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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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1 Introduction

The English language has been taught in Japanese schools since the late 1800s and is accepted at both the national and individual level as a means by which the Japanese can engage with the world. As a result of this, a significant number of Japanese adults choose to use their own time and money to undertake English study making the provision of English education a multi-billion dollar industry. However, in spite of the value given to English and the efforts of large numbers of Japanese adults to learn English, there also remains a fundamental unease over the place of English in Japan.

English is a compulsory subject in Japanese junior and senior high schools as well as many university programmes. However, English education in Japan does not tend to emphasise developing skills in speaking, a gap which a number of national and local chains of *eikaiwa* (English conversation) schools have moved in to fill. In urban Japan *eikaiwa* schools are as ubiquitous as pharmacies and banks and provide students with both the ambience of *gaikoku* (the world outside of Japan) as well as a range of branded pedagogical approaches to the study of English. However, despite the long history and compulsory nature of English school-level education in Japan and the presence of a well-organised and profitable *eikaiwa* industry, results of international standardised tests such as TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) show that Japanese people do not have the skills in English that might be expected. This has been noted at the highest level of government in Japan as a cause of concern, “At present the English-speaking abilities of a large percentage of the population are inadequate, and this

imposes restrictions on exchange with foreigners and creates occasions when the ideas and opinions of Japanese people are not properly evaluated” (Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2002). In seeking to understand and remedy this, much attention has been given to analysis and reform of the teaching methods used to teach English in Japanese schools; in spite of this, there is also a body of research that makes it clear that Japanese identity is firmly bound up with the Japanese language. As such, while Japanese may have what appear to be very strong motivating reasons to develop their English in order to use it for work, travel, or to demonstrate their membership of a sophisticated cultural elite, there remains the underlying assumption that one cannot be both a good Japanese and a good speaker of English, “the old and well entrenched belief, particularly strong among older people, that Japanese people cannot learn other languages” (Gottlieb, 2008: 153).

Such widespread concern over a national lack of success in learning English does not, however, appear to have dampened the enthusiasm of Japanese adults to participate in English classes and a wide range of English learning opportunities are available to adults living in urban Japan. As an English teacher in Tokyo for several years I taught in a range of typical settings including university classes, workplace-based programmes in which a group of employees were required by their employer to participate, community-based classes heavily subsidised for residents by the local city council and attended by students of a range of ages and backgrounds, smaller and more expensive classes in language institutes, as well as more casual one-on-one conversation classes with students who may have been preparing to travel, attend a conference abroad, were under pressure by their employer to improve their English skill, or who just wished to

maintain and develop a skill that they had put energy into in the past.

As a teacher it seemed to me that there was an endless line of Japanese adults who felt compelled to devote large amounts of time and money to an activity which, while perhaps pleasurable in some aspects, was also almost universally spoken of as difficult. It also became apparent that while some of the students I taught had immediate, measurable goals for their English, the majority did not but rather seemed to be motivated by a combination of enjoyment in the social aspect of the activity as well as by an image of themselves as a future successful English speaker, while struggling on an ongoing basis with the enormity of getting to such a point. In addition, observing my Japanese husband, who, employed by a foreign-owned IT company in Tokyo, was constantly working to improve his English brought home to me how consuming this issue is for a large number of Japanese adults.

The community and institute-based classes that I taught tended to be dominated by Japanese women and included individuals who were working in a range of jobs or who were, as they described themselves, housewives. Such women, who appeared to lead comfortable and secure lives, had devoted a remarkable amount of time and significant amounts of money to their English study over many years. Traditional theories of language learning motivation would seek to explain their motivation by showing the necessity of such learners to use English in their work, a factor that may be relevant for some elite Japanese male workers, or perhaps the desire to integrate with an English speaking community. However, these factors did not appear to be relevant to the majority of the women that I taught and I was interested in exploring further what brought such women to their English classes week after week, year after year.

This study, therefore, set out to explore in detail the motivational factors that had influenced a group of Japanese women living in Tokyo who were long-term learners of English. Through the course of this study, which was largely based on data collected in interviews, it became apparent that in order to understand the motivation of these women to attend formal English classes, attention should be paid to the place of English both practically within Japanese society, and symbolically within Japanese culture and identity. Gendered roles in family and work remain significant in Japanese society and after considering the interview data it also became clear that it would be relevant and useful to consider motivational influences for these women in terms of the reality of their domestic situations.

The key concept of motivation as it relates to Second Language Acquisition (SLA) will be discussed in detail in the Literature Review. Motivation is now understood to be a dynamic process which is centred in the individual and I was interested in taking a long-term view of the learners in this study as I had seen the way in which learning takes place for Japanese adults through their lives in a range of settings. In addition, the fact that English study is compulsory in Japanese junior and senior high schools means that all Japanese adults share the experience of having been an English learner. I was interested in exploring whether there are things that are shared by those who continue to study English through their lives on a long-term basis.

As noted previously, women are the majority of students in classes such as those which formed the setting for this study. Japan remains a society with powerful gender roles and while there will be motivational influences that are common to Japanese male and

female adults, it is also useful to have the opportunity to focus particularly on factors that are relevant to women. For example, research discussed further in the Literature Review has noted that motivational influences to learn English which are often thought to be universal among EFL learners, such as to use English for work, to use the internet or to watch English movies, are stronger among Japanese men than women. Understanding motivational differences in terms of gender is particularly relevant if there are settings in which women are more likely to be present as students than men.

It was with such factors in mind that I undertook this study and information and analysis of what was found is structured as follows. The relevant literature will be reviewed in Chapter Two while Chapter Three will contain details of how the study was developed and carried out. Chapter Four will show the results of the study. Chapter Five will discuss findings and Chapter Six will contain the conclusion and implications of the study.

2 Literature Review

The literature relevant to this study is centred around current theories of motivation in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) among lifelong learners and within the Japanese context. Studies of motivation among Japanese women are also of interest. The place of English in Japan is helpful in explaining attitudes towards the language that may be present among Japanese learners.

2.1 Motivation in SLA

Motivation, within the context of SLA, is the imperative to begin and to continue learning the second language (L2). Learning a second language is hard work and a process unlikely to be embarked on or maintained unless the learner is in a motivated state, “a state of cognitive and emotional arousal, which leads to a conscious decision to act and which gives rise to a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort, in order to obtain a previously set goal” (Williams and Burden, 1997: 120). Current theories of human motivation based in psychology favour an understanding of motivation that is centred in the individual and that is dynamic and shifting and balanced alongside other factors in the life of the learner, “the conception of the individual as a purposeful, goal-directed actor who must coordinate multiple goals and desires across multiple contexts within both short- and long-range timeframes” (Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele, 1998: 1074). In SLA, Dörnyei and Otto also define motivation as a dynamic process that is located within the individual learner who selects, prioritises

and operationalises activity based on, “dynamically changing cumulative arousal” (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998: 65). Motivation to learn the second language will be initiated and sustained as long as the necessary elements are present:

[Motivation is] a process whereby a certain amount of instigation force arises, initiates action and persists as long as no other force comes into play to weaken it and thereby terminate action, or until the planned outcome has been reached. (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998: 118)

It is understood that an individual’s success in learning an additional language will be related to *Individual Differences*. While it has been argued that aptitude is the Individual Difference that most strongly correlates to L2 acquisition, motivation underpins all elements of language learning and can, “override the aptitude effect” (Dörnyei, 2005: 65). Motivation in the L2 learner is rational and logical and affected by both positive and negative motivational influences which, Dörnyei argues, can be classified according to the following seven dimensions:

1. Affective/Integrative Dimension
2. Instrumental Dimension
3. Self-Concept-Related Dimension
4. Goal-Oriented Dimension
5. Educational-Context-Related Dimension
6. Significant-Other-Related Dimension

7. Host-Environment-Related Dimension

(Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 29).

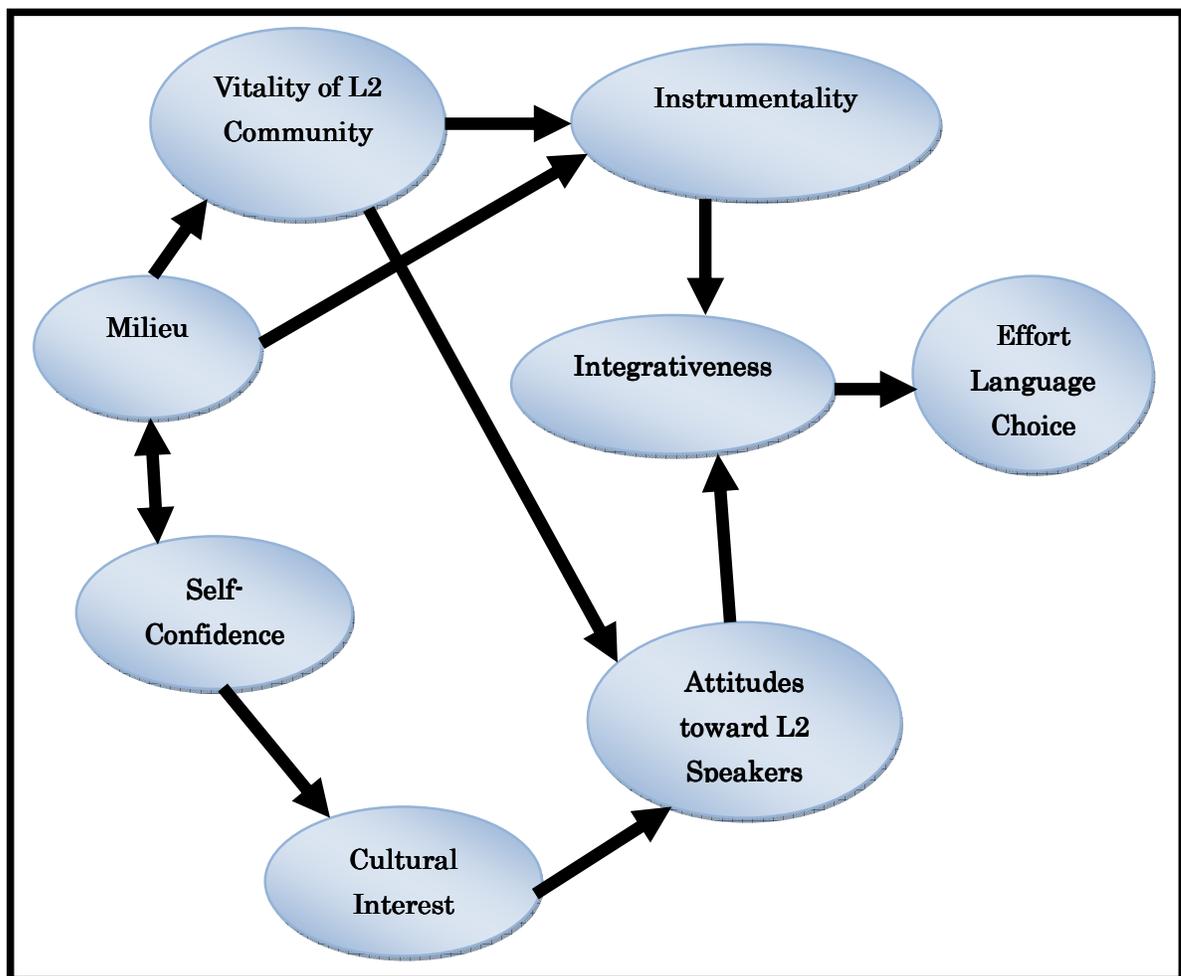
These dimensions are useful in providing a framework within which it is possible to analyse the origin of motivational factors in learners and for tracking motivational change over time. It is expected that different factors will take on different significance depending on other relevant factors.

Historically, one of the most influential models of motivation in the field of SLA has been Gardner's socio-educational theory of motivation (Gardner, 1985). In this model are listed the following categories of variables which, it is argued, are most likely to be associated with second language learning: *Motivation* (effort to learn the language, desire to learn the language, attitudes toward learning the language), *Integrativeness* (attitudes toward the target language, interest in foreign languages, integrative motivation) and *Attitudes* toward the learning situation. The concept of integrative motivation includes both Integrativeness and Attitudes toward the learning situation and Gardner suggests a strong correlation between Integrative motivation and motivational behaviour (Gobel and Mori, 2006: 196-197). Dörnyei provides the following definition of Gardner's concept of integrativeness:

A positive interpersonal/affective disposition toward the L2 group and the desire to interact with and even become similar to valued members of that community. It implies an openness to, and respect for, other cultural groups and ways of life. (Dörnyei, 2003: 5)

Figure 2.1 from Dörnyei provides a visual representation of the relationship between integrativeness and other significant dimensions affecting L2 motivation. Dörnyei places integrativeness at the centre of a range of influences and shows the direct influence of both instrumentality and attitudes toward L2 speakers, both of which are also influenced by a range of internal and external factors. As the figure shows, instrumentality may be an aspect of integrative motivation, rather than an alternative to it.

Figure 2.1 Schematic representation of the structural equation model in Dörnyei *et al*'s (2006) study (Dörnyei 2009: 27)



Dörnyei's theory of the Ideal L2 Self is an emerging new theory that seeks to understand the motivation of the lifelong L2 learner to remain engaged in the often tedious and difficult process of L2 learning. Dörnyei argues that it is the image of the Ideal L2 Self that sustains motivation in successful L2 learners:

I felt that the secret of successful learners was their possession of a superordinate vision that kept them on track. Indeed, language learning can be compared in many ways to the training of professional athletes, and the literature is very clear about the fact that a successful sports career is often motivated by imagery and vision. (Dörnyei in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009: 25)

Dörnyei argues that alongside the image of the Ideal L2 Self is the Ought-to L2 Self, containing attributes that one believes one should have to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes, as well as the L2 Learning Experience which acknowledges that for many learners the initial experience of L2 learning may be within the context of compulsory study and that positive and negative experiences will affect ongoing motivation.

While Gardner's socio-educational model of integrative motivation has been very influential, it has also been criticised, in particular, with regard to the importance given to social aspects of second language learning motivation and the relevance of these in different settings in which second language learning takes place such as EFL settings (Gobel and Mori, 2006: 197). When considering motivation among learners situated in a language learning context in which a clearly dominant L2 group is not present, such as

Japanese learners, it is necessary to rethink the concept of integrativeness. Dörnyei maintains that integrativeness is a key aspect of motivation in long term learners of English, however, he has reworked the concept of integrativeness to consider it not as integration into a target community but rather as an aspect of the Ideal L2 Self. In this view, the learner is motivated by an aspirational view of the self within which the desire to be proficient in the L2 is present. If the Ideal Self includes the L2 aspect, Dörnyei argues that integrative motivation, as discussed in relation to L2 learning, is pertinent:

Looking at ‘integrativeness’ from the self perspective, the concept can be conceived of as the L2-specific facet of one’s ideal self: if our ideal self is associated with the mastery of an L2, that is, if the person that we would like to become is proficient in the L2, we can be described in Gardner’s (1985) terminology as having an integrative disposition” (Dörnyei 2009: 27)

This argument is particularly relevant in relation to English learners in Japan. Japan is a community within which English is accepted as useful to Japanese in relation to the outside world but which does not have a clear place domestically: “English has always been seen in that light within this particular polity [Japan]: we are inside and self-sufficient with our own language, but in order to look outside, we need English” (Gottlieb, 2008: 144). As such, the concept of integrativeness in terms of the Ideal Self is more useful in understanding the context of English learning in Japan than previous discussions around the desire of English learners in Japan and elsewhere to integrate into particular English-speaking communities.

In addition to integrative motivation, Gardner and Lambert's highly influential theory of motivation also presented the idea of instrumental motivation, that is, the motivation to learn the L2 to use for a practical purpose. The concept of integrative and instrumental motivation has been a significant construct within SLA with earlier research finding integrative motivation to be more powerful for L2 learners. However, in addition to the rethinking of the concept of integrativeness by Dörnyei, globalisation and the rise of English as a *lingua franca* has changed the way that English is viewed by learners which makes attempting to clarify integrative motivation problematic as we move to consider English the language of a global rather than national community. Integrative motivation has assumed a defined target community, however, for L2 students in the current global climate English is not tied to a particular nation, society or group: "Does it make sense to talk about integrative attitudes when ownership of English does not necessarily rest with a specific community of speakers...moreover, does the notion of integrative motivation for learning English have any real meaning, given the increasing curricular reframing of English as a universal basic skill to be taught from primary level alongside literacy and numeracy?" (Graddol, 2006 in Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009: 3).

The origin of motivational influences changes for learners over time and within contemporary motivational psychology a number of researchers have attempted to analyse motivational change within the context of the lifespan, what is called the "broad lifespan perspective". These include Heckhausen's (2000) work on "developmental regulation across the lifespan" and Smith and Spurling's (2001) research on "motivation for lifelong learning" (Dörnyei 2005: 25). Ushioda (1996) has also considered the dynamic nature of motivation within the institutional context and has argued for a more

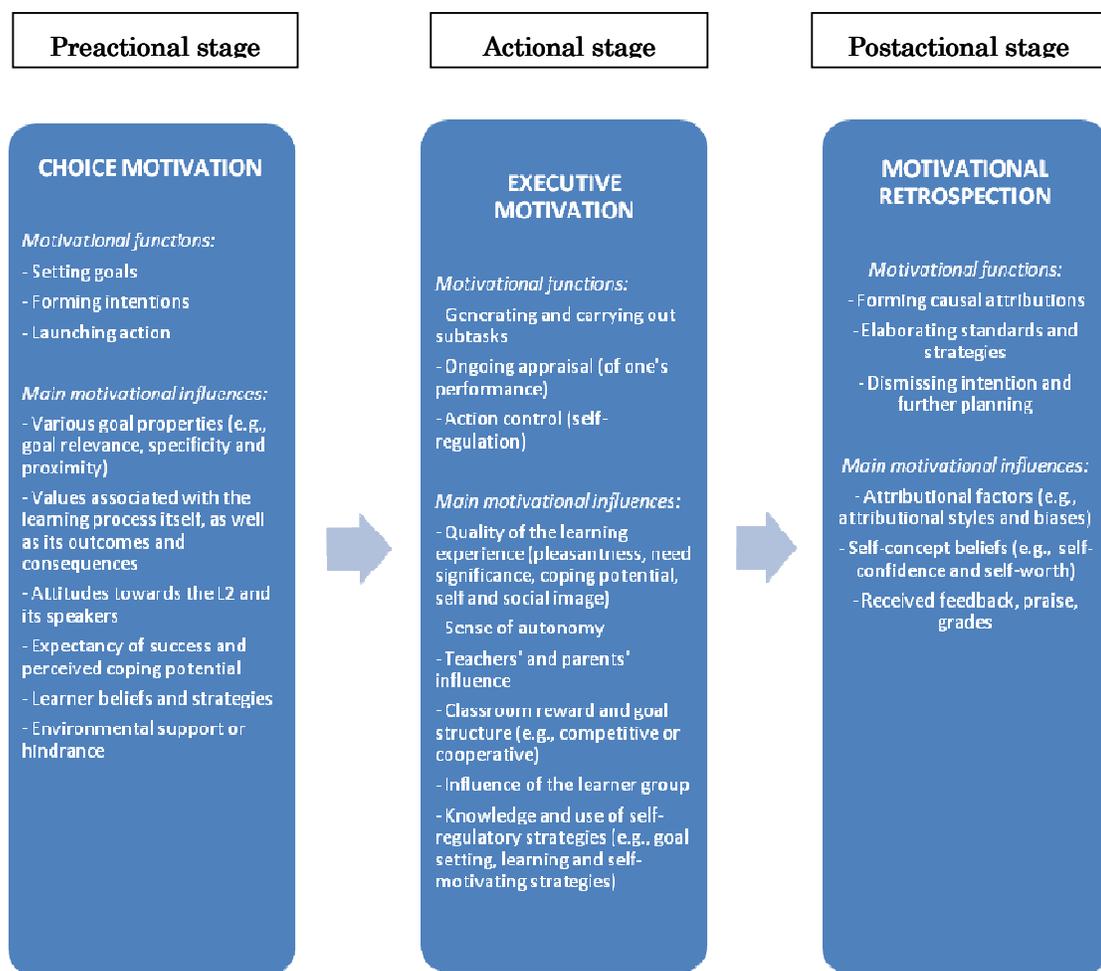
qualitative research approach in order to better understand motivational change in L2 learners rather than the traditional, questionnaire-based quantitative approach which does not lend itself so well to exploring dynamic change: “when it comes to institutionalized learning, the common experience appears to be motivational flux rather than stability, which warrants the ‘notion of a temporal frame of reference shaping motivational thinking’” (Ushioda in Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 24).

