

An Analysis of Learner Motivation of Less Commonly Taught Languages

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the process of student motivation construction. It explores the initial motivation of students studying less commonly taught languages, specifically Chinese, Japanese, and Russian, and how students' initial motivation changes over time. By utilizing a qualitative approach, students' unmodified views towards their motivation are analyzed in-depth. Data were collected in the beginning of the fall term and in the beginning of the winter term (four months later) through questionnaires and interviews. The findings suggest that many students initially start to study the target language because of their attraction towards an uncommon language and the challenge that such languages hold. At the second stage, however, the majority of the students expressed a development of intrinsic motivation, i.e., enjoyment they obtained through learning the target language. Based on the findings, the study suggests how teachers and administrators can sustain students in less commonly taught language programs.

Introduction

All foreign language programs face one common problem: the attrition of students.¹ Student loss is a particularly critical issue in programs of less commonly taught languages (LCTL's), such as Chinese, Japanese, and Russian. These language programs tend to have a lower enrollment to begin with, and they experience a higher attrition rate as the students' levels progress (Mills, Samuels, and Sherwood, 1987; Saito-Abbot & Samimy, 1997; Watt, 1997). The attrition rate of students of Japanese, for example, is estimated as high as 50% (Miyaji, 1993). Thus, the majority of learners do not continue their study

beyond the introductory level. The issue of student attrition becomes even more critical for colleges that do not have a foreign language requirement. Previous studies have shown that an institutional language requirement is one of the most significant variables for learner motivation (Mandell, 2002; Wen, 1997). Colleges without foreign language requirements may have more difficulties recruiting or retaining students in language classrooms. Furthermore, LCTL programs with low enrollments are under more pressure because, generally, language programs are the first to go when universities suffer from budget cuts (Yamada, 1997).

The major purpose of this study is to investigate the process of motivation construction of the students in LCTL programs. The role of motivation in second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning has been extensively examined in the fields of social psychology as well as the field of education. A number of researchers have addressed the significance of motivation for successful L2/FL learning (Gardner & Clément, 1990; Noels et al., 2000). In fact, motivation is one of the affective variables as important as language aptitude in predicting L2 achievement (Gardner, 1985). Motivation also helps determine the extent of student involvement in learning (Okada, Oxford, & Abo, 1996). For example, highly motivated students tend to use more language learning strategies (Oxford & Nyikos, 1989). Motivation also propels learners to interact with native speakers of the language and to seek and receive more input (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992).

More importantly, motivation is related to student attrition in language programs. Specifically, motivation has been demonstrated to be one of the critical factors predicting attrition in the Japanese classroom (Saito-Abbott & Samimy, 1997). Most teachers of L2 and FL are aware of the significance of student motivation and hope to foster their students' motivation in the curriculum. As Yang (2003) suggests, teachers and administrators may benefit from using different approaches that reflect an understanding of student motivation to recruit new students into language programs. Retaining students is, however, as important as recruiting new students. This is especially true for LCTL programs. This study aims to examine what motivates students to continue studying a language through analyzing their ini-

tial motivation and how it changes over a period of time. The findings of this study will hopefully help teachers and administrators to recruit and sustain students in LCTL programs.

Research Questions

This study explores the initial motivation of students studying LCTL's, specifically Chinese, Japanese, and Russian in a liberal arts college that does not have a foreign language requirement. This study will also examine how students' initial motivation changes over time. It is important to note here that this is a small-scale exploratory study. The researcher has no intention of generalizing the results of this study. The emphasis here instead is to analyze the motivation development of the students in this particular research setting in-depth and understand the nature and the needs of these students. The research questions are as follows:

1. What is the initial motivation of the students studying LCTL's, specifically Chinese, Japanese and Russian in a college without a foreign language requirement?
2. How does their initial motivation change over time? What propels them to continue to study the target language?

Student Motivation for Studying LCTL's

Gardner and Lambert (1959) are the scholars who first established the theory of L2 motivation—the Socio-Educational model. In the Socio-Educational model, motivation is defined as the combination of effort, plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language, plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language (Gardner et al., 1983). Gardner and Lambert identified two types of motivational orientations: integrative and instrumental. Integrative orientation refers to an individual's desire for cultural or linguistic integration, such as an interest in interacting with speakers of the target language group. Students with integrative motivation often state that they want to learn a L2/FL because they are drawn to the

target language culture or group. Moreover, they are also often attracted to the language itself. Instrumental orientation, on the other hand, points to a more practical purpose or goal to be attained through studying a L2 or FL (Gardner, 1985). An instrumental purpose is normally related to economic or social advancement, such as getting a better job, passing an examination, earning more money, entering a better college or graduate school, and so on. Unlike integrative orientation, it does not involve identification with the target language community.

