as which Gardner and Lambert (1972) labelled positive feelings toward the community that speaks the target language. The former does not always specify native speakers of English or English-speaking cultures, while the latter concerns the specific L2 group and community. Nakata (2006) argued that the concepts of integrative and instrumental motivation are not always applicable to an EFL context where the learners have little direct contact with native speakers of the target language and thus have rare opportunities to use the language in real life. He, however, also pointed out that:

...we should also bear mind that the concept of 'integrative motivation' is often problematic not so much because the

*learners are Japanese, but because the language is English,  
which is a lingua franca — an internationally used language,  
in the place where globalisation issues are dominant.*

In a similar way, Yashima (2004) also pointed out that as for the L2 learning, characteristics of English as a universal Language could make English different from other languages in reasons for learning the language or attitudes towards the L2 group. As English is increasingly gaining the status of World Language, it may be quite natural to lose its 'nationality', where English may no longer simply belong as a member of the language community. Whether the L2 learners are interested in the culture or community the language is spoken in, and whether they have positive attitudes toward the L2 group, may be a crucial part of learning the second language. This, however, may not always apply to English. People start to learn English not necessarily from interest in English-speaking cultures or communities but from various reasons such as success in business or even 'Machiavellian motivation' — 'the desire to learn the L2 in order to manipulate and overcome the people of the target language' (Ellis, 1997: 75).

According to Yashima (2004), Japanese students are likely to study English mainly with two goals in mind: one is a specific and short-range goal such as entrance examinations, grades, tests, and assignments and the other is a rather vague long-term goal such as communication with foreign people, studying abroad, jobs related to foreign affairs or people, self-image as a member of international community. Yashima (*ibid.*) described the latter as 'Kokusaiteki sikousei', which could be translated into 'international orientation', that implies the learners' aiming at connecting the self to the world or international community. Yashima (*ibid.*) pointed out that the former goal does not always coincide with the latter especially in an environment in which English is not spoken in their daily lives as in the Japanese educational context. According to Yashima (*ibid.*), after Japanese students get into university, the former goal becomes less important and they are divided into those who can establish the latter goal and those who can't. Whether the

learners can set a proper goal for learning the target language seems to be of great importance for them to continuously learn it for a long period of time especially for Japanese university students, and could affect their motivation.

Statistical analysis of motivated and less motivated learners' orientations revealed that there was a significant difference between them in their orientations. Orientations of the learners identified as motivated to learn English at university were characterized not so much by a simple structure as by a composite construct made up of several L2 learning orientations. Interest in foreign cultures and communication with foreign people and recognition of future usefulness and necessity of English competency seem to play a main role in motivating them to learn English at university as well as intrinsic orientations. Orientations of less motivated learners, on the other hand, were characterized by a quite simple structure; extrinsic and instrumental orientations were dominant and other factors were much less influential on their motivation.

A number of studies about second language learning motivation of Japanese learners have examined the general nature of their orientations so far. As a result, they have dealt with Japanese learners as a whole group. It is, however, assumed that there might be a great deal of variation among Japanese learners with regard to their orientations or attitude toward learning English. My study revealed there was a significant difference between motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations. Studies focusing on specific groups among Japanese learners could thus provide useful knowledge to have a better understanding of second language learning motivation of Japanese learners. It may be also of importance to examine learning experiences before university even in a study taking university students as an object of study. Studying English usually starts from junior high school, or sometimes even earlier, in Japan. Learning English at university can be thus described as a stage in a sequence of EFL instruction which starts before university, rather than a discrete learning experience, distinct from prior EFL learning. Moreover, the study revealed the difference between motivated and less motivated learners in their orientations. Further studies, however,



would be necessary to understand what brought about the difference. In order to examine the cause of the difference, qualitative approach on the basis of data collected from interviews could be also of great use because it allows researchers to make a deeper examination of thoughts or feelings or belief of the respondents.

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## Appendix

### Statements referring to orientations

Statement number	Statement: I learn (or learned) English:
1	Because studying English is fun
2	Because I want (wanted) to gain a good grade.
3	Because being good at English is cool
4	Because I am interested in foreign events and cultures.
5	Because English will be useful in the future.
6	So that I can broaden my view
7	Because I want to be able to speak English
8	So that I can get a certificate such as EIKEN or TOEIC
9	Because my parents tell me to study English
10	Because I want to be able to communicate with foreign people
11	Because I want to go abroad or study abroad in the future
12	Because English is necessary in the future
13	Because I like English
14	Because I can obtain a good job in the future
15	Because I am influenced by friends
16	Because I am interested in British or American culture
17	Because I am interested in English-language music or films
18	Vaguely without any specific purposes or reasons
19*	Because I want to enter a school or university I like
20	Because English is useful when we travel abroad
21	Because English is the subject required for tests or entrance exams
22	Because I can make a success in international society in the future
23	Because I want to gain a job in which English competency is required in the future
24	Because I want to deepen my knowledge
25	Because English is a compulsory subject
26	Because English teachers are good
27	Because I am good at English
28	Because of interest in or curiosity about English as a language

\* Statement 19 is not used for this paper.