Differences between the motivational forces required to both initiate and sustain activity have been explored by the psychologists Heckhausen and Kuhl who constructed a process theory of motivation often referred to as *Action Control Theory*. They argue that motivation is a process made up of phases and that the ‘*predecisional phase*’ and the ‘*postdecisional phase*’ are distinct phases in the motivational process. In the *predecisional phase* we make decisions and set goals which are implemented in the *postdecisional phase*. Different motivational factors will be of significant at different stages in the development of the learner and it is useful to understand the shifting relevance of various factors (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 24).

In Dörnyei’s “Process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom” (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 26), pictured as Figure 2.2 below, three stages of learning are identified, the Preactional, Actional and Postactional stages. Motivational functions and influences are attributed to each stage and these represent the different dimensions. At the stage in which the decision to study is being made, the main motivational influences include factors such as attitudes toward the target language and its speakers, values associated with the learning itself, expectations and environmental support. Dörnyei

calls these “Choice Motivation”. In the Actional stage, what Dörnyei calls “Executive Motivation”, the main motivational influences include aspects of the learning experience including perceptions of the classroom and the influence of parents and teachers, as well as knowledge of learning strategies. In the Postactional phase, what Dörnyei calls “Motivational Retrospection”, the main motivational influences have moved into the area of self-concept belief, along with received feedback.

Figure 2.2 A process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom (based on Dörnyei 2001) (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 26)



In addition to the process model of motivation, Shoaib and Dörnyei also identified 6 stages in a temporal pattern of language learning motivation. These are listed in Figure 2.3 below. The number in the second column indicates the proportion of the twenty five participants in their study for whom each of the six factors had been identified as being relevant.

Figure 2.3 Shoaib and Dörnyei’s Temporal Stages of Language Learning Motivation (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 31-35)

| Temporal Stage | | Explanation |
|---|-------|---|
| Maturation and gradually increasing interest | 17/25 | Participants noted that their attitude towards studying English had changed as they became aware of value in it. |
| Stand-still period | 9/25 | Participants often stopped learning for a period and came back to studying later. |
| Moving into a new life phase | 25/25 | Participants became more motivated if their work or study situation changed. |
| Internalising external goals and ‘imported visions’ | 16/25 | Participants who had been forced to study English became interested in it. |
| Relationship with a ‘significant other’ | 5/25 | Participants were affected by having partners living in English-speaking countries or by having an English-speaking partner. |
| Time spent in the host environment | 14/25 | Time in a host environment can be a motivating experience as learners become aware that their English need not be perfect. However, time in a host environment can also be a demotivating experience. |

The most universal of the temporal stages was the “Moving into a new life” phase which was experienced by all twenty five participants, followed by the “Maturation and gradually increasing interest” phase and the “Internalising external goals and ‘imported visions’” phases, which were both experienced by about 2/3 of participants. It is significant that these are all phases which reflect change over time, and that they are phases which can only be recognized by taking a reflective view. What is not clear is how Dörnyei’s model applies to long-term students of English and, referring back to Figure 2 and Dörnyei’s Process Model of Learning Motivation, whether to be a successful long-term student of English it is necessary to remain at the third stage of Postactional. As Dörnyei lists one of the functions of the Postactional stage as being “Dismissing intention and further planning”, is there a stage beyond the Postactional when the long-term student of English will move from being a “learner” to a “practitioner” of English?

2.2 Situating motivation among English language learners in Japan

In Japan, English is taught as a fundamental foreign language. Attempts were made by politicians to have English adopted as the language of Japan in the late 1800s, 1947 and 1950 and while this has not occurred, Kubota argues that the language has had a significant impact on the development of the Japanese language, as well as affecting the development of views of language, culture, race, and identity among Japanese (Kubota, 1998: 297). Furthermore, while English has not been adopted as a national language, through the commitment to and process of learning English the Japanese have placed themselves squarely on the side of the Western world, “through learning English, the

Japanese have identified themselves with Westerners, while regarding non-Western peoples as the *Other*” (Kubota, 1998: 299).

The learning of English in Japan, particularly within the context of compulsory education, is closely associated with *kokusaika* (internationalisation). *Kokusaika* as a discourse emerged in the 1980s as a means by which Japan could retain a separate identity while still engaging with the West for economic benefit. Japan did not seek to become part of the West or to dominate, but rather to be seen as an equal while also retaining a separate identity through the promotion of the idea of Japan having a distinct and unique cultural heritage, “the discourse of *kokusaika* thus harmoniously embraces both Westernization through learning the communication mode of English and the promotion of nationalistic values” (Kubota 1998: 300). In support of the *kokusaika*-based education reforms of the late 1980s, Morita (1998) presented an image of the ideal Japanese person to illustrate the balance that was attempting to be sought between promoting and uniquely Japanese perspective with the goal of being seen as a member of the rich and developed world. Morita’s image of the ideal Japanese person is one who can engage with the modern English-speaking world and understands the values of the US and can use technology while still remaining fundamentally rooted in a traditional and nationalistic interpretation of Japanese culture (Morita, 1998, in Kubota, 1998: 301).

Another concept which is relevant when seeking to understand the place of English in Japan is that of *nihonjinron* (theories on the Japanese). *Nihonjinron* is a discourse of cultural nationalism which attempts to define the essential characteristics of the

Japanese by imposing a particular homogenous identity on Japanese people, including minorities, as it seeks to legitimise business and political practices that are incompatible with Western ideals (Sugimoto & Mouer, 1982, in Kubota 1998: 300). Befu (1987) has argued that *nihonjinron* is a reaction against post-war Westernisation and industrialisation and is an attempt to prevent the loss of a distinct Japanese identity. Others, however, have argued that it reveals something darker, that is, “either an inferiority complex in regard to Europe and the United States, or its opposite – a narcissistic conceit and a sense of superiority” (Nishikawa, 2001: 245). Central to the concept of *nihonjinron* is language, with race and language being seen as inextricably linked in representing the unique spirit of the Japanese people, “*Nihonjinron* has a strongly linguistic dimension as within the overarching framework of *Nihonjinron*, the Japanese language plays a significant role as one of the fundamental manifestations of distinctiveness” (Maeda, 2003 and Miller, 1982 in Liddicoat, 2007: 34).

Nihonjinron and *kokusaika* may explain the seeming paradox of what Kubota calls ‘English-allergy’ and ‘English-addiction’. These are the push and pull of those negative attitudes towards English-speaking peoples and the English language (English-allergy) that seem to sit alongside and counterbalance the ‘English-addiction’ that has emerged and become more prevalent due to increased contact with the world outside of Japan and as economic ties with the West have taken on greater importance. Both *kokusaika* and *nihonjinron* demonstrate an attempt to define and manage the terms by which English exists in Japan and the place of the English language as a means by which the world outside of Japan may be accessed and this is a view expressed at the highest levels of Japanese government:

Achieving world-class excellence demands that, in addition to mastering information technology, all Japanese acquire a working knowledge of English – not simply as a foreign language but as the international lingua franca. English in this sense is a prerequisite for obtaining global information, expressing intentions, and sharing values. (Prime Minister’s Commission 2000, in Gottlieb, 2008: 144).

At present the English-speaking abilities of a large percentage of the population are inadequate, and this imposes restrictions on exchange with foreigners and creates occasions when the ideas and opinions of Japanese people are not appropriately evaluated.

(Japan Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2002)

Taking a view of English that is purely instrumental and which situates the language as only having a role as a way by which Japan interacts with the outside world, rather than a role within Japan, has influenced the way that English is taught in Japan. McVeigh draws a distinction between *eigo* (English language) and *eikaiwa* (English conversation) with *eigo*, the kind of English traditionally associated with Japanese schools and universities, representing English for Japanese nationalist-utilitarian purposes, “English for climbing the examination-education ladder” (McVeigh, 2004). McVeigh argues that *eikaiwa* represents a non-Japanese English in which the purpose of learning and using the language is communication. Japan is still dominated by *eigo*, however, a factor that must affect the ongoing development of the long-term English student.

[Japanese] Students of English are serving goals which focus on passing examinations, achieving the aims of the corporate culture, or even contributing to a vague sense of the national collective rather than developing a sense of themselves as human beings able to speak more than one language (McVeigh, 2004)

The teaching of English in Japan is often presented as driven by purely instrumental goals on the national level and, as such, more recent interpretations of integrativeness become particularly relevant in understanding motivation as it relates to Japanese learners at the individual level. In addition to Dörnyei's theory of the Ideal L2 self in which the concept of a "target community" is reconsidered as being much more closely related to the learner than to a particular L1 language community, Yashima (2002) has further explored motivation among Japanese college students studying English for whom, she argued, a defined target L1 community could not even be identified. As such, Yashima introduced the term 'international posture' to explain the motivation to learn English when it is seen primarily not as the language of a defined group but as an international language. 'International posture' describes this motivational influence and is defined as, "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude to different cultures" (Yashima 2002:57).

For young Japanese, living as they are in a society that largely sees itself as homogenous and monolingual, English represents a bridge to the entire world outside of Japan. Those that are motivated to learn English are, therefore, seeing themselves in

relation to a broader international English-speaking community rather than any specific target language community and are not seeking to integrate into a target language community: “Even though many Japanese learners wish to interact with native speakers of English, they are not particularly interested in identifying with them” (Yashima in Dörnyei and Ushioda 2009: 145). Japanese learners of English understand the instrumental value of learning the language and that this will have benefit on both an individual and national level. There is also an understanding that learning an additional language requires a large degree of open-mindedness and humility. However, the group to which these learners aspire is not that of a particular L2 host community.

Japan is not the only country for which such issues are pertinent and Lamb’s study of Indonesian 11 and 12 year-old students (Lamb 2004: 3-19) also explored the effect on motivation when English becomes less associated with a particular culture and rather becomes linked more generally with globalisation. Lamb found that while very high levels of motivation existed in the cohort in his study, the traditionally distinct orientations of integrative and instrumental were almost indistinguishable; as English loses its association with a particular Anglophone culture, the desire to integrate loses any explanatory power in the EFL context. Lamb argues that individuals in this context may aspire to a ‘bicultural identity’ in which an English-speaking, globally-involved version of the self is balanced alongside the local L1-speaking self. Motivation, therefore, is centred around the desire of the individual to become a member of a global community who also maintains a strong local identity.

2.2.1 Japanese women learners of English

A limited number of researchers have sought to explore the role of gender within motivational influences affecting Japanese learners of English. Proficiency in English is a prerequisite for entering university in Japan and increasingly necessary for promotion in Japanese workplaces. However, while Japanese learners of English may be motivated by ambitions of education or employment, Kobayashi's study of *non-eliteworkingwomen* who left secure economic situations in Japan to study English in Canada found that beneficial effects of English proficiency are limited in Japan to those men and very few women who are likely to succeed anyway, "it is the mostly male elite business and engineering employees working for well-established companies who can advance their expected career mobility further with additional skills such as English...because those opportunities are institutionally reserved for career-track elite businessmen who are expected to make loyal contributions to the growth of their company (Kobayashi 2007). The women in Kobayashi's study had limited expectations of advancement through English study and did not overvalue the power of English to improve their own prospects in this regard. Rather, for these women, studying English overseas was something pursued for personal or "frivolous" reasons (Kobayashi 2007: 66), in particular, as a way of, "disengaging from the constraints and difficulties of life in Japanese society" (Habu 2000: 55). While policy makers in Japan continue to place emphasis on the importance of attaining communicative competence in the language, these women were aware that it would not make a significant difference to their own prospects.

The interview data from the three interviewees showed that each had an identical

preference for western movies and also a yearning for a temporary stay in western countries; each denied any previous interest in English study or particular incidents motivating them to quit their jobs. Their future expectation to ‘acquire a wide range of symbolic and material resources’ and ‘a good return on that investment’ (Peirce, 1995: 17) is limited...Furthermore, an integrative motivation, or the desire to assimilate into Canadian mainstream society, was not witnessed in the interview data: while mentioning the possibility of future overseas trips or study, they were positive about returning home, and clearly stated that their decision to tender their resignation and study in Canada was not because they had come to dislike their native country” (Kobayashi, 2007: 66-67).

The women in Kobayashi’s study were unmarried women aged between 25-30 years old. Age was a recurring theme in the interviews as these women will have been aware that this is the period in life in which they would be expected to move into the domestic role of wife and mother and this was reinforced by the use of phrases that refer to time slipping away for these women: “the informants’ use of phrases such as ‘It was the last chance’ and ‘While I’m still young’ echo their recognition of gender roles/identities back home’ (2007: 68). Kobayashi notes that age variance has not been extensively considered in research into academic students in Japan. For this group of students, the stage of life that they were in generally was clearly a significant motivating factor to pursue the chance to live and study abroad and this is not an opportunity that would generally be available to older married women.

Finally, data from the 2003 Japan General Social Surveys (JGSS), in which the question of whether motivation to learn English differs between age group and gender was explored, provides an insight into motivational factors that may be of particular significance to Japanese women learning English. This study surveyed randomly selected Japanese adults aged between 20-89 years old and 1957 valid responses were received from respondents across Japan. A summary of the reasons provided by those who indicated that they intended to study English in the future is provided in Figure 2.4 and is broken down by gender.

The first category, “Because it will broaden by worldview”, can be classified in terms of a wider view of integrative motivation or international posture and this was listed by more than half of respondents as a motivating factor. In terms of the remainder of categories, all of which were instrumentally-oriented, perhaps the most significant difference between motivating factors for men and women is that of being useful in one’s job, which was three times more significant for male than female respondents. However, it is interesting to note that the perception of the value of English study when finding or changing a job was similar for men and women. Women were significantly more likely to report being motivated to study English to help their children’s studies, whereas men were much more likely to be motivated by wishing to access English news, films and the internet.

Figure 2.4 Reasons for studying English in the future provided by Japanese men and women (Koisu, 2003)

| Reason for studying English in future | Female respondents | Male respondents |
|--|--------------------|------------------|
| Because it will broaden my worldview | 55.5% | 51.7% |
| For an overseas trip | 45.3% | 43.6% |
| Because it is useful in helping my children's studies | 22.1% | 15.3% |
| Because I would like to understand English news or films | 20.7% | 31.4% |
| Because I like the USA and UK | 11.7% | 6.8% |
| Because it is useful for my job | 9.6% | 27.1% |
| Because it is useful for finding or changing a job | 6.4% | 7.6% |
| To use the internet in English | 2.1% | 14% |
| To obtain a license | 1.6% | 2.5% |

The literature relevant to this study covers a range of issues related to motivation to learn a second language, in particular, the central role of integrative motivation in the L2 learner. Of particular interest in relation to this study are those studies that reconsider integrative motivation from the perspective of the learner for whom English is primarily an international language as this is the dominant view underpinning the teaching of English in Japan. Existing studies tend to be focussed on young adult learners and there is scope for additional research that investigates issues of motivational influences and

change over time from the perspective of the older adult learner. It is also clear that Japanese male and female learners are affected by different motivational influences and a better understanding of what these differences might be, as well as consideration of whether such gender-based differences go beyond Japanese learners, would be of value to both learners and teachers. Such considerations form the basis of the research questions around which this study was centred and will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

3 Methodology

This chapter will describe how the study was carried out, including information about the setting and participants. The research question, research and analysis methods and procedures will also be described.

3.1 Refining the Research Questions

When working as a teacher in Japan I had observed that there was a group of older Japanese who were life-long learners of English that who did not seem to fit the theories of motivation in SLA that I had been exposed to at that point. That is, that despite seeming to have little practical use for the language or identification with an English-speaking culture, these adults had remained committed students of English over the course of their busy lives. The purpose of the study was, therefore, to investigate the motivational influences over time on a group of long-term adult English students.

The concept of motivation as it relates to SLA has been discussed in detail in Chapter Two, however, it is useful to consider in more detail key concepts which influenced the development of the research questions. The aims of the study that I carried out were similar to that of Shoaib and Dörnyei's study "Affect in lifelong learning: Exploring L2 motivation as a dynamic process" (Shoaib and Dörnyei: 2004, 22-41), as discussed in Chapter 2.1, in that I intended to work with participants who are long-term students of English to construct narratives of their learning in order to see temporal changes in

motivation. Motivational theory, through the “situated approach”, acknowledges two key aspects of motivation: that it is constantly changing, its “*dynamic character*”, and that these changes ebb and flow and change over time, its “*temporal variation*”. To understand motivation in an individual it is necessary to explore evidence of both elements and to look for contextual factors which can shed light on their origin. In this study I set out to understand the motivational factors at work over time in the lives of these long-term learners.

The setting of my study was the EFL context of Tokyo, Japan. I expected that factors influencing an older EFL student such as those targeted in my study would be different to those significant to a younger ESL student such as those in the Shoaib and Dörnyei study.

Shoaib and Dörnyei’s seven dimensions within which motivational influences could be classified for L2 learners, as introduced in Chapter 2.1 and repeated below, were an important starting point for me when considering possible motivational influences affecting participants in my study.

1. Affective/Integrative Dimension
2. Instrumental Dimension
3. Self-Concept-Related Dimension
4. Goal-Oriented Dimension
5. Educational-Context-Related Dimension
6. Significant-Other-Related Dimension

7. Host-Environment-Related Dimension

(Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 29).