Research indicates that integrative orientation is likely to result in spontaneous performance in the target language and a positive attitude in the classroom. For instance, Gliskman, Gardner, and Smythe (1982) found that integratively motivated students volunteer more answers in the classroom, attempt to capture all practice opportunities, and are more satisfied and rewarded by their participation. Gliskman, Gardner, and Smythe's approach was influential and socially grounded, and most studies before the 1990s adopted their paradigm to examine the affective domain of L2 learning (Laine, 1981; Svanes, 1987).

Several researchers, however, have criticized their approach because these motivational orientations may co-exist or overlap and there may be more nuances to motivation that do not fall clearly on one side of the instrumental and integrative paradigm. Clément and Kruidenier (1983) suggest that motivation factors are context-specific and are determined by "who learns what in what milieu." Subsequently, scholars have explored ways of adopting new approaches and setting up new research agendas, such as self-determination theories, intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, and expectancy-value theories, among others (Clément et al., 1994; Dickinson, 1995; Dörnyei, 2001).

The focus of self-determination theories is the degree to which human behaviors are volitional or self-determined (Deci & Ryan, 1985). When one is highly self-determined, s/he endorses her/his actions at the highest level of reflection with a full sense of choice (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The intrinsic/extrinsic model has evolved based on self-determination theories. This model asserts that extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards. Intrinsic motivation, in contrast, is accelerated by the rewards that are obtained from

the activity itself (Deci et al., 1991). The extrinsic/intrinsic distinction differs from the instrumental/integrative distinction in that both instrumental motivation and integrative motivation are part of extrinsic motivation (Schmidt et al., 1996). For instance, an intrinsically motivated student may take a L2/FL course to fulfill a language requirement, but perhaps truly enjoys studying the language as well (Schmidt et al., 1996).

In expectancy-value theories, the valence and the expectation of the desired outcomes determine the effort exerted toward any particular action (Wen, 1997). Valence and expectancy are defined as “the psychological value of a particular goal” and “effort that will lead to a successful performance” respectively (Lewin, 1951; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). A person makes conscious choices leading to potential consequences according to the probability of achieving the desired outcome (Wen, 1997). Valence of learning outcomes, expectancies of learning abilities, and probability of obtaining the outcomes are considered significant for the motivation of students in language learning (Wen, 1997).

Most of the previous motivation studies in L2/FL research, however, have dealt with commonly taught languages, such as ESL and French. Only a few studies have examined learner motivation in the field of LCTL's (Ueno, 2000; Wen, 1997; Yang, 2003). For example, Wen (1997) investigated the motivational factors for students of Chinese with Asian and Asian-American backgrounds using quantitative survey research that utilizes expectancy-value theories. The results showed that cultural interest and heritage status were the main reasons why these students started to study Chinese. For students at the intermediate level, however, expectations of learning efforts and strategies were found to be strong factors. In another study, Yang (2003) surveyed the language learning motivation orientations of college students enrolled in East Asian language classes using a quantitative research design. The findings showed that the most important variable for Korean and Chinese learners was heritage learner status. For Japanese learners, however, personal interest was a more significant factor. Yang also found that integrative motivational orientations were stronger than instrumental motivational orientations for East

Asian language learners and that many East Asian language learners study the target language regardless of foreign language requirements.

Ueno (2000), using a qualitative research design, explored the motivational factors of students studying intermediate-level Japanese as a foreign language compared to those of students of intermediate-level Spanish. A sharp contrast was found in the results. In comparison to the students of Japanese, who responded that they were drawn to the fact that Japanese is uncommon, students of Spanish stated that they study Spanish because Spanish is a prevalent language. The findings also revealed that Japanese students expressed specific cultural interests as part of their motivation, whereas Spanish students had more general, unspecified cultural interests. Additionally, many Japanese learners stated that they consider learning Japanese very important in their academic and personal lives.