While English is not necessary for daily life in Tokyo, for many people working and studying in the city a good TOEIC score or conversational ability will often be a requirement of work or study. Therefore, I expected that the Instrumental-Dimension would be an important one for many people living in Tokyo and all of the examples of motivational factors related to this dimension as listed in the Shoaib and Dörnyei study appeared relevant:

- Desired job
- Further study
- English as a lingua franca
- Current Job
- Colleagues
- English is part of the image of a modern person

(Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 38).

I also expected that the Goal-Oriented-Related-Dimension might be significant for those who are working to achieve a certain level of proficiency. However, it seemed unlikely that these would sustain a lifelong study of English unless they were to somehow become part of the “Self-Concept-Related-Dimension”. In Shoaib and Dörnyei’s study “confidence” and “satisfaction” were factors that motivated positively in this dimension but in the EFL context, it is possible that the instrumental factor “English is part of the

image of a modern person” could become related to self-concept.

Among older adults, I expected that the Educational-Context-Related-Dimension would be significant because this is the context in which many will have had their most concentrated exposure to English, however, I was not certain to what extent this would affect motivation over time.

For people who may have only spent limited periods of time in an English-speaking environment, the Host-Environment-Related-Dimension and Significant-Other-Related-Dimension could make a strong impact. As a world city, English has a role in Tokyo as a *lingua franca* but a characteristic of English in Tokyo is that it is often mediated in a way that English in an ESL context is not. I was interested to know if, among residents of a city like Tokyo, I would see participants making a distinction between, and assigning different value to, the Mediated-Host-Environment Dimension or the Mediated-Significant-Other Dimension and “authentic” versions of these dimensions.

Similarly, I was interested to see how the Affective/Integrative Dimension is discussed by participants who are living in a city which in many ways may seem to be an international environment. In particular, if they have been long-term students of English it would not be unexpected that they would notice the English-language elements of the city. It is also common for urban middle-class Japanese to travel and it is likely that participants would reflect on experiences that they have had in English-speaking environments abroad. It might also be that being able to successfully undertake international travel has a role in sustaining motivation.

One dimension not discussed in any detail by Shoaib and Dörnyei but which I thought may be significant among my target group is what could be called the Media/Culture-Related Dimension. Japan is an enthusiastic consumer of English-language media and culture. Such a dimension is related to dimensions such as the Affective/Integrative and Host-Environment, however, it might be that it deserves separate recognition among this group.

3.2 Research Questions

With this in mind, the research questions which motivated this study became:

1. What factors have motivated a group of Japanese adult women to choose to continue to study English over an extended period of time?
2. What have the main motivational influences been for participants over time?

The exploratory nature of the research questions influenced my decision to choose a qualitative methodology. In addition, qualitative research methods were better suited to my aim of constructing narratives of the learning histories of participants. Earlier research into motivation has had a significant quantitative component, however, researchers such as Ushioda (1996) have noted that the qualitative approach is better suited for considering motivational change over time. This is because it is possible through such an approach to find connections and themes that may not otherwise be immediately apparent.

3.3 Setting

At the time of the study participants were students at an *eikaiwa* (English conversation) school that will be referred to in this report as “The Institute”. The Institute is a non-profit language school with recognition from the national Japanese Ministry of Education. It is located in central Tokyo in a neighbourhood known for the presence of a number of well-regarded universities and colleges. Overall, The Institute has a good reputation as a place for serious study.

The Institute’s English language teaching programmes include intensive summer courses for Japanese high school teachers of English, company-based classes where a group of employees study English together on a weekly basis at their workplace, both compulsory and voluntary classes at various Tokyo universities, classes in community centres, and classes held on-site at The Institute. During 2005-2006, I taught in all of these programmes.

Participants in the study were attending on-site classes at The Institute. These classes have between four and eight students and a semester of ten classes of 120 minutes costs around 50000yen, the equivalent of about NZ\$30 an hour. The teaching methodology is structured around providing large amounts of input in the form of real-world materials such as articles from newspapers and news magazines which students read for their homework and then use the class time to produce large amounts of output with the role of the teacher being to facilitate discussion and provide correction and form-focused instruction. There is an expectation that students will speak a lot, usually in pairs, and

as well as constructing narratives from the teaching materials that they will gain experience and confidence in expressing their opinions in English. This style of class is not one which is common in Japanese schools and some students find it quite intimidating. The classes can be quite small in size and are taught by different teachers and the actual level of the classes might overlap, depending on the participants and the teacher. Classes are not standardised and may be somewhat idiosyncratic but this is seen as acceptable due to a perceived value of the class being interacting with the teacher who is a native speaker of English. The combination of cost and the nature of the classes means that students tend to be motivated and serious learners.

Students are assigned to classes on the basis of a standardised written test score and their in-class performance. The movie class is a specialty class and as such contains more of a mixture of abilities. The introductory, sophomore and junior discussion classes are assigned appropriate textbooks while the senior and advanced classes for discussion texts use realia such as newspaper articles and documentary video. In the movie class students watch a segment of a set movie each week over the course of the semester and then discuss the language used and issues raised in the segment.

3.4 The participants

Participants in the study were self-selecting following a general invitation. The process for inviting participants to join was that the manager of The Institute made students in higher-level classes aware of the study. Those who were interested gave their names to the manager, who passed these on to me. There was no pressure on students to join the

study and given the limited time-frame that interviews were carried out in, participants had to be quite flexible in making themselves available to be interviewed.

Participants in this study were eleven female students of English classes which are held on-site at The Institute in central Tokyo. All attend classes during the day on weekdays. One student is Chinese, married to a Japanese man. To protect the privacy of the participants, all eleven have been assigned a Japanese female pseudonym.

One older Japanese man participated in the interview phase. However, during the analysis phase I made the decision to focus on material that came out of the interviews with the female participants in order to explore issues that were more specific to the experience of Japanese women. As such, material that was collected during the interview with the male participant is not discussed in this report.

Discussion classes are ranked according to difficulty in Figure 3.1, along with the number of participants from the class that participated in this study.

Figure 3.1 Participants in the study

| Class | Number of participants in this study |
|-------------------------|---|
| Introductory discussion | two participants |
| Sophomore discussion | |
| Junior discussion | three participants |
| Senior discussion | one participant |
| Advanced discussion | three participants |
| Movie class | three participants |

3.5 Research procedures

Prior to carrying out the study, approval was gained from the Massey University Ethics Committee. Potential interviewees were provided with an information letter that outlined their rights as participants and written consent was provided by all participants. Copies of this material is provided in Appendices 1-3.

At the time that this study was carried out I was living in New Zealand and I intended to travel to Tokyo to carry out interviews. Due to my distance from potential participants I was uncertain as to how many students would agree to participate in the study. Although the manager of The Institute was very helpful during this period it was difficult to imagine the reception I would get from students when I arrived in Tokyo.

Data was gathered in the following phases.

1. Pre-interview phase.

Participants were asked to complete a writing task on a topic related to the theme, “My experiences as a life-long English learner”. Nine participants completed this phase.

The participants who did not complete this task indicated that they did not consider such a writing task to be useful for them and so were reluctant to commit the necessary time to it.

The purpose of this phase was to introduce me to the background of participants and so to allow better preparation for the interview phase. It was also to prepare the participants for the interview phase.

2. Interview phase.

The bulk of data was collected by means of a narrative biographical interview. The development of the framework of the interview I used was influenced by Hermanns (1995) and Kvale (1996). Hermanns describes the narrative interview as follows:

In the narrative interview, the informant is asked to present the history of an area of interest, in which the interviewee participated, in an extempore narrative... The interviewer's task is to make the informant tell the story of an area of interest in question as a consistent story of all relevant events from its beginning to its end. (Hermanns, 1995: 183).

Interviews were carried out at the institute during November-December 2007. Most participants were interviewed either before or after their regular English class. In the interview, I began by acknowledging the written task that had been undertaken by some participants. There was also time set aside for general conversation as a means of building rapport between myself and the participant.

Participants were then invited to tell the story of their English learning experience over the course of their lifetime. I began by asking a generative narrative question based on an example of Hermanns (1995: 182).

Question: I want to ask you to tell me the story of your experience as a student of English. The best way to do this would be to start from when you were a child and then tell me about the things that you remember.

Please take your time in doing this and give details because for me everything that is important to you is interesting to me.

In the first part of the interview I will let you speak freely and will not interrupt. In the second part of the interview I might ask you some questions about things that you have talked about.

I then asked specific, unscripted questions as necessary in order to ensure that the following themes were covered.

1. How learning had occurred
2. Reasons for learning English
3. Attitudes towards English/English speakers
4. Goals
5. Satisfaction with level
6. Positive/negative factors that have affected the learning commitment

The interviews ran for 40-70 minutes and were tape-recorded. When interviewing I used Kvale's (1996) framework for qualitative research interviews (Figure 3.2) as a guideline. The interviews were later transcribed and copies of the transcriptions sent to interviewees.

Figure 3.2 Kvale's framework for qualitative research interviews (Kvale, 1996: 30-31)

| | |
|-----|---|
| 1. | Life World. The topic of the interview is the everyday world of the participant and their relationship to it. |
| 2. | Meaning. The interview seeks to interpret the meaning of the Life World by considering what is said and how it is said. |
| 3. | Qualitative. The interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language. |
| 4. | Descriptive. The interview attempts to obtain open nuanced descriptions of aspects of the subject's life worlds. |
| 5. | Specificity. Descriptions of specific situations and action sequences are sought, not general opinions. |
| 6. | Deliberate Naivete. The interviewer is open to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories of interpretation. |
| 7. | Focused. The interview is focused on particular themes without being strictly structured. |
| 8. | Ambiguity. Interviewee statements can exhibit ambiguity. |
| 9. | Change. The subject may receive new insights or awareness as a result of the interview and change their descriptions and meaning of a theme. |
| 10. | Sensitivity. Sensitivity to, and knowledge of, the interview topic can result in the interviewer eliciting different responses. |
| 11. | Interpersonal situation. Knowledge is obtained through the interpersonal interaction of the interview. |
| 12. | Positive experience. A well carried out interview can be a positive and enriching experience for the interviewee who may obtain new insights into their life situation. |

The participants all appeared comfortable during the interviews and to enjoy the experience. Participants commented that it was, “like a free private lesson”. For some participants, it was their first experience of an extended, one-on-one conversation in English and several commented that in future they would like to have classes that followed a similar structure.

In addition to interviewing participants, I also observed them in class and this allowed me to understand better the context of their current learning situation. Participants tended to be very modest about their English ability and having observed their classes gave me a sense of their level. This was useful when considering what they had to say about their abilities, which they often downplayed.

At the beginning of the interview process before I had arrived in Tokyo it was unclear how many people would participate in the study. However, word seemed to spread through the school that it was a positive experience for those who participated and it was possible to complete twelve interviews.

3.6 Analysis procedures

As a first step, I organised data according to Dörnyei’s (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 29) main motivational constructs in the L2 motivational field, as discussed in 2.1 and 3.1, in order to determine whether these classifications were relevant to the ideas that had come out of the interviews.

After analysing the interviews in this way it became clear that when talking about their lives, the female participants spoke of motivational factors in relation to five common life stages. The life stages are discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, however, the table below provides an outline of the stages.

Figure 3.3 Life stages identified in the study

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Child |
| 2 | Junior high/senior high school student |
| 3 | Tertiary student |
| 4 | Worker |
| 5 | Mother |

Within the different life stages, participants had different responsibilities and roles within their families, as a result of which different factors motivated their study of English.

3.7 Shortcomings and problems

3.7.1 Language

Participants were all invited to use Japanese in the interview and it was explained that I could understand some Japanese. The interviews were recorded so later translation would have been possible. However, with the exception of a few words, the interviewees spoke almost entirely in English. This may have been influenced by the setting of the interviews, their English school. As a result of speaking in English it is

quite likely that participants did not speak as fully as they would have had they been speaking Japanese. However, it must also be noted that it was the motivation to participate in the English-language interview that gave participants the incentive to reflect on their learning history. Had the interviews been conducted in the Japanese language it is likely that the interviews would have taken a different course. The process of using the English language to reflect on development as an English learner, then, is one which was appropriate for this study.

3.7.2 Relationship with participants

I had not previously met any of the participants, but it was known that I had an association with The Institute and had previously taught there. It might be suggested that participants felt compelled to participate in the project. However, based on the number of students who did not take part and the late addition of interviewees it seems that participation was freely agreed to.

The following was a comment made by a participant in the study as to why she was happy to participate:

When J told me I was very happy to see your documents, that was so interesting. Especially you gave us topics of suggestion, that interested me a lot, that was very good so I wanted to see you...There was many ideas in it. You wrote about some topics. That was very interesting. Japanese people cannot think those things so that helped me a lot. That was a good chance for me to think about my English learning history. Thank you very much.

I had hoped to gather more information about recent factors that had influenced the motivation of participants but, perhaps due to my relationship with the school, participants spoke little about their satisfaction with their current classes.

4 Findings

4.1 Life Stages

The participants in this study were long-term students of English whose motivation to learn the language had been sustained over a number of years and learning contexts. After reviewing the interview data I became interested in the fact that participants organised the stories of their learning experiences around different periods in their lives, what I call *Life Stages*. For these women, learning English is an activity that continues to take place within the broader context of education, work and family. As such, considering the motivational influences on the participants with reference to life stages makes it possible to consider the learning experiences within the context of their roles as students, workers and mothers. In particular, this approach allows a thoughtful consideration of the different motivational influences on these women during the different life stages.

When speaking of their learning histories the participants in the study spoke of common life stages. These were Child, High School Student, Tertiary Student, Worker, Mother. An explanation of the stages is provided in Figure 4.1.

Participants have each been assigned a Japanese female pseudonym and these are listed in Figure 4.2 alongside the Life Stage that each participant was in at the time of the interview.

Figure 4.1 Explanation of Life Stages

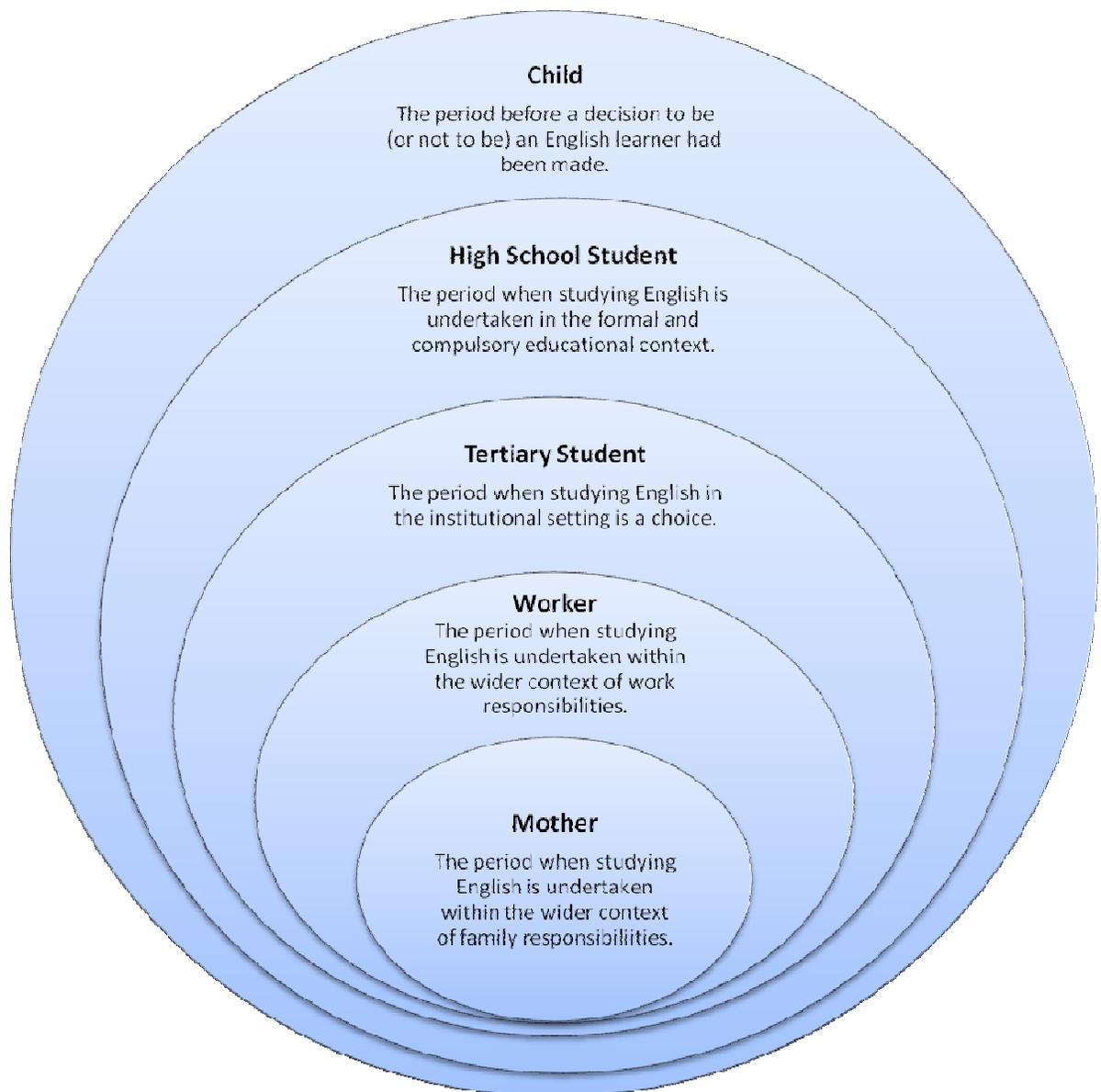


Figure 4.2 Life stages of participants at the time of the interview

| | |
|---------|-------------------|
| Ayako | Mother |
| Chiharu | Worker |
| Etsuko | Mother |
| Fumie | Mother and Worker |
| Harumi | Mother |
| Kazue | Mother and Worker |
| Mayumi | Mother |
| Noriko | Mother |
| Shiho | Mother |
| Tomomi | Mother |
| Yoshie | Mother |

4.2 Analysis of motivational influences during the different life stages

4.2.1 Child

| Child: Key motivational influences | |
|---|---|
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Significant-Other-Related Dimension | Impetus to begin study came from others. Encounters with English speakers significant in developing ongoing interest. |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | Attending formal classes builds identity as “English learner”. Positive and negative aspects are remembered. |

The child period was that before English study became compulsory in the school setting.

Only one participant, Chiharu, participated in formal English education during this time.

She was the youngest women in the study and the decision for her to attend English classes was made by her mother. Two of the older women, Noriko and Fumie, spoke about this period in terms of their later decision to study English and in both cases this was due to the effect meeting an English speaker had on them. As such, the influence of other people was the most important for this group at this stage in their lives as the decision to participate in English classes was either made by another, as in Chiharu's case, or because of the impact of meeting an English speaker. For the majority of participants, however, this was perhaps the only period in their lives that they were not "English learners".

For the participants who had had experiences with English at this stage in their lives, it is not surprising that other people were central in regard to their motivational influences. For Chiharu, it was her mother who forced her to attend study English. Chiharu is younger than the other participants and her mother would be the same generation as others in this study. Chiharu remembers that her mother had spoken positively of the memory of her own experiences studying English and how she had contrasted that with later working at a trading company and being busy, tired and under pressure.

When Chiharu considered what may have been behind her mother's decision to enrol her in English classes her sense was that it was both for the practical benefit of being able to use it in work, as well as for the pleasure her mother remembered of being a student. While Noriko, who is of an older generation than Chiharu, did not attend classes as a child, like Chiharu the reaction of her mother to her decision to study English was important. Noriko remembers her mother telling her that any study is a means by which women could become self-supporting and she encouraged her to

develop a skill that would support her financial independence, “[My mother] liked to study something because women, olden times women must be married and stay home, like that. But my mother is, women must do something to live alone. So she likes my study something”. Noriko and Chiharu had been born perhaps 40 years apart, however, both received from their mothers an important early message about how English could help them to work and build an independent life.

Fumie and Noriko both talked about individuals outside of their family who they met as young children and who motivated them to study English. Fumie described her meeting with a Canadian woman and the obvious impression that made on her, as well as the effect this had when she began to learn English formally soon after,

When I was younger I remember I was 10 or 11 years old, I was a primary school student. My primary school was in Setagaya, and Setagaya ward and Winnipeg city in Canada was sister cities and one of the fabulous women came from Canada. I think it was the first time for me to speak and shake hands with foreign people. I was so young so I was very moved. I think I said just “hello” or something. I was only 10 but that was big moment for me. I, now I can remember. And then I went to a junior high school and I started learning English so that interested me a lot.

Noriko also vividly remembers the interaction that she had with a young American girl when she was a child. Following World War Two, some American families occupied houses in Japan and one such family lived next to Noriko’s family for a period of time:

When I was a very very little girl my neighbour was American and we played each other. So that is my good memory. First time I contact with foreigners...Always she doesn't speak Japanese, I didn't speak in English. So, but children can play each other, communicate. And at that time is American army, I am very old, but the American army occupied big Japanese houses and they lived...and made their house. So I knew my neighbour's daughter. We are, just after the war, so we are very poor. The American family is very rich. So they are very kind people, they invite me, festival, I remember there was festival, coloured egg hiding...That is my big memory. I didn't know about that, such beautiful eggs. And they gave me very pretty dresses...I very enjoyed...So I was very little so I felt very long but I think very short time. They left Japan and went back to America or something.

Any anxiety or resentment felt by the adults as a result of the situation of living next to members of the occupying forces are not remembered, while the memory of the Easter egg hunt and playing with the American girl are treasured memories and recalled as significant early motivational influences.

One participant grew up in China where English study in school was not, and is not, compulsory. Due to demographic and social changes in the society, however, English study has now become more common. There were eight children in this participant's family which is quite different from Chinese families under the one child policy where family resources will be targeted towards the education of one child,

In my country now, from the kindergarten, because China now just can have one child so the mother, the parents want to pay more money, just one child, they

can pay more money for education for study English. When I was a child it's not too important, I feel, because maybe it's not too many money and not one child, maybe seven, eight childs.

In Japan the Chinese participant also sees a connection between economic prosperity and English study, with those in richer societies having the luxury of being able to spend money on education:

Japanese people, maybe, compared with my country, Japanese people is okanemochi [rich]...So have a money, I think, high educations people maybe want more money for education, I think. If you don't have money you can't think about the education, just think about 'what can I eat today?'

It is notable that none of the other participants spoke about economic matters when considering education and the role of the state in providing compulsory English education. However, for the participant from China, the economic dimension is the key one when considering the question of English study.

English is not compulsory for elementary school students in Japan and only recently has it become more common for those in this age group to study English. For Chiharu, the only participant to attend English classes in this stage, the initial experience of studying English was enjoyable, however, this was due to the social aspect of the class and being with her friends, rather than being motivated to learn the language by other factors. While Chiharu was studying basic pronunciation and vocabulary she remembers the classes as enjoyable and as play rather than study. However, as the focus of the classes moved to grammar, Chiharu began to enjoy them less.

For the majority of participants, the period before English study was compulsory did not feature in their discussions of their learning histories and, therefore, among their later motivational influences. However, for Noriko and Fumie, exposure to the English-speaking world through meeting English speakers was a positive experience. For Chiharu, attending English classes from a younger age than most meant that she learned earlier than other participants that the initial fun of English classes was soon overtaken by the tedium of the study of grammar.

4.2.2 High school student

| High School Student: Key motivational influences | |
|---|---|
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | English study compulsory within the educational context. Generally the learning experience was spoken of in negative terms. |
| Significant-Other-Related Dimension | Encounters with English speakers significant in developing ongoing motivation. |
| Self-Concept-Related Dimension | Beginning of awareness that English could be used to express original ideas. |

English study is compulsory for Japanese junior and senior high school students and all of the participants talked about their experiences as English learners during this period. Participants discussed negative and positive influences on their motivation from this period. Negative influences were often discussed in relation to the way in which the subject was taught, that is, with a strong emphasis on memorising grammar rules. Participants believed that the situation for young Japanese has improved.

For most Japanese students of English the first experience learning the language will occur within the context of compulsory education. Chiharu describes what is perhaps a common experience for young Japanese in that she didn't remember having a clear sense of why she was studying English but just accepted that it was her fate:

And in junior high school, of course there was an English class and high school is same. So English was necessary. Actually I don't, I wasn't positive for English. When I was a child my mother made me go to school and I went to junior high school of course I studied English and high school I studied English. It's major subject. So I didn't care to study English and I didn't like studying English. Why I studying English? Actually I didn't really think about it.

The lack of opportunities for "English conversation" was a common theme of remembrances of this period and for participants it meant "the opportunity to express my own ideas in English". For a number of participants the way in which English was taught at school, in particular, its removal from the authentic context meant that they came to dislike their English classes. Harumi remembers that at this early stage she was aware of the difference of English that was grammatically correct and the way that she would use English to express her feelings, and that this led to her not to enjoy her English classes:

[At high school] most of English study is for entrance examination for university so teacher, maybe most of English teacher, didn't practice normal English conversation but they know the grammatical correct way and we had to memorise a lot of words and many things and writing to make sentences. There

are certain type of correct sentence so if I made another way to express my feeling then it was not correct. So, I don't like, that time I don't like, didn't like, English study.

At this stage Harumi was beginning to be aware that English could be used to represent her ideas, however, the educational priorities did not support her to develop her communicative skills. Similarly, Fumie was also becoming aware that English could be used to express her ideas and she could do this in written form, however, she regrets that there weren't more opportunities to use English in this way:

In junior high and high school I liked composition. Once I remember the words or idioms it was easy for me to make the composition on Japanese-style test. So I liked it. So, if I had a chance to speak up I could have used those expressions when I was younger. But unfortunately I didn't have any opportunities. And in those days I liked reading English and I memorized, I liked memorizing words and phrases because I was so young, my brain was very young at that time.

Participants had mixed experiences about their Japanese teachers of English. Harumi remembers a teacher who spoke English with an excellent accent but considers that this may have been a rare situation, especially for a student in a public school.

Some participants had positive recollections of studying English at Junior and Senior High School related to individuals that inspired them. Harumi spoke about having met a native English speaker during this period of her life, an experience that had a positive impact on the development in her interest in speaking English:

But near my house there is a church and the church open to the, that area's person, some cultural relationship or lecture and once a week there is English speaking, native English speaker there. So, I was attended, attend the class to chat. It was fun and I had a lot of interest in his country. He was Australian.

All of the Japanese participants in the study undertook compulsory English classes at junior and senior high school and, for all but one participant, these provided their first taste of what was to be an ongoing interest through their lives. Some participants had positive experiences due to good teachers or to achieving an understanding of the way in which English could be used to express their original ideas. For the majority of participants, however, English classes were frustrating due to the way in which the subject was taught with a focus on memorisation of grammar rules. It is expected that all Japanese adults will have attended English classes as part of their compulsory schooling and the comments provided by participants in this study would suggest that experiences in this life stage would have the potential to demotivate students from later study. Several participants commented that the situation for younger Japanese has changed and that school classes are now better and these reflections will be discussed further in Chapter 4.6.1.

4.2.3 Tertiary student

| Tertiary Student: Key motivational influences | |
|--|---|
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | English study compulsory in some programmes. Participants had both positive and negative memories of their classes. |
| Instrumental Dimension | Participants chose to study English due to a belief that it would be useful in building a future career. |
| Affective/Integrative Dimension | Participants continued their English study due to positive past experiences learning English. |

All of the eleven women who participated in this study completed some kind of study in the post-compulsory setting. Eight participants attended university and the three oldest participants attended vocational schools. Participants are listed in Table 4.2.3 alongside the type of institution that they attended and their major subject.

Figure 4.3 Type of tertiary institution attended by participants and major subject

| Name | Type of institution | Major Subject |
|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Ayako | University | English literature |
| Chiharu | University | Chinese |
| Fumie | University | American Literature |
| Harumi | University | Economics |
| Kazue | University | Art History, English |
| Shiho | University | Economics |
| Tomomi | University | Art |
| Yuriko | University | Japanese history |
| Etsuko | Vocational School | English |
| Misato | Vocational School | English |
| Noriko | Vocational School | Secretarial studies |

Five participants undertook some kind of study in the post-compulsory environment in which English was prominent. Given that participants had much more influence over the decision to study English at this time, and furthermore that this was the first time that participants had made the choice to pursue English study, it is helpful to consider comments made about their reasons for choosing to study English at this time.

There were two main reasons discussed by participants as to why they made the decision to study English at this time. One was related to the instrumental dimension; they believed that English skill would be helpful in their future careers. The other reason was due to the fact that they had previously undertaken study of English and wished to build on this, or because they had had positive experiences as English students in the past. The following comment in which Fumie refers to her previous positive experiences studying English, as well as her aspirations for future work, is typical of responses received:

I was interested in English when I was in high school. And, um I liked reading and I want to be, I want to get a job something related to foreign countries at that time. So I join the English course.

Some participants did not major in English but found that English ability was useful in terms of their own studies. Kazue was an Art History major and found that she often had to use English in the course of her reading about Western Art History. In addition to this, however, Kazue was also interested in introducing Japanese art to English-speaking peoples and this has continued to be a motivating factor in her study.

Three participants did not enter university, however, they did attend vocational schools and studied English. Their reasons for undertaking English study were that they wished to find work where they would use English. As well as for reasons related to the kind of work she wished to undertake, Etsuko also discussed studying English because of her interest in English films:

I like English so, and in Japan English movie almost, Hollywood movie, so I want to see movie without subtitles, listen to his line directly.

While there was a greater element of choice involved in participants' decisions to study English at this time, some participants also had more arbitrary reasons for selecting their majors. Ayako settled on English because she had enjoyed studying the language as a child, however, she does not believe that she had the necessary aptitude and that she should not have chosen English. However, when considered alongside other options English seemed to her to be the safer choice:

To tell the truth I shouldn't try to [major in English], I don't like mathematics. I chose English literature. But [when] I was a child, I was studying English so I like English very much. So I choose.

Chiharu majored in Chinese and this was because her university entrance exams were not good enough to enable her to major in English. She was given the option of majoring in Chinese or Japanese and because she enjoyed studying foreign languages she chose Chinese.

The participants who undertook English study in the tertiary environment remember being dissatisfied with their classes for reasons similar to those outlined for their high

school classes. That is, despite being older and having made, to some degree, a choice to study the language, they found that the method of instruction was still one that focussed on reading and writing, rather than speaking. Much of the discussion of English literature was also carried out in Japanese.

Those opportunities that participants had to be taught by native speakers of English made a strong impression. Fumie remembers a British teacher who taught in English but this was the only time that English was used, a fact that was disappointing for her:

So I liked learning English but I think I didn't have many chances to speak and study at university. I was not happy at university.

Harumi majored in economics but retained an interest in English and it was being taught by the native speaker that not only helped to sustain her interest in studying the language but also to put herself in a position where her abilities were stretched:

After I entered the university I took economics part...I majored economics. And so, there are few English classes but there was one class. It is, maybe International Monetary Fund or that kind of things by English, the teacher is, oh I forgot his name. Anyway, first I met him he was middle-aged person at that time. Very cool! So, I took the class beyond my league and also I could imagine that class should be very hard for me but anyway something, I had something for English studying so keep going from the 12 years old. Some interest and attracts, English attracts me in some aspect.

However, for most students, classes were in Japanese and based around listening to lectures. Ayako remembers studying grammar, dictation and reading Shakespeare

poems and plays, and above all, “I listen, only listen...So I didn’t feel to study English”. Ayako longed for more opportunities to develop her conversation and discussion skills but was not able to.

As with the high school classes, there is a feeling the university English classes are now changing with students having more opportunities to speak in English.

A number of participants went on to undertake English study at university and this was the first time that they made a considered choice to further their English study. For some participants the motivational influences were instrumental, in particular, due to wanting to work in an international context. For others, the decision was based on good memories of classes they had taken when they were younger. The nature of the classes, which were still far removed from an environment where learners were able to express their ideas in English, continued to be a cause of disappointment for learners. However, participants were becoming increasingly aware of the potential for English to be a means of self-expression and this was a positive motivating factor in terms of continuing to study English. In addition, rather than being demotivated by their learning experiences, during this Life Stage these participants can be seen to have been building identities in which being an English speaker was becoming an increasingly important aspect of their Ideal Self.

4.2.4 Worker

| Worker: Key motivational influences | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Instrumental Dimension | For some participants, English skill was valuable when applying for positions. However, opportunities to use English in their work were more limited than expected. Using English in the workplace can provide a safe context for interaction with English speakers. |

The majority of participants in the study had undertaken some kind of paid work prior to marrying. Increasing numbers of Japanese workers are required to demonstrate proficiency in English by taking tests such as the TOEIC test, however, participants in this study had different experiences regarding the value of entering the workforce with English skills.

Ayako had majored in English literature at university but found that working meant that not only did she have no time to study English conversation but also that through lack of use her English skills deteriorated. Ayako stated that while she liked English she was not confident using the language and so did not pursue a job where English was necessary. Ayako recently stopped working to become a full-time caregiver for her five-year-old son but in the company Ayako had worked in previously, where she had held a product marketing role for ten years, workers are given the opportunity to take the TOEIC test twice a year. However, this is not a requirement and despite working in a Japanese company with an international profile, during this time she did not use the language.

Fumie's first job was working in a travel agency as a typist. This was a role that involved using English to type words related to travel or visa applications, though there was no requirement to speak English. Etsuko had a similar role as a typist working in an insurance company, a job that required her to type short sentences in English regarding the import and export of goods. For both of these women, skill using English was immediately useful in terms of the labour market.

Chiharu's part-time job when at university was working at Narita airport. She describes the enjoyment of the interaction that this enabled with people from other countries:

Then I enjoyed myself because the store, various people, for example, American or Chinese and French, another country's people came here, came the store, so I was excited.

In contrast to Ayako, who avoided work which would require her to use English, Chiharu sought out such opportunities. Chiharu had majored in Chinese at university so had not been able to develop her English skill in this setting, however, her experience working at Narita airport had been one that made a strong impression. After graduating Chiharu worked in a company in which it was not necessary to use English but left this to take on a role which did, and then stopped working altogether in order to study English full-time with a future job in mind. The attraction for Chiharu in her work at Narita airport had been the positive interpersonal contact that speaking English enabled her to engage in:

Of course, it's necessary to speak English but except that it's necessary to contact other people with smile and with using finger. Smile is important and it's ok to have 5 or 10 words, "thank you" "you're welcome" "in cash". And I was able to contact foreign language. Culture is different so I thought I can contact, I think I can enjoy myself to contact other people, other foreign people. ..Maybe I can see the people only in Narita Airport in my life. In my life I can see other country's people only in Narita Airport.

While at the Worker stage in her life, Chiharu is currently unemployed. Chiharu is also different from all of the other participants in the study in that she does not have children. She sees English as being of great value to her in securing an interesting job in the future. As well as developing her conversational skill, she is seeking to improve her TOEIC score, despite limitations with the scope of the test:

I have heard from my friends, she have a friend who can't speak English but that friend take, took 700 score in TOEIC. But she can't speak English. So I feel the TOEIC score and speaking is different, maybe. But if I, when I apply for job the company's requirement, for example, TOEIC score over something-hundred. There is a requirement, qualification in company. So I think it's a necessary to take, took score.

At this stage in her life, Chiharu is highly motivated to develop the range of her English abilities. She has a strong awareness of where she believes her learning needs to focus so that she might develop the skills and abilities that she believes she will need to be competitive in the labour market.

While there is a widespread perception that English skill will be of benefit for all in the Japanese labour market, the experience of the women in this study confirms the fact that for such a group the opportunities to use English in the workplace remain rare. When discussing their reasons for studying English at university or in a vocational school, participants had referred to instrumental motivational factors. However, while it is possible that English skill may have made these women more competitive when applying for work, the reality was that these women were not able to access the kinds of elite English-speaking positions which they may have previously envisioned themselves in. In addition to having limited scope to make use of their English in their job, the demands of the Japanese workplace meant that it also became difficult to find the time to continue their study. Some participants reflected on the situation for their own children who are now entering the labour market and the role that English plays in their working lives and this is discussed further in Chapter 4.6.3.

4.2.5 Mother

| Mother: Key motivational influences | |
|--|--|
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Self-Concept-Related Dimension | Participants develop an identity in their English classes which is not centred in being a wife, daughter or mother. Participants gain recognition from family members for their English skill. Being a long-term learner provides opportunities to move into senior roles/the role of expert within the classroom. Studying English is an activity that respectable Japanese citizens should be engaged in. |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | Participants feel that they have more power to influence the content and structure of their classes than in other life stages. |
| Affective/Integrative Dimension | Participants gain access to an alternative world view. Participants enjoyed the social aspect of their English classes. |
| Instrumental Dimension | Some participants continued to work in jobs in which they needed to demonstrate ongoing commitment to building their English skill. English skill is useful when travelling. |

For the women in this study, only two were currently working and they combined this role with that of being a mother. Both are teachers; Kazue is a high school English teacher and Fumie a teacher of Japanese to international students. For Kazue, studying English is “a must” while for Fumie, English is used in the classroom as a way to support the teaching of Japanese. As such, for both women, continuing to study English retains an instrumental aspect. Similarly, Chiharu is undertaking English study with a future job in mind. For the remainder of participants, however, there are other reasons for continuing to undertake English study and these relate more strongly to the integrative dimension. One significant factor is the enjoyment that participants receive in their classes and this comes from several factors including the social contact with

other students and from what they learn about the world by using English as a medium. Another reason that the women give for their continued attendance of English classes is that being an English student also allows them to develop an identity that is separate to that which they have within their home environment. Due to the place of English in wider Japanese society, studying English is a respectable hobby for older women.