As stated above, integrative motivational orientation is likely to result in more successful class performance and satisfaction on the part of the learners (Glikzman, Gardner, and Smythe, 1982). According to the findings of previous studies, LCTL learners have integrative motivational factors, such as cultural interests, and therefore seem to be highly motivated to study the target language. Yang (2003) states that students usually must have strong reasons for studying East Asian languages because of the level of difficulty they pose. Okada, Oxford, and Abo (1996) also claim that motivation must often be higher when one tries to learn more difficult languages because greater persistence and determination are required to cope with the stress of this difficult task. Yet, despite the strong motivation these researchers find in students of LCTL's, these language programs tend to suffer from a high attrition rate.

Perhaps these findings result from the fact that previous studies examined student motivation at one point rather than over a period of time. Student motivation is, however, a fluid process. For instance, in the Socio-Educational model, a student with instrumental orientation may develop integrative orientation over time. In expectancy-value theories, a learner may realize the probability of achieving the desired outcome appears to be lower over time. They might, therefore, modify the goal or simply discontinue studying. Williams

and Burden (1997) assert that motivation is more than merely arousing interest. Rather, the initial reasons for doing something (stage one), lead one to decide to do something (stage two), which results in sustaining the effort or persisting (stage three). Exploration of the learners' process of motivational development over time may, therefore, be helpful in understanding how student motivation leads to the continuation of language study.

In order to investigate student motivation as a fluid process, a more introspective qualitative research approach may be more productive. Even though quantitative research designs are more dominant in L2/FL motivation research, a qualitative approach may be especially fruitful when exploring student motivational experience over time (Ushioda, 1996). Dörnyei (2001) states that the qualitative method is timely in L2/FL motivation research because of its introspective nature. The richness of qualitative data may also provide "new slants on old questions" (Pintrich & Schuncke, 1996). Furthermore, Ushioda (1994, 1996) claims that qualitative research approaches are more sensitive to the dynamic nature of L2 motivation. When the participants are provided with numerical or multiple-choice options, they cannot offer any answers that do not appear in the given options. For instance, the attraction towards LCTLs that many participants raised in Ueno's study (2000) is not stated in Wen's (1997) or Yang's (2003) quantitative surveys. In order to analyze students' unmodified perspectives in-depth, the qualitative approach appears to be more appropriate. Hence, this study utilizes a qualitative approach to investigate the motivational development of students learning Chinese, Japanese, and Russian.

Methodology

This research project involved two stages. A two-part questionnaire (see Appendix A) was prepared at stage one, consisting of 1) student background information and 2) open-ended questions concerning why the students are studying the target language. A semi-structured follow-up interview was also conducted that asked the participants to elaborate their responses from the questionnaire.

At stage two, another questionnaire was distributed (see Appendix B) that was comprised of open-ended questions with regard to the changes in their reasons for studying the target language. Subsequently, the participants were asked to elaborate their answers from the questionnaire in the semi-structured interview.

Participants

Participants in the questionnaire and interview process at both stage one and two were students enrolled in beginning level classes of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian at a small liberal arts college in the northeast United States. Questionnaire data were collected from thirty-four students (thirteen females, twenty-one males) during the first stage, twenty of whom (ten females, twelve males) agreed to be interviewed. During the second stage, twenty-four students (seven females, seventeen males) filled out the questionnaire, eighteen of whom (seven females, eleven males) agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. During the first stage, six students of Chinese (17.6%), fifteen students of Japanese (44.1%), and thirteen students of Russian (38.2%) completed the questionnaire. Six students of Chinese, twelve students of Japanese, and two students of Russian took part in the follow-up interview. During the second stage, six students of Chinese (25%), twelve students of Japanese (50%), and six students of Russian (25%) completed the questionnaire. Six learners of Chinese and twelve learners of Japanese agreed to participate in the follow-up interview. The demographic information of the participants is summarized and shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1:
Summary of Demographic Information of Participants at Stage One

Language	Chinese (N=6)
Gender	Female (2) Male (4)
Year	Freshman (2) Sophomore (3) Junior (1)
Nationality	U.S. citizen (6)

Language	Japanese (N=15)
Gender	Female (7) Male (8)
Year	Freshman (4) Sophomore (5) Junior (2) Senior (2) Other (2)
Nationality	U.S. citizen (10) Chinese (4) Korean (1)