Participants were obviously very motivated to undertake English study and a main reason for this is clearly enjoying the social aspect of being with other people that they like in the classes. Etsuko's class has been together for many years and after classes the students socialise together over a cup of tea. Etsuko also feels lucky that she is able to meet the other students.

This is small class of five or six people and we really enjoyed about the class and after tea time, I really enjoyed... So they are so intelligent, I think. So I feel so I lucky to know each other.

Studying English has also provided an opportunity for some students to take on a teacher role as a volunteer in introductory classes. Harumi was married young as the result of an arranged marriage, however, in addition to being an English learner she also undertakes volunteer work teaching English which provides her with an identity that is separate from that of her family;

Yes, if I have the chance I wanted to see out of my home because I bring up, brought up three, my daughters. Just I did that so people ignores me, just my daughter's for example, K's mother, I am K's mother. So I wanted to make my

individual character outside of my home and volunteer sounds somehow good opportunity. So it was first to be involved in the society.

Studying English has also brought Harumi into contact with broader social issues and has encouraged her to consider volunteer work outside of Japan:

Few years ago I had something, not English, but using English I came to know there are many poor children so maybe I volunteer to go to Africa to help something for children. But now I have no confidence myself, of my own, anyway, not English, maybe communicate or do something international activity, not only in Japan.

For Harumi, studying English has provided an opportunity to consider a role for herself in the international arena as a volunteer. In addition, this is an activity that gives her a certain power and visibility and she refers to English as a “weapon”.

But maybe the first purpose to learn English is conversation and understanding each other with different language is very fun for me. So recently, now it’s somehow my weapon [laughs] to relate my stupid opinions.

For Etsuko, studying English is something that her family is proud of. She has no stated goals in terms of the development of her English apart from the enjoyment that it provides. In addition, as an older woman, being a student of English is a respectable use of time and a way to keep busy. Etsuko’s English study is a point of pride for her family so while she downplays her reasons for studying, it may be that an important motivating factor is the recognition that comes from being engaged in this activity.

My son said to new family, my son's wife's family, my second son said about me, "My mother is great. She studied English every night". He is proud of me, maybe...[My English study is] Hobby and exercise my brain. Just hobby and interesting and enjoy and pleasure...No goal, I think. But so practice of English, so no goal. Forever, I think. Yes. I can't work so I study English.

Etsuko also enjoys seeing her progress in the classes and seeing the skills of herself and her classmates growing each day. Etsuko is a participant in the movie class which is dominated by women. For Etsuko, the explanation for this is that these classes are somewhat frivolous and, as such, not likely to be attractive to men. For Etsuko, though, the class offers an opportunity to spend more time talking about movies, which is a topic of interest to her. The study of movies also offers a window onto the wider world:

Yeah, movie is so good. Really deep director's opinion, so I, I saw one movie first time I couldn't understand very well but almost line I listened to the line and read the line so I could understand the movies' opinion. Customs or culture or something I understand.

Fumie has also found the study of movies has changed her wider outlook on the world, that, "learning English changed my idea a lot". She stated that she had been surprised when watching TV programmes and movies in English to learn what people are thinking. As a result of this she has the desire to travel more and her interest in foreign countries continues to grow, "after learning English I want to go abroad more and I want to see TV news or I got to be interested in foreign countries more". As a teacher herself,

attending a language class also provides an opportunity to have the experience of being a student which she believes is valuable.

After many years as English learners, the participants had clear ideas about what they liked in their classes and they took responsibility for being active participants in classes. For Fumie, being active in the class and taking the opportunity that the classes offer to explore ideas are important. Not being “Japanese” is an important aspect of Fumie’s Ideal L2 Self and she said that her style in the classroom has changed over time and that she makes a concerted effort to be an active member of the class. She contrasted the style of English classes, which she characterises as active and casual, with the style of Japanese classes which she says tend to be serious. Fumie is very aware of the kind of teacher that she finds effective and she remembers clearly teachers who have created an uncomfortable atmosphere in the classroom. Clearly one reason why she enjoys her current classes is due to the teachers, an aspect present in the actional stage of motivation as discussed in Chapter 2.1

Harumi also spoke about teachers and the different kinds of teachers that she likes. She has noticed that some teachers have a style of teaching which older Japanese students do not like. Examples of this are those who do not instruct but seek to elicit ideas from students through brainstorming and quizzes. Harumi describes a good class as one in which teachers give a lot of homework and correct even small mistakes. Harumi has clear expectations of her classes and knows the way that she wants to be taught. Harumi states that other students are not so serious because they treat English study more as a hobby and recalls a situation where the students did not appreciate the efforts

of a “good teacher” because the style of teaching is stricter. When speaking about previous life stages Harumi had expressed dissatisfaction with the traditional Japanese *eigo* classroom, however, clearly aspects of this approach are attractive to her.

For participants in this stage a number of factors continue to affect their motivation to undertake English study. One is the opportunity that the activity provides to engage in something outside of the home and separate from their domestic responsibilities. For others it is the pleasure of the classes themselves including the material covered and the participants are very conscious of what they like and do not like in their classes. Several participants also spoke of gaining recognition from their families as a result of their English study and it seems that in addition to English study as a respectable hobby for older Japanese women, it is also what one participant refers to as a “weapon” that can be used to build an identity as an intelligent and independent person.

An analysis of motivational factors in relation to the different life stages is useful in providing an insight into key motivational influences through the lives of these women. However, ongoing influences are also of interest and these will now be discussed in more detail.

4.3 Ongoing motivational influences

The Life Stages approach allows for consideration of motivational influences that have been of significance over the lives of these learners. However, in addition to considering what participants had to say about their experiences when reflecting back

over their learning histories, it is also valuable to look in detail at motivational influences which are current and ongoing. In particular, while some of the influences discussed in the previous section are current for these learners, it is also useful to consider in more detail two ongoing motivational influences that were widely discussed in the interviews and which provide additional explanation as to why these students continue to study English. The first of these is related to the role of English as an international language which means that travel is both an important context for English use as well as a significant motivating factor for those with a developed International Posture. The second ongoing influence is related to the role of English in Japan which makes the study of English a respectable hobby and sanctioned aspect of the Ideal Self.

4.3.1 Travel

For participants, travel has played a role in developing their motivation to study English. Travel provides a context in which being able to speak English is both useful and meaningful. All of those who participated in the study had travelled internationally over their lives and travel continues to be an activity that takes place within the limitations of domestic responsibilities.

There was no clear pattern in terms of life stages in which the women were more likely to have travelled. Many of the participants had travelled as university students and young, unmarried women while some had also lived overseas for a time to undertake English study or when their husbands had been posted abroad for work. Participants described travelling with their children and as a family and several of the older

participants were now also finding that they were able to travel more due to no longer being required to care for elderly relatives. Some participants travelled alone for extended periods while others took shorter trips with friends or family. It may be useful at a later stage to seek more information from Japanese female learners of English regarding their travel experiences in relation to their motivation to learn English, however, this was not a focus of these interviews.

The interaction with both native English speakers and those who were second language English speakers in the context of a foreign country had had an effect on the motivation of participants to study English. Shiho noted that travel had been a factor cited by a number of students in her class as their reason for studying, “many of my students this English class named their motivation as when they are travelling abroad it could be cool or good to speak something”.

For some participants such as Harumi exposure to other non-native English speakers motivated her to be a better speaker of English. Travelling had exposed her to what she considered to be the poor English spoken in Asian countries and she did not want to be identified with this.

I like to learn strictly good English because recently when I visit to Asia there are many strange English, many people speak strange English, then I feel somehow disappointed that situation. So, as for me, my English is very bad but I like to get certain correct English.

Other participants were also conscious of the English that they heard spoken when travelling. As a university student Harumi lived in the UK for a period and visited Italy and remembers at that time that young Italian people were serious about studying English, however, she believes that this is not the case now, that, “ordinary people doesn’t care if they can’t speak English.” She contrasts this with the situation in France, where she believes that more people speak English now, and Asia where people also do not speak English well but believe that it is important. Harumi is conscious when she visits foreign countries of the role of English and the observations that she makes during these travels affects the development of her idea of the kind of English speaker that she wishes to be. Harumi also described the situation for her daughter for whom speaking English was necessary, though she was reluctant herself until she spoke with Spanish and Asian people and found that, in her observation, they did not speak English proficiently and that this meant that she was more comfortable speaking English.

[My daughter] said that partner to speak with is Asian people or South American, Spanish, Spanish areas people so she said the other is also very bad [laugh] so now I am relaxed to speak English.

Tomomi also spoke of having been positively influenced in her own studies through meeting other European English learners. In particular, Tomomi was impressed by the high levels of motivation to speak that she saw, even if she noted that use of grammar was not good. Being exposed to cultural differences in the way that English is taught and learned had clearly been of value for these participants and it is interesting to note the different impact of perceived motivation and skill among other non-native speakers

on the motivation of these Japanese learners, with Tomomi noting the effect of what she saw as high levels of motivation, as opposed to others who noted low levels. It is likely that being exposed to varying examples works to refine one's Ideal L2 Self.

Fumie also commented on the different kinds of people and English that she was exposed to when travelling in New York city, however, while confusing this was also part of the pleasure of being in the authentic L2 context.

And when were in New York there were many, we saw many races, especially taxi drivers. Koreans or Indians or something. And black people. And their English was so different so those conversations sometimes confused us but we enjoyed it very much.

Practice in an authentic setting was also valuable in developing motivation. When speaking about time that she had spent in San Francisco with a Japanese friend who lived there, Chiharu described the experience as being one that was positive in terms of her motivation and this was due to the “fun” of communicating in this language and the window that this provides onto a new culture that she had spent many years studying in the classroom setting. Ayako also described a similar kind of trip where, as someone who had been studying English for many years, she visited a Japanese friend now living in Ireland. Ayako found the experience of trying to communicate frustrating, however, and found it necessary to go beyond speaking to using gestures to communicate. On coming back to Japan she decided to try and improve her English.

I can't speak English... Try, with gesture. Say the word. I can't say the sentence. So communicate with gesture. [I feel] Irritate. I want to speak I can't so my motivation is down. But from then I come back to Japan, I decided to try to study English at that time.

Undoubtedly being able to travel internationally is a mark of sophistication. The non-Japanese participant's comments on this matter were broader in perspective. She had noticed that her classmates travelled extensively internationally and that they had said their reason for studying English was to make it easier to use hotels and transportation. For this reason she saw studying English as being associated with travel and, therefore, "kakkoi" (cool).

The ability to travel is one that was limited for participants by their domestic responsibilities, in particular, care that they were required to provide for elderly relatives, a basic responsibility for a Japanese housewife. One participant who had recently been able to travel more was Etsuko. For Etsuko, opportunities to travel have been limited due to her responsibility to take care of her mother-in-law, however, now that her mother-in-law has passed away there is the chance for her and her husband to travel, and also for her husband to study English himself. In addition, in the future Etsuko dreams about teaching her grandchildren English, another aspect of an imagined Ideal L2 Self. Now that Etsuko does not have the responsibility of caring for her mother-in-law she is able to travel more extensively, "I try to go abroad everywhere and speaking English". Etsuko takes advantage of opportunities to speak English by approaching strangers and described actively communicating with an Australian woman

during a trip to Brisbane.

So I sat down couch and to speak, spoke neighbour, maybe older lady, so nice woman. So, “May I talk to you?”, “Yeah, please, I like”, she said to me, “Japanese, almost Japanese smile and gesture but you speaks English very well”. So maybe lip service, I think, but I enjoyed one hour airport...I was relaxed. But maybe my English is so wrong but I think it’s ok, don’t hesitate.

Etsuko also described her husband’s envious reaction to evidence of her ability to communicate in English.

[My husband] said, “I want to speak English so I want to study English”...Maybe he felt jealousy for me. I enjoyed very much.

Several participants spoke of wishing to spend longer periods abroad. Misato hoped to relocate permanently to Australia, New Zealand or Hawaii with her husband and this is why she was learning English. As a young woman, Noriko had spent time in Europe and North America on her own and with her husband. She continues to travel extensively and because her husband and friends do not speak English she takes on the role of making arrangements with local people on these trips. Noriko spoke of wishing to go abroad for a longer period but being unable to due to family responsibilities.

I want to as much as possible speak English...I think nowadays many people do homestays. And recently, like my aged women go to long stay. They go to stay

long, a month or several months. So if I have time I want to go there. But I have now my father, mother-in-law and my brother, more than ninety years old. So I can't go to abroad.

Tomomi had travelled extensively also and enjoyed the opportunity to be in situations where it is necessary to use more complex language. She had recently enrolled in an intensive English course in Honolulu but was disappointed that the majority of other students were Japanese, young and not serious but noisy out of class and quiet in class. Tomomi had found that as she travelled more she became more interested in knowing cultures more deeply. She had spent extended periods in Fiji and Malta, motivated by "curious interest". As an older woman it was not always easy to get a student visa but Tomomi has been able to seek out countries where she is able to visit and was planning a trip to the Philippines where she could, "research tropical island life and talk about that with host mother". Tomomi recommended the experience of the extended period of study abroad in order for Japanese to understand better about both foreign cultures and Japanese culture and society. For Tomomi, English provides a means through which she is able to extend herself intellectually and engage with the world in contexts which would not be available to her as a monolingual Japanese speaker.

I think Japanese people who want to learn English, they should go to abroad to study. So we can know Asian culture, custom and how much they want to study English... Different ages and also different jobs, so conversation is very interesting and we learned different culture, customs from each other. That was really nice, better than in Tokyo. Tokyo, of course, only different ages.

Lifestyle is almost same.

Tomomi described herself as shy, however, when travelling she makes herself available to others and enjoys speaking with strangers about topics that are of interest to them. As such, English is a way in which Tomomi is able to interact with others and to enact an ideal self.

Interesting topic for them, I want to know. Sometimes the topic, sometimes science story, even political topic. But one person who very want to speak about that topic I really want to know why. Even the content is boring for me, if someone want to speak, why? So, I really want to know...Maybe I interested in people. What is thinking about?

Being in a foreign country has been a way for Tomomi and other participants to learn more about Japan. Kazue's husband is an academic and she had the opportunity to spend an extended period of time in Ohio. Kazue attended English classes with graduate students at the university and relished the opportunity to develop her English to the level that she was thinking in English. Kazue describes the experience of living in the United States as initially being liberating and as feeling quite free from restraint. However, being abroad also made Kazue very aware of Japanese culture and she compares what she found in the United States unfavourably with Japan.

The next thing I noticed was about Japanese culture. I noticed, I first noticed the Japanese culture is very sophisticated compared with American culture,

including food...The biggest one is about food and taste and appearance. And the traditions. In America went to historical place that is about 100 years ago or so. But in Japan, for example, Horyuji temple is the oldest wooden architecture built more than 1000 years ago. So we have very old and traditional, we have protected old and traditional culture. That is the difference between Japan and America.

Yuriko also lived in the US for an extended period and described the experience of attending English classes.

[Outside of the class] when we talked each other we talked in broken, as you say, broken English...That was fun because everybody was English learner so I didn't need to feel hesitant to speak English in front of them because everyone the same situation...But when I talk to native speaker I am very nervous because I am always I am afraid of many mistake.

Harumi also reflected on the experience of studying English in the UK as a young woman and of finding differences between the city of Cambridge in the UK and Japan. She enjoyed the experience due to the experience of being with people in the UK as well as the experience of difference. As an older woman she is more aware of the complexity of the situations she is in when abroad and recounted an experience in Malaysia where she tried to resolve a problem with a Saudi Arabian man and was aware of deeper issues which could not be addressed through using English.

I visited Malaysia, the resort attracts many countries people. There is one Saudi Arabian father whose daughter is somehow naughty and my daughter was problem with them so I wanted to stop to speak with that father but that time I recognize, I came to know, very different...maybe as for him it's stupid things a woman as I was putting bathing suit and I just stopped to talk with stranger because he seemed very high-ranked soldier and strictly women hide their body. That kind of stress was beyond the communication or beyond the lack of my ability speaking English. And that time I thought English isn't almighty to make the relationship.

Harumi's final comment regarding what she has come to realise is the limited value of English contrasts with that of participants when reflecting on their reasons for learning English at an earlier stage of their lives. That is, in the earlier stages of motivational development English is credited with extensive utility in terms of forming relationships. However, learners would appear to come to a stage such as which Harumi describes where they are able to perceive that communicative competency goes beyond the use of language.

For the participants in the study, travelling abroad had provided a range of experiences that motivated them to study English. Participants spoke of using English as being "cool" and, in addition, participants enjoyed the opportunity to use English to interact not just with English-speakers but to use English to speak with others for whom English was a second language. Seeing other English students also motivated participants as they were able to see a model against which to contrast their own Ideal Self.

Participants also spoke of the frustration and difficulty of using English abroad as well as the awareness that having a good grasp of English would not guarantee effective intercultural communication.

4.4.2 A respectable hobby

When speaking about their reasons for continuing to study English, one reason that clearly had an influence was related to the way in which English is perceived in Japan. That is, that while there may be unresolved issues around the place of English in Japan and to what extent it is really desirable to be a good speaker of English, in general being a student of English or a consumer of English education is a legitimate and respectable activity.

Harumi is perhaps representative of other women of her age and at her stage of life who are English students. She does not undertake paid employment and her children are now adults and, as she says, women such as her have time and money. Harumi stated that she enjoys studying English because it broadens her life and her outlook on the world and in addition to this it is a respectable hobby that other family members cannot complain about. She seeks to share her enthusiasm with her family and to introduce some of what she is exposed to through her study to her family:

I got my English study is so enthusiastic in my family so the rest of family members doesn't like English subject...But in the morning I put on TV, CNN news so every, my daughter hates that choice and also my husband... But recently we could both accordance of the programmes there are many interest

American drama, TV drama like *Heroes*. So husband and I have common interest in watching those dramas.

In the class that I observed of Harumi's the students were discussing extremely complex topics, such as methods for disposing of nuclear waste in France. Harumi does not share the content of her classes with her family and, given her previously noted comments around seeking to develop her own self outside of her family through her English study, this separation may be a deliberate way in which she is able to retain control over this aspect of her self. However, obviously this is an activity that is in contest with other aspects of Harumi's life and she notes that due to the time that studying English takes away from doing housework, perhaps her husband does not like that she spends time on this. Despite this, Harumi seeks to share with her family some of the things she has gained access to through her English study such as showing them American television programmes.

For these women English is clearly an important aspect of their Ought-to L2 Self, as discussed in Chapter 2.1. Kazue spoke about her mother who had spent her adult life as a devoted wife and was recently widowed. After the death of her husband, Kazue said that her mother had no purpose in life and that for people like her, English study may provide "something to live for". English is appropriate as an activity because people will have studied it at school and culturally it is closer to Japanese than languages such as French or Italian and for this reason Kazue believes that many housewives choose to study English. Misato also sees her English study on one level as a useful and respectable activity. She compares studying English with "creating something" and concludes that being able to communicate with foreign people is more useful than

making something decorative. Misato also speaks of studying English as a duty: “I understand I have to do, to study English”, and this is an idea also expanded on by Yuriko. When asked why she studied English at University, Yuriko stated: “Because that is mandatory...Because, you know, Japan is English-obsessed country”.

Several participants spoke of the importance of studying English being due to its role as an international language. Good citizens should be able to participate in the international community. In addition, some participants mentioned that there are now increasing numbers of English-speakers living in Tokyo and that it is important to be able to interact with these people. However, given that in reality participants did not take advantage of opportunities to use English these reasons do not seem to be of real importance and appear to be something of an alibi. It seems that while participants are motivated by the desire to be able to communicate, in some cases this is due to ideas of being a good Japanese citizen, rather than an actual expectation that there will be opportunities to make use of their skill. Being a student of English within accepted boundaries is a legitimate and respectable use of time and even confers on the individual a certain amount of cultural capital as this is an activity to which there are some barriers such as time and money.

The provision of English education in Japan is a lucrative industry and this may be another factor that gives English study legitimacy. Tomomi understands this dynamic and made the point that Japan is a market for English study, and that undertaking study becomes an act of consumption: “So even English student means we have to pay”. Consumption is motivated by a desire to attain distinction and Tomomi describes the

activity as a “fashion”. It is unclear to Tomomi which has a greater value: being able to speak English or simply being able to say you are an English student. The example she gives to support this analysis is that while people may put a lot of time and energy into their study, they do not necessarily take advantage of opportunities to speak when these arise. However, Tomomi makes a distinction between people her own age who study English because of a genuine desire to communicate and younger students who simply want to be able to read the internet or a guidebook when travelling, rather than as a tool of conversation. As such, English study becomes trapped within the education industry, rather than being in the real world. The industry feeds off what she calls, the “stress and pressure [of being a] Japanese who don’t speak English”. Related to this are the goals that such students have which Tomomi believes are meaningless, such as a slightly higher TOEIC score.

4.5 Using English outside of the classroom

The participants in this study are lifelong learners of English who have voluntarily chosen to continue their English classes over a number of years. However, despite ongoing commitment to developing their proficiency in English, and despite being resident in a large city with authentic English resources available, most participants kept their English study separate from their lives outside the classroom. Traditional theories of motivation and the Good Language Learner assume that motivated learners will take opportunities for authentic practice. However, the participants in this study talked of not only not seeking out opportunities but actively being afraid of finding themselves in a situation where they would be expected to speak in English. Comments in this section

will reveal more of the complexity of the nature of the motivation to study of this group.

Along with New York and London, Tokyo is one of the three world finance centres and the political and economic centre of Japan as well as the of the world's second-largest economy. As such Tokyo is an international centre of business in which English is a *lingua franca* and in which a number of authentic English language media such as newspapers, radio stations, magazines and films are present. It is reasonable to assume that residents of such a city would have had some exposure to English-speaking peoples and culture and that enthusiastic, long-time English students would be alert to the growing number of English speakers in their own wider community and would seek out opportunities to use the English they have been studying in the classroom in an authentic context. However, this did not seem to be the case for the majority of participants. Despite being long-term students of English who said that they enjoy their English classes, participants did not seem to seek out or even enjoy meeting English speakers in Japan outside of the classroom context.

Harumi, who was discussing nuclear physics in the English class I observed, has created an opportunity to speak English outside of class but it is in a controlled, classroom-like setting. When asked what opportunities for practice she undertook outside of class she described a conversation circle that she has established near her house to which an American teacher is invited and where the participants, "just chat, not study, without preparing". However, the majority of participants did not speak English at all outside of their weekly class.

Whether or not participants had the opportunity to speak English outside of class, different opinions about the value of knowing English for the Tokyo resident were expressed. Harumi went on to say that she did not think it was necessary for Tokyo residents to know English. The connection she makes between needing English to communicate with tourists is not within the context of work that would involve speaking to such people, but rather whether or not it is necessary to be able to assist confused travellers. Noriko thought that English is useful for being able to communicate with foreign people. However, while all of the participants in this study would be able to communicate in English, it became clear that having the ability and having the confidence to do so are different.

Some participants work or had worked in jobs where English was spoken but for these participants there seemed to be a clear sense that English was primarily a tool for the job and did not automatically give them confidence to speak English in different settings. Kazue, who is a high school English teacher working with native English-speaking teachers, said that she rarely spoke English with her Australian colleagues. The following was her response to a question about whether she had opportunities to speak English outside of the classroom.

No, almost none. There are some native speaker teachers at my school, Australian teachers. But we teach separately so I have little chance to speak with them.

Chiharu has worked as an information officer at Narita Airport, a role in which she often

spoke English with travellers. However, she goes on to say that while she does not see non-Japanese people in her daily life, she would not have the confidence to talk to them even if she did. Despite having a job where she speaks English, she says that she feels “afraid” of speaking English outside of the controlled airport environment. Within the airport environment it is “natural” to be speaking to other people and indeed to be speaking English but the rules for speaking English in the wider community are not yet clear for Chiharu.

I don't see other country's people in my place. I don't see other country's people much. But if I see the people I can't speak, maybe...In Narita Airport I have a opportunity to contact the people and it is natural to contact the people. But in normal life if I ask other people about something I though, I think other country's people think, “Why she ask me?”. And maybe I have a feeling to be afraid of people. But in Narita Airport it's natural to speak with other people...Maybe I think when I ask the people about something I can't catch the word and I can't continue conversation. It's afraid.

Etsuko's comments regarding this matter are similar. She also does not speak English outside of the class and speaks of not having the opportunity, as well as being “conscious” of making mistakes, an awareness that seems similar to the fear that Chiharu refers to.

It's too hard, it's too hard to speak English frequently because we don't have speak English opportunity. So, and Japanese is so shy and hesitating. So, and

how was I, how was my English, good or not good, my pronunciation is right or wrong? So people are conscious about this.

Tomomi's response links this fear or consciousness, as well as the basic desire to be English-speakers, to the nature of Japanese people. In Tomomi's analysis, being competent English speakers demonstrates "good attitude or behaviour or principle" in Japanese people. Concern for making mistakes is linked to basic issues of self-image and identity.

Anyway, we would like to be more fluent English-speaking people. It's, how do I say, good attitude or behaviour or principle or that kind of thing. Because mandatory we have the long education time. So we always think somehow threaten we have to speak English more correct or more careful.

Tomomi states that the reason that Japanese do not become proficient English speakers is because being able to speak English provides only a small opportunity to Japanese people. In other Asian countries being an English speaker may provide significant financial opportunities, however, for Japanese these are limited to some exposure to other cultures and travel: "As a country in Asia, Philippine, Thailand, second language English but almost official language for them because necessary for making money. Serious opportunity. For Japanese, just culture and having travel, small opportunity. Big contrast. So that's why we don't speak English, I think".

Misato's comments reveal more about the social pressure to study English that she has

felt. For Misato, studying English, even as an older Japanese woman, is a duty that must be undertaken. When asked if she took opportunities to use English outside of the classroom, Misato responded that while she knew she should study English, she made it clear that the extent of her fulfilment of what she saw as this obligation was to attend classes: “I like easy life. I have to do, I understand I have to do, to study English. But after school I don’t study”. Misato’s comment indicates that studying English is an activity that she does not connect to her life in Tokyo outside of the classroom.

The one participant did take up opportunities to use English in an authentic setting was the Chinese participant. Tokyo has a significant Indian population and this participant described enrolling in a swimming school so that she would have more opportunities to speak with the Indian girls she had noticed also attended. This participant went to the swimming school every day in order to try and find opportunities to speak English. She describes the surprise of her Japanese friends and their lack of courage when it comes to using English, whereas this is not a concern for this participant whose main concern is simply on developing her competency:

My Japanese friend said, “why are you want to go to the, why you always speak with the Indian girls?” “For me, it’s study English”, I said. And Japanese people really shy so they always are “We study English long long time but we can’t speak more” so I’m not shy, I think, so I don’t want to write, I just want to speak remembers long sentence or long story and remember this story’s new words.

While participants expected that interactions with foreigners in Tokyo would take place in English, there was ambivalence over whether this was a fair expectation. When speaking of whether learning English to speak with foreigners in Japan was a good aim, or whether such people should be learning Japanese, Yuriko responded definitively: “Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes actually. Basically yes [foreigners in Japan should use Japanese]. But present situation is not like that...Because in the world and in Japan we adore English.” This is a situation that is out of control due to the place that English has taken both in Japan and internationally.

Although participants talked elsewhere about the importance of speaking English to enable “international communication” and despite being long-time, committed students of English, while opportunities to speak English in a reasonably authentic setting do exist in the metropolis of Tokyo, participants reported that they largely did not speak English outside of their classes.

4.6 Additional impressions of the place of English in Japan

In addition to speaking about the factors that had directly affected their own learning, participants also spoke in a more abstract way about the place of English in Japan. The way in which participants discussed the place of English more broadly in the context of Japan demonstrates that the generally positive feelings that participants expressed when talking about their English classes and the importance that participants assigned to a working knowledge of English for Japanese children is not the same as being positive about the role that English has come to take in Japanese schools, Japanese workplaces,

and the wider Japanese society. In addition, within the Japanese workplace it seems that English knowledge is seen of value when seeking work but of limited practical value in reality and associated with test-taking.

4.6.1 English in Japanese high schools now

When reflecting on their own experiences studying English at junior and senior high school, several participants commented that while some concerns remain about what is behind the teaching of English, the classroom experience for young Japanese studying English at school is much better now due to the improved quality of Japanese teachers of English and increased focus on developing speaking abilities.

Noriko believes that students have greater access to native English speakers and that the general standard of English teachers is higher than when she was a child:

In my age the Japanese English teacher knows about grammar and reading but very bad at pronunciation. My teacher, I think specialist, special, maybe, I don't know, but my English teacher very bad at pronunciation in Japanese accent, bad Japanese accent. And doesn't speak English at all, Japanese only. Many teachers like that in my age. Nowadays foreigner speak, teach English with Japanese teacher. I envy them.

The wider context has also changed and as Misato noted, not only do young people now have greater opportunities to meet English speakers but they also have access to the internet and English language resources through this. Kazue, who is a high school

English teacher, has seen teaching practices change since graduating as a teacher herself with a greater emphasis now on developing listening and speaking abilities. However, despite some improvements, Kazue believes that some problems remain and may even be getting worse. It seems that while teachers may be better trained as language teachers and while policy makers may understand better the best way to teach language, wider policy issues continue to be driven by schools wishing to maintain appearances, such as the example of choosing textbooks that are too difficult or structured in a certain way that is not effective in order to impress parents and market the school:

The problem is the school focus on the improving the ability to get high marks in exams. So, it's a private school and they give students a lot, give them workbook that contains many errands. So they have too much things to do. And they, so, besides the students ability is not so high. But the school wants to teach them all more. So the students fails to acquire the basis of English. That's a problem...Because as you know the decreasing birth-rate, the competition in the private schools is becoming fierce and especially the situation about girls private school is very severe. So the level of the students is getting worse and worse in my school...The school wants to choose a difficult textbook. Maybe, partly because advertisement for the parents and cram school.

Kazue sees this approach to English study as part of a wider, ongoing social problem that influences the educational context. The focus on passing exams is, according to Kazue's analysis, part of a wider deference to authority. Teaching students to think for themselves or to express original ideas is, therefore, a revolutionary act and when the

teaching of the English language is also brought into this a range of difficult political and ideological issues of become entwined:

Recently I think, I'm afraid the Japanese government try to make people obedient to the government so maybe the Japanese education, education in Japan focuses on too many examinations just to obey the authority. So I think to, in the democratic country to have autonomous judgment is most important. But I am afraid that current education does not succeed in doing so. So as a teacher I want to make the student acquire the ability to think for themselves. When I teach I'm worried about the students because they want to know, when I solve the workbooks in class they want to know only the answers. "Why this is so?", they don't think about, "Why this is so?" ... Maybe the root is maybe after the war. Some people say, of course Japan is said to be a democratic country. But we didn't win democracy by ourselves. The democracy was given by the United States. So both the politicians and also the citizens have little conscious about what the democracy is. It's a problem I think.

Kazue's own experience at junior high school was similar to this, with the focus on developing obedience. That students are only interested in what the correct answers are reflects the basis on which English study has been built.

When talking about the classes that her daughter attends, Yuriko also expressed concern that some of the same negative motivational factors that she experienced are still present in classes now, and that with the pressure that has come from the increased value that English is perceived to have, the educational-context is not one which will positively motivate students to study English,

Textbook is very, textbook has changed very much. Compared to my generation the textbook is very harder... the speed of lesson [in my daughter's class] is very high, rapid. Pace is very high. So, and every week, every day she takes English class in the school but just one time, for only one time in a week she can't understand the lesson, next time she completely can't understand the whole lesson. And also the teachers imposed or pushed, teachers push students to study too hard. It was good, in a sense, but it is not good because that kind of thing is probably causes, one of causes of the student come to hate English.

As with the high school classes, there is a feeling the university English classes are now changing with students having more opportunities to speak in English, as Fumie's comment regarding her university-aged children demonstrates.

There is a small class and they can choose conversation classes if they want. So that is very different from what we got at university when I was young.

Fumie's children attend university now and are able to participate in smaller conversation classes, which is a great change from when she was a university student herself.

4.6.2 English in Japanese elementary schools

The question of whether English should be taught more in Japanese elementary schools was one of the topics covered in the interviews and it was when speaking about this that

participants expressed the strongest concerns about the place of the English language in Japan. It would be expected that the motivation of participants to learn English has been influenced to some extent by the same concerns that they raised when talking about the possible impact of placing further emphasis on English in schools and of the greater importance that employers are assigning to being able to demonstrate English competence.

When participants talked about themselves they did not explicitly express concern that being a student of English might threaten their identity as a Japanese person. However, such ideas were raised repeatedly when participants talked about whether Japanese children should study English to a greater degree. Japanese language is inextricably bound up with Japanese identity; if you are Japanese you must speak Japanese, if you are not Japanese you cannot speak Japanese. The converse of these assumptions is that the English language does not have a place within the identity of a Japanese person and this appears to continue to be true in the minds of the women in this study. This idea was expressed most clearly by participants in that while they talked about the importance of studying English in order to travel internationally, it was not expected that foreign visitors or workers in Japan would take the trouble or be able to learn communicative Japanese, that they would be dependent on local people being able to speak English. The terms “English allergy” and “English addiction”, are two aspects of the same concern, “allergy” representing concern regarding Japan’s place in the world, and “addiction” representing the desire to engage with the world outside of Japan and it is when discussing a group of Japanese, in this case school children, that it is possible to see the forces of English allergy and addition at work.

Improving the English communicative competency of Japanese people is a goal of the Japanese government and Ministry of Education and six years of English classes at school has long been the minimum for young Japanese. However, participants in this study expressed increased confidence in the current English education system due to the increased presence of non-Japanese English teachers, rather than the improved calibre of Japanese speakers of English. When discussing these improvements as compared to the situation was when she was at school, Noriko described a feeling of envy.

In my age the Japanese English teacher knows about grammar and reading but very bad at pronunciation...Nowadays foreigner speak, teach English with Japanese teacher. I envy them.

As discussed in Chapter 2, in Japan the English language is acknowledged in government policy as a means by which Japanese people can participate more fully in the world beyond Japan, and as a way of representing Japan and Japanese ideology to the world. Participants also referred to English as an international language. However, while participants all agreed that being proficient in the international language English is important for Japanese in the modern world, it seems that how this idea relates to the fundamental issue of a place for a second language within the composition of a Japanese person may not yet have been satisfactorily resolved. It is interesting that even within a group of seemingly motivated Japanese students of English these tensions can still be seen, particularly in the reservations they had about making English study in elementary schools compulsory.

Compulsory English instruction for Japanese children begins at junior high school, however, in recent years there has been a movement towards introducing compulsory English classes in elementary schools. Public elementary schools are administered by Boards of Education at the city level and some regional Boards of Education have established or trialled compulsory English programmes in their elementary schools. Depending on the policy of the Board of Education this may mean that students are visited by a native English speaker once a year, that students are taught English by local Japanese volunteers, or that there is a more comprehensive programme where students are visited systematically by native speaker teachers through the school year. Private elementary schools are common in Japan and may also have English-language programmes.

Participants agreed that proficiency in English is important for Japanese children yet most did not agree with the movement towards making English study compulsory from a younger age. With the exception of the Chinese participant, all participants in this study completed their schooling in Japan which included compulsory English classes for three years at junior high school and three years at senior high school. Participants were generally critical of the value of the English education that they had received at school, yet when discussing the issue of English in schools many did not talk from the perspective of educational value, but rather from that of identity. Only two participants supported the idea of English education for children because of a belief that it is easier for children to learn English than adults. One of these was Ayako who referred to cognitive factors when talking about her elementary school aged son.

In elementary school children's memory is very good. [My son is] absorbing everything. Then, now they should have a chance [to] study English.

Misato talked about affective factors that she suggested make it easier for children to learn English than adults.

Japanese small children start to study English now...It's a very good idea. English is very enjoyable...When they grow up they don't like English. But little children very enjoyable...If they are very small they enjoy English. Game, music.

However, the most common reaction to this topic and the common concern that participants considered in relation to this issue was that of the development of Japanese language ability in Japanese children. These responses provide insight into the concern that learning English must come at the expense of developing skills in Japanese. The responses, such as the following statement from Noriko, demonstrate the belief that being a good English speaker is not politically neutral but rather that if study is not undertaken with appropriately it may be dangerous to development of Japanese skills.

I think too enthusiastic because now Japanese government recommend study from primary school. I'm not agree with that because I think Japanese language, they have to study Japanese language...Japanese language is also very important but nowadays younger generation, not so good at reading kanji or something like

Japanese, how do you say, poem or something like.

When considering this topic Kazue expressed a stronger idea that learning English at a young age may affect development as a Japanese person.

They should focus on studying Japanese in elementary school because one's ability to think is developed in ones native language, I think.

Harumi teaches occasional English classes in elementary schools as a volunteer but she sees these classes as being “not education” but rather to ease students into developing an international perspective and preparing them for studying English at junior high school. Harumi may describe the classes as “not education” because, while she is supportive of elementary school classes to the extent that she volunteers as a teacher, she has not yet resolved concerns over the potential impact of such classes.

It is clear that participants see English classes in schools as being about much more than just language education. Yuriko's son is an elementary school student and while she dismisses his English classes as “meaningless”, she sees value in the contact that he is able to have with the outside world through the classes. If such contact is necessary, the safe, controlled environment of the classroom is perhaps a preferable context in which for it to be carried out.

He, my son, has taken English lessons for two or three times so far. But that lessons were only game. You know, clap your hands or just singing a song. So,

my opinion, that kind of lesson are meaningless...But, you know, Japan is only homogenous country so we Japanese don't use to be touch to people who are from other country. So to have chance to talk with other country's people, especially English, is very good chance, good thing for little children.

Participants acknowledged that the situation for young Japanese is different from the world that they inhabit themselves. It might be that these issues of identity have become more urgent for young Japanese. Etsuko's response to this question reflects the seemingly conflicting ideas that participants seemed to have about this topic.

But the English pronunciation, for children, is so good I think. But Japanese is more important for children. They need English more than my generation. Japanese children definitely needs Japanese and more skill in English.

In this statement Etsuko acknowledges the advantage to pronunciation of beginning to learn English from a young age and the increasing importance of the language. However, the final sentence reinforces the fact that it is seemingly impossible to consider the study of English without considering the Japanese language.

Participants argued for the importance of children developing fluency in English and some acknowledged the pedagogical benefits of providing English instruction and exposure to English speakers to young children. However, as a group of long-term English learners themselves, participants were not supportive of lowering the age at which compulsory English instruction would begin. The study of English appears to be

bound up for these individuals with the development of Japanese language skills and the formation of a positive Japanese identity. English may be an aspect of the Ought-to Self for Japanese adults but the extent to which this is true for Japanese children is yet to be resolved.

4.6.3 English in the Japanese workplace

Some of the perceptions that participants have of the role of English generally in the Japanese workplace will be discussed here. Participants had varying experiences using English in their own work and the relationship between participants' motivation to learn English and their own experiences as a worker will also be discussed in more detail.

Japanese adults receive messages about the practical value of learning English from a variety of sources including their own experiences, the experiences of their friends and family, messages in the popular media and messages that they have received in their English classes and one of the strongest common reasons stated for developing English fluency is the opportunities that it will open up in the workplace. In this study the concept of Japan now being part of a global community and the associated need to be able to be seen as an international citizen and to communicate beyond Japan seemed most keenly felt by participants when referring to the world of work.

Japan is a country that is heavily involved in international trade and it is accepted that those whose work involves such trading will need to understand English and that this is necessary for the practical survival of Japan and the Japanese economy. However, it is significant that while participants accepted the importance of English in the workplace, their own experiences using English at work were few. This finding supports Kobayashi's study, discussed in Chapter 2 regarding non-elite Japanese working women undertaking temporary English immersion study in Canada in which, while the wider social rhetoric is that Japan needs an English-speaking workforce, these women knew

that their own working future was unlikely to be measurably improved by better English skills.

Rather than English being a skill that everyone needs to function in the workplace in practical terms, participants were realistic that it is necessary within only a limited range of jobs. Several participants mentioned those people working for trading companies, a rather elite and desirable area of work, as being members of the group of Japanese workers who have a real need to be able to communicate in English. Yukie's son and Harumi's daughter are working in such companies and both agreed that English is important for their children at work despite previous lack of demonstrated ability. Harumi described her daughter's experience:

My daughter is recruited [to a] trading company, big trading company. It's very hard to enter that popular field and most of them, just my daughter is exception, the employee can speak English freely or they have experience to bringing up in foreign country. So, somehow my daughter is enter the company so always she is fighting with those English-speaking...She needs to study hard but so far she is too busy...English study individually, privately, is very hard for the person who doesn't have motivation...And also, but my daughter could get high score TOEIC. She doesn't, she can't communicate with foreigners as well. But she got a high score because of school education.

Harumi's daughter would seem to have instrumental reasons for learning English but Harumi's comment that equates her daughter with "the person who doesn't have

motivation” indicates that she sees a difference between studying because it is required for work rather than being the result of one’s own volition. Harumi also notes that getting a good TOEIC score has been important for her daughter’s career, even if this good test score has not meant that she can communicate confidently. Harumi’s statement that those working in this field are likely to have lived abroad as children reinforces the idea that this is a career option that is likely only available for those who have had a more international and privileged upbringing.

Apart from the value that comes from Japanese interacting in the outside world, another reason that participants gave for English being more practically useful is the increased number of foreign workers in Japan and the necessity of being able to communicate with them. When asked whether she saw the focus on English shifting as China became a more important trading partner for Japan, Kazue reinforced that it is the role of English as an international language, rather than the language of a particular group of people that is important:

Only Chinese people speak Chinese but English is spoken all around the world. Besides, top people in China can also speak English. So if you can speak English you can communicate with Chinese. Not commoners, common Chinese, but people who engage in business...Of course to preserve Japanese is important but besides Japanese, we should speak, we have the proficiency in another, one or two, at least one or two foreign languages. This is important and necessary for people who work internationally.

Kazue's comments appear to indicate that English is not just an international language but the language of an international elite, and that learning English is a shared goal among similar people in other countries.

The perception of the need for English has changed significantly within the lifetime of these women. For Chiharu, who is the youngest participant, it is thought that being able to speak English will provide individuals with an advantage in the workplace and this is due to English having become an international language. She describes English as a skill that will benefit both individuals and Japanese companies more broadly. Fumie, however, remembers that when she was younger there was a greater expectation that translators could be relied on to facilitate communication, whereas now the expectation is that Japanese workers will speak directly to foreign people and that these will not necessarily be native English speakers: "We almost always speak English with Korean, Chinese or Latin American people whose native language is Spanish or French. So English is very very important these days".

Company policy around the need for workers to speak English is also shifting and there is now more focus on English being useful for employees travelling outside of Japan but not as important for use within Japan. Tomomi is aware of this shift and spot of how some large companies are now moving so that what is most important is showing the "Japanese way", and not being able to speak English is not as significant.

But lately, for example, automobile company, some automobile company one site but now changed. That is identity, issue of identity. Old times we felt just

negative point “Japanese don’t speak English”. But here Japan we have to, we should speak English even foreign officer, no, worker. We should show the Japanese way, lately such a company policy, the company has such policy. I think, that is second, new step, second step for us.

Tomomi’s statement suggests that the position of English as a medium for promoting Japan and engaging with the world is not set but continues to be one which is under debate. In general, however, there is an expectation that English is necessary for communicating with foreign-born workers in Japan. Ayako stated that English is important to communicate with foreign workers, but when considering why English needed to be the language of communication for foreign workers within Japan she referred back to notions of the nature of the Japanese language and the international place of Japanese.

Interviewer: What do you think, don’t you think they [migrant workers] should speak Japanese?

Ayako: Maybe they said, “Japanese is very difficult”.

It is difficult to argue that learning Japanese for a foreign worker in Japan is more difficult than for a Japanese worker learning English. However, Japanese has not been positioned as an international language, therefore, it may be useful to consider the word “difficult” as referring not only to the process of learning the language but the limited motivation that would be felt by one who was engaging in the process without any prospect of it being valuable. It is also perhaps more comfortable for Japanese to

consider migrant labour as temporary, something that would perhaps be more difficult to do if these workers were speaking the local language.

Among some participants there was a perception that being able to use English to communicate is becoming more practically useful within Japanese workplaces. Ayako recently stopped working and she has observed changes within her previous company.

After I quit the job of my company...everybody speak English in company...So, when I worked on this company everybody don't, didn't use English. But now at meeting everybody should speak in English. So everybody study English now.

While English communicative ability may only be practically necessary in a limited range of jobs, "English ability" has become more generally associated with being successful in Japan and a broader range of workers are now required to demonstrate a level of English proficiency. Yuriko's comment shows the relationship between English proficiency and success in the workplace.

And in Japan, business society required employees to speak or to use English recently. So, in the business scene, ability to, if people have some ability to speak English or some ability to read English, that kind of people are very successful.

As Harumi's earlier comments make reference to, there is a large gap between

workplace English that is useful from the perspective of being able to communicate effectively, and being able to demonstrate English ability by getting a good test score. The most common measure of English for Japanese workers is the TOEIC test. The TOEIC test was developed as the workplace-oriented counterpart to the academic-oriented TOEFL test and claims to measure the ability to function in an English-speaking workplace. It is a popular test with 1.5 million people in Japan taking the TOEIC test every year and in some companies a good TOEIC score is one of the requirements for promotion to senior roles.

Until 2007 the TOIEC test only tested reading and listening comprehension and communicative competency was not measured and it is widely accepted in Japan that TOEIC measures only a limited range of competencies. “English proficiency”, therefore, can mean something quite different in the Japanese workplace, where TOEIC is often key measure, from what it means in the English classroom, when travelling in an English-speaking country or when speaking to a colleague in a foreign branch. In many Japanese workplaces “English proficiency” has come to denote a high score in the TOEIC test which is not matched by communicative ability.

Despite the shortcomings of the TOEIC test, for some workers it is through their TOEIC preparation that they will have their main exposure to English education and it is not surprising that this might result in some Japanese workers coming to dislike English as it has become associated with a tedious learning experience. When talking about her son, Misato associates her son’s dislike of English with his TOEIC study and then goes on to discuss the experience of her husband, who has also been required by his company

to study English.

My son needs English at the company but he doesn't like English. Company ordered to study English. Do you know TOEIC? He tried TOEIC. Maybe company would know his level. Sometimes company send him tape recorder from the English school but he doesn't study. [My husband] works at international company so he send to a English school when he was young but he doesn't like English. Japanese people don't like English. Especially man don't speak English.

As a Japanese worker the task of "learning English" must sometimes seem overwhelming given that the kinds of abilities that the employer is interested in measuring will probably be quite different from the kinds of skills that a worker would find being developed in an English conversation class.

When talking about her son, Etsuko makes the comment about the fact that while he likes English and was a member of the English Speaking Society at university, and that he is now required to take the TOEIC test at work and is both interested in English and needs it for his job, that his role means that he does not have the chance to use the language, "Maybe he likes English. But he works at Japanese company so he doesn't have opportunity to speak English". It is clear that being motivated to learn, and being required to develop skills by one's employer is not enough to counteract the limitations of working for a Japanese company.

One participant who saw real value in English ability in the Japanese workplace was the immigrant from China. This participant talked about her friend who was also Chinese and for whom English ability was seen as being very important in finding work in Japan and that this was because she was proficient in English and Chinese and Japanese. This participant's example was the most vivid and concrete provided by any participant regarding the value of multilingualism in the Japanese labour market which suggests that this may be an area felt more keenly by migrants to Japan.

5 Discussion

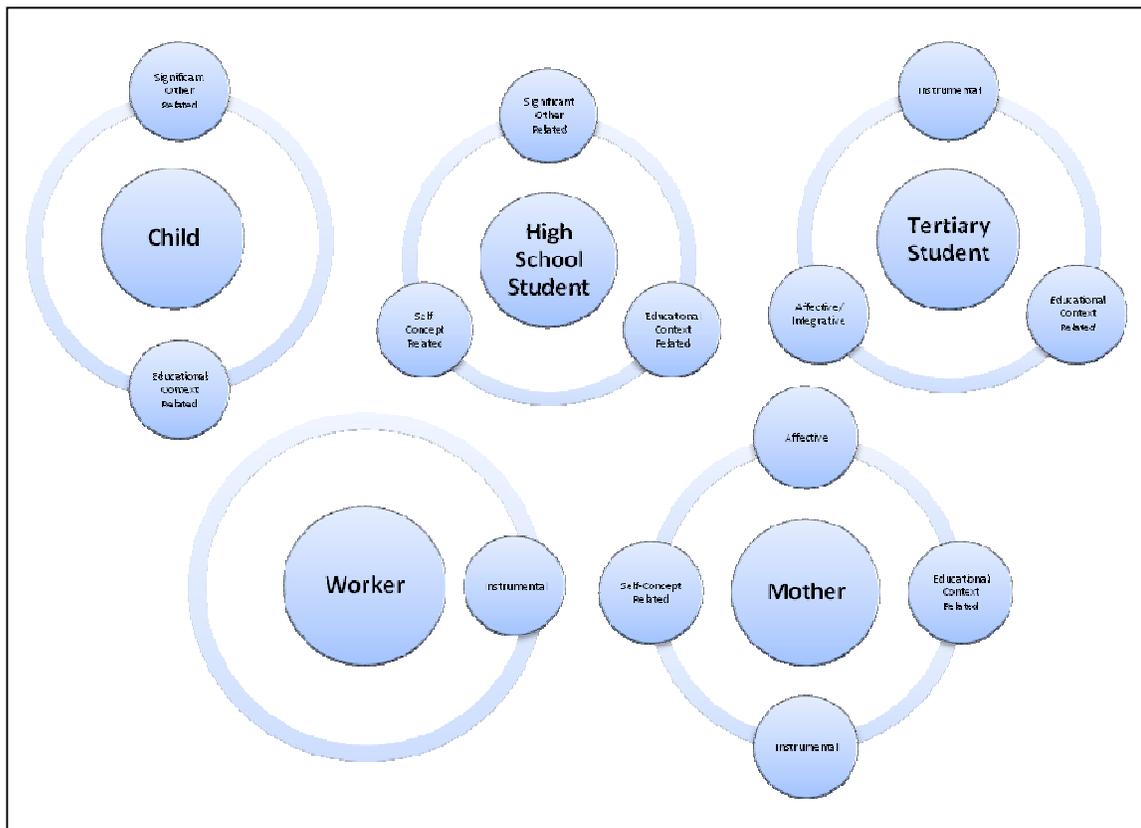
Participating in English classes is a common activity for Japanese adults and this study set out to investigate the reasons that a group of female long-term learners of English had for continuing to undertake English study through the course of their lives. From the interview data it became apparent that a range of factors had influenced this group of English learners at different times in their lives and, as such, it is valuable to consider motivational influences within the context of Life Stages. The Life Stages approach allows for both the dynamic nature of the motivation of these learners to be better understood, as well as revealing more clearly the social forces that will be at work on such a group women through their lives. In addition to understanding the place of English in Japan, having an awareness of what it means to be a child, high school student, tertiary student, worker and mother within the context of contemporary Japan is valuable in understanding the motivation of this group of women to continue to be involved in studying English across a number of decades.

5.1 Key motivational influences during the Life Stages

Considering the motivational dimensions outlined by Shoaib and Dörnyei, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.1, and the changing significance of these during the different life stages, enables an understanding of both the changing nature of the motivation of these life-long learners, as well as the social context in which the learning is taking place. Figure 5.1 provides a summary of the significant motivational dimensions discussed by participants during the different life stages. As would be expected, the

range of motivational factors became more diverse as the learner moved through the different life stages with the affectively oriented self-concept-related dimension being of key significance in the most mature life stage.

Figure 5.1 Key motivational influences during the Life Stages



Despite the frustrations which participants spoke of when recalling their experiences studying English at school and university, these stages were also significant in a broader sense as it was here that learners were beginning to develop their Ideal-L2-Self. The Ideal-L2-Self that emerged from this study was of a woman who used English in her work, spoke English when travelling abroad, was able to consume English-language

media and who was able to express her ideas and opinions in English. As participants moved through the life stages the Ideal-L2-Self became more defined and included additional features such as, for some, using English to undertake voluntary work abroad, living in an English-speaking country, teaching English to one's children or grandchildren or even being able to participate in a high level English class. However, it was in the earliest life stages that the Ideal-L2-Self began to develop and, as such, the learner was able to remain committed to learning English despite negative learning experiences.

By considering motivational development with reference to the three motivational stages of Preactional, Actional and Postactional, as outlined in Dörnyei's "Process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom" (Shoaib and Dörnyei, 2004: 26), it is possible to see learners moving between the three motivational stages through their learning histories. Dörnyei presents a process model of learning motivation in the L2 classroom (Figure 2.2) in which learners move in a linear manner through the different motivational stages of preactional, actional and postactional. However, it is clear from the interview data that the participants in this study moved between the stages depending on the life stage within which the learning took place. This is because participants were situated within both the context of the life stage and broader social forces as well as within the context of the development as an English learner. For the participants in this study the preactional stage became significant in adulthood, once the learners had emerged from the context of compulsory education and it is noteworthy that the negative learning experiences that participants spoke of in relation to their experiences studying English at school and university did not deter them from entering

this stage.

Kobayashi has noted that Japanese society is one in which there is much age-specificity associated with gendered roles for women (Kobayashi 2007: 68). It must be acknowledged that there will be variance in the experiences of Japanese women, particularly in relation to social and economic class. However, for the women in this study, who were following a similar life path from school to university to a working life that was secondary to a domestic role, the motivational influences in the different life stages were consistent between different participants. Figure 5.2 provides an explanation of the key motivational influences.

Figure 5.2 Explanation of key motivational influences during the Life Stages

| Explanation of key motivational influences during the Life Stages | |
|--|--|
| Child | |
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Significant-Other-Related Dimension | Impetus to begin study came from others. Encounters with English speakers significant in developing ongoing interest. |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | Attending formal classes begins to build identity as “English learner”. Positive and negative aspects of the learning experience are remembered. |
| High School Student | |
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | English study compulsory within the educational context. Generally the learning experience was spoken of in negative terms. |
| Significant-Other-Related Dimension | Encounters with English speakers significant in developing ongoing motivation. |
| Self-Concept-Related Dimension | Beginning of awareness that English could be used to express original ideas. |
| Tertiary Student | |
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | English study compulsory in some programmes. Participants had both positive and negative memories of their classes. |
| Instrumental Dimension | Participants chose to study English due to a belief that it would be useful in building a future career. |
| Affective/Integrative Dimension | Participants continued their English study due to positive past experiences learning English. |

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Worker | |
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Instrumental Dimension | For some participants, English skill was valuable when applying for positions. However, opportunities to use English in their work were more limited than expected. Using English in the workplace can provide a safe context for interaction with English speakers. |
| Mother | |
| Motivational Dimension | Comment |
| Self-Concept-Related Dimension | Participants develop an identity in their English classes which is not centred in being a wife, daughter or mother. Participants gain recognition from family members for their English skill. Being a long-term learner provides opportunities to move into senior roles/the role of expert within the classroom. Studying English is an activity that respectable Japanese citizens should be engaged in. |
| Educational-Context-Related Dimension | Participants feel that they have more power to influence the content and structure of their classes than in other life stages. |
| Affective/Integrative Dimension | Participants gain access to an alternative world view. Participants enjoyed the social aspect of their English classes. |
| Instrumental | Two participants continued to be employed in roles as teachers for which English study is relevant. |

The women in this study initially undertook English study due to the influence of external forces such as the broader educational context or that of a parent. The women were almost unanimous in speaking negatively of the immediate value of their English classes at school, however, it was through this initial exposure that they began to become aware that English could be used to express their own original ideas or even could lead to a broader range of career opportunities. In addition, meetings with English speakers made a significant impression. These positive experiences and factors built on themselves and contributed to their development of an Ideal-L2-Self to the extent that these women often took up the opportunity to study English in the post-compulsory education setting. Again, the educational experience was often not remembered as being effective, however, being an English learner was now identified as a worthwhile activity for broader reasons related to the idea of the Ideal-L2-Self within which the importance of self-expression became increasingly important in terms of motivation.

The Educational-Context-Related Dimension was consistently significant and it is worth considering in more detail the learning situations that these women experienced. For many Japanese adults, English classes can be classified into two different types, one of which is the ideal *eikaiwa* (English conversation) class, which is communicative, fun, interactive and pressure-free. It is perhaps worth noting that several participants commented that the interview itself was how they imagined genuine *eikaiwa* to be. In contrast to *eikaiwa* is the pressure-full, passive *eigo* (English grammar) class in which English is approached as a test to be passed, with the formula memorised for next time. The focus of English classes in Japan has been from the *eigo* approach which has a focus of passing exams and where the teaching style is one which is heavy on

memorising grammar and vocabulary out of context and this is how participants remembered their own experience of learning English at school. English conversation is not considered to be a natural part of *ieigo* classes and when Chiharu spoke about the value of her years of English classes her comments reflected those of the other participants, “I learn English grammar so I cannot speak English conversation. So I studied English elementary school, junior high school, high school, university...I study only grammar so I wanted to study conversation but I had no chance”. Participants continued to distinguish between *ieigo* classes and *eikaiwa* classes, however, perhaps surprisingly, it became apparent that both were associated with limitations. Speaking and listening were identified as being valuable and participants spoke of wishing for more opportunities to develop these skills, however, concern was also expressed that should these become the focus of study that grammar and vocabulary may have suffered. As such, while participants were in agreement that they had regretted not having the opportunity to practice English speaking in their classes at school and university, on reflection, they did not necessarily regret having participated in those earlier grammar-intensive classes.

When speaking of the Worker life stage the participants spoke much more specifically of the instrumental value of learning English, however, it was also noted that opportunities to be an English speaker in the workplace were both limited and avoided. This is consistent with Kobayashi’s argument that while English proficiency is a stated goal in the Japanese world of work, it remains secondary to factors such as academic background and, indeed, gender in being a predictor of success (Kobayashi, 2007: 63). As such, while there is a common view expressed that English study will be useful in the world of work, it can be seen in the data that there is a disconnection between

English study in the context of work, in which the motivational forces are limited only to the instrumental, and English study within the contexts of school, university or domesticity. It may be that for some Japanese women or Japanese men work will provide a rich context for study, however, this was not the case for this group of learners.

Ten of the eleven participants in this study were in the Mother life stage in which their learning now takes place within the wider context of domestic responsibilities. As these women moved into a mature phase of their learning history it is the place of English in Japan and as a *lingua franca* that is significant in providing a context in which English study is accepted as a respectable use of time and money for a Japanese woman to be engaged in. On an individual level, at this stage of their learning histories these women identified a wider range of motivational influences than in previous stages. The most significant change that participants spoke of was the relationship between their English study and their roles as wife and mother. Participants spoke of the reaction of their husbands to their study and this varied from admiring and even somewhat envious of this skill to disapproving of the fact that this was a commitment that took time away from duties in the home. Learning English is an activity that all Japanese individuals will be engaged in to some degree at school or in relation to work and participants spoke of the experiences of their husbands and children to English study, however, it was not spoken of as an activity or pleasure that was shared with other members of the household. Rather, it became clear that being an English learner was a way for these women to develop an identity as expert outside of the home and to enact a different facet of their Ideal Self.

The shortcomings of previous educational experiences studying English was a common theme when speaking of being a student in earlier stages of their lives, however, it was apparent that the learning context was a significant motivating factor for women at this stage of their life. Participants were clear about what they considered to be effective teaching and learning situations and valued the contribution of other students to their learning situation. In his study of lifelong learners, Antikainen noted that hobbies remain contexts of significant learning experiences (1998: 224) and he argues that this is because of the need for communal spaces of learning outside of the structures of school, work or university, “Despite the institutionalization of the life-course in a secularized industrial society there is space and need in one’s personal life for subjective choices without the support and guidance of the institution – or at least one dominant institution” (1998: 224). Antikainen notes that the choice of hobbies will be determined by a range of factors but that the degree of choice on the part of the individual is significant. For the participants in this study, experiences as English learners in school and university provided initial exposure, however, the pleasure of undertaking this activity now is one that combines a range of factors related to the development of an identity as an English speaker but also including the somewhat straightforward pleasure of being with a group of likeminded women and that this became the target language community.

5.2 Current Motivational Influences

When speaking about positive motivational influences, the women in the study spoke in relation to themselves and their own experiences and it was apparent that the pleasure of

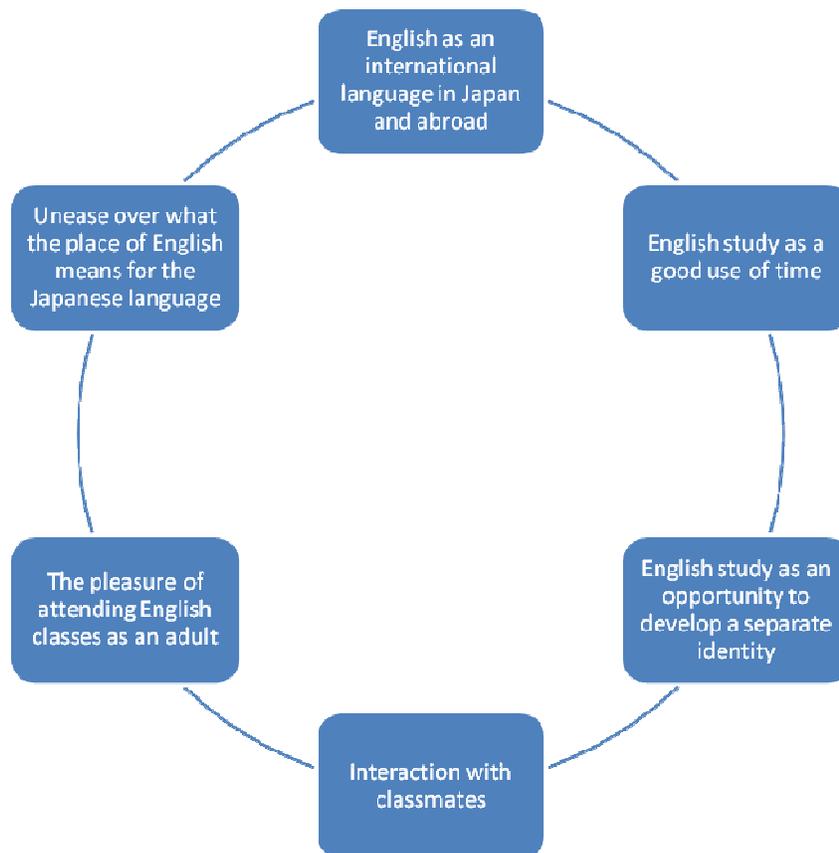
being in classes and speaking to their classmates was significant. Participants had concerns over the place of English in Japan, however, these tended to be related to the broader context, in particular, what the changing role of English might mean for the Japanese language rather than that being an English speaker may compromise their own identity as Japanese. The opportunity to pursue an activity outside of the home was clearly significant in terms of the motivation of this group of women. The participants travelled extensively, however, this was not discussed as a significant reason for studying English and while participants spoke of experiences using English abroad, it seemed that the controlled context of the classroom is the preferred site for using English.

Through the course of the interviews it became apparent that while these women were certainly interested in the world outside of Japan and enjoyed their English classes, their motivation had certainly not been sustained by a desire to identify with English speakers. In fact, it became clear that for these women, who were generally in a later stage of their lives, a significant pleasure in learning English now came from the interaction with the other Japanese students though they may have been motivated by more instrumentally or externally-oriented factors when they were in earlier life stages. The English class also provides a forum in which these women can enact a different aspect of themselves and one which is bound up with their Ideal-L2-Self. In addition, these women enjoyed the distinction that comes from being a student of English, which they noted is a legitimate hobby for a Japanese wife, mother and citizen. It is important to note that for this group there is clearly a difference between being a *student* of English, which is quite respectable, and being a *speaker* of English, which remains problematic in some

cases.

Figure 5.3 provides a representation of current significant motivational influences for the women in this study.

Figure 5.3 Current motivational influences



5.3 Reflections on the study

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study and this was effective in enabling consideration of motivational change. In terms of the research process, the purpose of the initial invitation to participants to write about learning experiences had been to allow the interviews to be better focussed as well as to enable participants to develop their ideas in advance of the discussion. In the end I was largely unable to receive the written comments in advance of the interviews, and some participants did not complete the task because they did not think it was useful for them. This response clearly shows to what extent these learners now feel able to take control of their learning and to make their own choices about the value of related activities. Some participants commented that they found the written exercise useful in beginning to explore their own learning histories. On reflection, I consider this to have been a useful activity from the perspective of preparing participants; however, it did not meet the aim of providing information to me in advance of the interviews. The interview process itself was limited by the fact that I was visiting Tokyo only for a short period to carry these out, as well as by the busy schedules of participants. Several of those who were interviewed commented that they enjoyed the discussion and reflecting on their experiences as English learners and this indicates that the process was one which was valuable for participants. I had hoped to facilitate group discussions with participants, however, this was soon abandoned as it became clear that it would be too difficult to arrange in the short time that I was in Tokyo.

Two ideas which were not the focus of the study emerged as potential fruitful lines of future enquiry in order to better understand the motivational influences at work on such learners. The first of these would be to further explore the relationship between the concept of the Ought-to Self and English education as a consumer product in Japan. This was not a focus of the current study but the idea came through in the data collected during the interviews and may help to further explain the motivation of female long-term learners of English in Japan during particular life stages.

The second area that was not a focus of this study but which may be useful in better understanding the development of motivation in affluent and long-term learners is that of travel as a learning context that changes across life stages. The women in this study had all travelled extensively during different life stages and it may be helpful to further explore with such learners the way in which different travel experiences at different stages affect the development of their motivation. Travel as a motivational influence was covered in the interviews in this study, however, the discussion was not detailed enough to be able to explain how travel experiences might affect motivation during the life stages.

English education continues to be a significant industry in Japan and one which employs a large number of teachers from countries such as the USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. When working myself in Japan I often heard other teachers express frustration that their students did not seem to be sufficiently motivated to really develop their English skill, with a key indicator of motivation being seen as learners seeking out opportunities to speak English. This study sought to explore the

motivational influences affecting a group of female long-term learners of English and found that, even among learners who had remained enthusiastic about attending English classes over many years, they lacked confidence taking up opportunities to use English in authentic settings and that their feelings about the place of English in the wider social context of Japan remain unresolved. That is, English is seen as important and a way in which to participate in the world, however, it is still not something that a Japanese adult can feel relaxed in relation to. This may be changing for younger Japanese but for those engaged in teaching adult students it is important to be aware that this dynamic may be present even among those who have spent their entire adult life studying English.

Through the course of the study it became clear that learning English had been a significant source of pleasure and a site of significant and transformational learning experiences for the women in the study, however, largely this could not be explained through reference to traditional instrumental or integrative factors. Furthermore, the target language community for the mature members of the group was the English classroom itself rather than an English-speaking environment, a revelation that some teachers may find challenging. Teaching English within such a context remains a valuable and worthwhile activity and one through which the life of the learner will be changed and enhanced, however, it is important for teachers coming into such a setting to understand where learners such as these Japanese women find value in their experience as a long-term learner of English. More broadly, it is important to understand that learning is a process that is closely linked to the social context and that motivation and motivational change will be affected by a range of local factors.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 Information for participants

Information about this project

Language Learning Histories: Japanese adults share their experiences as lifelong EFL learners.

September 2007

Dear Participant,

My name is Katy Watabe. I am a graduate student at Massey University in New Zealand. I am doing research for my Masters degree into the experiences of Japanese adults who have been studying English.

I was a teacher at XXXX from 2004-2006. I have taught XXXX classes, XXXX institute classes and classes at various universities in Tokyo, including Tokyo University. I lived in Japan for 6 years, in Iwate-ken and Tokyo, and am married to a Japanese man. Now we live in Auckland, New Zealand. I can read and speak a little Japanese.

Why am I doing this study?

A lot of research has been done about Japanese school and university students who study English. However, there has not been a lot of research about the experience of Japanese adults who choose to study English. I think that it's important for teachers to find out more about the experience of adult learners. I especially want to understand: Why do some Japanese adults choose to study English for many years?

I was a teacher in the XXXX/XXXX programme at XXXX and XXXX from 2004-2006. At that time I taught university classes also and I noticed that the students in my XXXX classes had a different approach to their English studies from university students. So, I wanted to find out more.

What do you have to do?

I want to talk to 10 Japanese adults who have chosen to take one of the XXXX/XXXX English classes.

My main goal for this study is to understand about your experience as an English student.

This study will be carried out in English.

If you participate in this project, you will have to do 3 things:

1. Write a story about your experiences as an English student.

Purpose The purpose is for me to understand a little about your background as an English student.

Date The deadline for this story will be October 17th.

Information There are some guidelines to help you with this on page 8-9.

3. Join in an interview with me.

- Purpose** The purpose of the interview is to talk more about your experiences as an English student.
- Date** I will be in Tokyo from November 23-December 8 to carry out these interviews. You have to be able to meet me during these 2 weeks.
- Information** The interview will take 1-2 hours. You can choose where this will take place (for example, it can take place at XXXX, your local bunka-centre, your home, a café).

4. Join a discussion with other participants.

- Purpose** The purpose of the discussion is for participants to talk together about their experiences as English students.
- Date** Sometime during the week of December 1-December 8 at a time and place that is convenient for everyone.

Will anyone else know what you told me?

I will tape record the interviews and then transcribe them (write them out), but you can turn off the tape recorder any time you want to. Some of the information that you tell me might be in my thesis. However, I will not use your name and I will make sure that nobody can identify the people involved. The tapes and transcriptions will be kept confidential. If you want, I can give you a summary of the information when the project is finished.

What rights do you have?

You are a volunteer in this research, so you have the right to:

- decide not to join;
- change your mind and decide not to come any time before the interview or discussion is held;
- ask me any questions about the study at any time you are involved in it;
- talk to me knowing that I will not use your name unless you give me permission;
- decide not to answer a question I ask you if you don't want to;
- ask me to turn off the tape recorder at any time during the interview or discussion;
- check and make changes to my transcript of our interview if you want to;
- be given a summary of the project findings when it is finished.

If there are other things that you are worried about, you can also discuss these with me at any time and I will make sure that you are comfortable before we continue.

Any questions?

You can ask me questions about the research before you agree to take part. You can contact me by e-mail (katyhackshaw@gmail.com) or telephone (64 9 361 6039).

You can also talk to XXXX at XXXX if you have any questions: telephone XXXX

I can contact you by telephone to talk about anything. Just send me an email or ask XXXX to give me a message and I will call you.

You can also contact one of my supervisors at the Massey University School of Language Studies, Gillian Skyrme: G.R.Skyrme@massey.ac.nz, or Peter Petrucci: P.R.Petrucci@massey.ac.nz Peter Petrucci is married to a Japanese woman and he can understand some Japanese.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this project, please contact Professor Sylvia V Rumball, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: telephone 64 6 350 5249, email humanethicspn@massey.ac.nz.

What should you do next?

1. Fill in page 5 : “Consent Form: Interview”
Fill in page 6: “Consent Form: Discussion”
Fill in page 7: “Contact Details”
2. Give these 3 forms to XXXX.
3. Read pages 8-9: “Guidelines for story” and “Suggested topics for story”.
4. Start writing your story, “My feelings about studying English over the years”.
Deadline: October 17th.

Please contact me if you have any questions!

Thank you for reading all of this. I really look forward to meeting you soon.

Best wishes

Katy Watabe

Address: 46 Old Mill Road
Grey Lynn
Auckland
New Zealand

E-mail: katyhackshaw@gmail.com
Phone: 64-9-361-6039

MY CONTACT DETAILS (for participant):

Name

Address

Phone number

Email address

● **What is the best day for your interview?**

November 26 – Monday _____ December 3 – Monday

November 27 – Tuesday _____ December 4 – Tuesday

November 28 – Wednesday _____ December 5 – Wednesday

November 29 – Thursday _____ December 6 – Thursday

November 30 – Friday _____ December 7 – Friday

December 1 – Saturday

December 2 – Sunday

What is the best time for your interview?

● **For the Group Discussion:**

What date is best for you?

Would you prefer to meet in the morning, afternoon or evening?

Thank you very much! I will contact you soon 😊

Appendix 2 Information for pre-interview task

Guidelines for story

Topic: “My feelings about studying English over the years”

The purpose of this research project is to find out about your experiences as an English learner.

So, the purpose of this writing assignment is for you to tell me about your experiences as an English learner!

Before you start writing, think about your feelings towards your English studies. How have these changed over the years? Why do you think they have changed? Use the questions on the next page to help you start thinking about your feelings towards studying English.

You don't have to answer all of these questions, just use them as a way to start thinking about this topic:

Choose what topics you want to write about to explain the topic, “My feelings about studying English over the years”.

Please write at least one page.

You can send this to me by email or by post.

The deadline is October 17th.

We will talk about your story in the interview.

What should you do if you are having problems?

Please contact me if you have any questions or aren't sure what to write.

You can also talk to XXXX at XXXX.

If you can't finish this by October 17th, please let me know.

It is helpful for me to have time to carefully read your story and think about it before we meet for an interview. But, I understand that you might be busy. Just let me know!

Some suggested topics for story

1. Your grandchild has started studying English at elementary school. They ask you: “What were your impressions of English-speaking people and the English language when you were a child?”. What would you tell them?
2. Your young neighbour has started an English class at university. They want to become good at English but are having problems keeping motivated to do their English study. What advice would you give them to stay motivated to do their studies?
3. Your English teacher is new to Japan. They ask you for advice about methods or activities that Japanese adult students enjoy in their English classes. What would you recommend?
4. Tell me about a person who has been significant in making you want to study English.
5. You are given ¥200,000 to spend on anything that will help you improve your English. What would you spend it on?
6. Imagine that you are writing a letter to yourself when you were a child. What advice would you write to yourself about studying English?
7. Complete this sentence: Japanese people who study English are different to Japanese people who don't because _____
8. Imagine that you had to stop studying English and use that time to do something different. What activity would you choose? Why?
9. Do you think that it should be compulsory for Japanese students to study English at school? Why/why not? If yes, what ages should it start and finish being compulsory?
10. What do you think about English education in Japan? What are the strengths and weaknesses of English education in Japan? What should change?
11. Your English school is designing a poster to advertise your class to new students. They ask you to write a slogan that will attract new students to the class. Complete the slogan: “Join our English class because _____

CONSENT FORM: DISCUSSION GROUP

THIS CONSENT FORM WILL BE HELD FOR A PERIOD OF FIVE (5) YEARS

Project Title: Language Learning Histories: Japanese adults share their experiences as lifelong EFL learners.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the interview being audio taped.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

I would like to check the transcript of my interview **Yes No**

I would like to receive a summary of the results of the project. **Yes No**

Name _____

Date

Signature

7 Works Cited

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