Language	Russian (N=13)
Gender	Female (4) Male (9)
Year	Freshman (1) Sophomore (9) Junior (1) Senior (1) Other (1)
Nationality	U.S. citizen (13)

Interview participants (N=20: 6 Chinese learners, 12 Japanese learners, and 2 Russian learners)

Table 2:
Summary of Demographic Information of Participants at Stage Two

Language	Chinese (N=6)
Gender	Female (2) Male (4)
Year	Freshman (2) Sophomore (3) Junior (1)
Nationality	U.S. citizen (6)

Language	Japanese (N=12)
Gender	Female (5) Male (7)
Year	Freshman (2) Sophomore (4) Junior (2) Senior (2) Other (2)
Nationality	U.S. citizen (9) Chinese (2) Korean (1)

Language	Russian (N=6)
Gender	Female (0) Male (6)
Year	Freshman (1) Sophomore (2) Junior (1) Senior (1) Other (1)
Nationality	U.S. citizen (6)

Interview participants (N=18: 6 Chinese learners, 12 Japanese learners)

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Both questionnaires were created based on Ushioda's (1994) study, which explores the motivational thinking of Irish learners of French using a qualitative approach. The questionnaires for this study were administered during the first weeks of the fall (stage one) and the winter (stage two) terms of 2003. The researcher attended beginning level Chinese, Japanese, and Russian classes to ask the students to fill out the questionnaire at the beginning or at the end of the classes and then collected them. Student participation was voluntary, but all students agreed to participate. The participants took ten to fifteen minutes to complete the questionnaire. In the first questionnaire, two questions were asked: 1) What is the main reason you take this language class? and 2) What made you take this language class rather than other language classes? The questions regarding demographic information were also asked at this time. In the second questionnaire, two questions were asked 1) How have your reasons to study this language changed over time, compared to the time when you first started to study it? and 2) Compared to the very first time you started to study this language, do you feel more/less strongly about studying? Why? The participants chose a code name so that they could protect their anonymity and so that the researcher could match the first and the second questionnaires.

The interviews were conducted during the second weeks of the fall and the winter terms of 2003. In the questionnaire, the participants, if they were willing to participate in the follow-up interview, were asked to provide their e-mail addresses. Subsequently, the researcher contacted the willing participants and interviewed them. The interview was tape-recorded and took approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. The interviews were conducted so that the participants could elaborate their questionnaire responses and the researcher could verify her interpretations of their responses to increase the content validity of the analysis. Fewer students took part in this study during the second stage because some students discontinued their study of the target language, which shows that attrition had already taken place at this point. The interval between the first stage and the second stage was approximately four months. The qualitative analysis

was performed based on the contents of the participants' responses in the questionnaire and the interview.

Results

Initial Motivation Factors of LTCL Students

The participants' responses to the questions, "What is the main reason you take this language class?" and "What made you take this language class rather than other language classes?" are summarized in Table 3. The first question asked in the questionnaire may have been somewhat narrow because the students often take language courses for more than one main reason. Most participants actually listed multiple reasons in their responses. They also elaborated their responses in great detail in the interviews. Additionally, many participants' responses to these two questions, "What is the main reason you take this language class?" and "What made you take this language class rather than other language classes?" overlapped in both the questionnaire and the interviews. In order to avoid redundancy, their responses are presented in one table. Even though each participant answered the open-ended questions in their own unique way, several common themes emerged from their responses. Two asterisks indicate that the response is from 50% or more participants. One asterisk refers to the responses that came from 25% or more participants. Other comments are from less than 25% of the participants. The actual numbers of the frequencies are shown in parentheses.

Table 3:
Summary of Reasons for LTCL Study

Chinese learners (N=6)	Japanese learners (N=15)	Russian learners (N=13)
**My friends speak it. (3) ** I'm planning to visit the country. (5) ** It's useful for future employment. (4) *I wanted to study something unique. (2) *I want to speak with my family/relatives. (2) - I was interested in the characters (writing system). (1) - I am interested in the culture. (1)	** I wanted to study something unique. (13) ** I am interested in the culture. (14) * I'm planning to visit the country. (7) * It's useful for future employment. (6) * My friends speak it. (4) * I like the challenge. (6) - I have been to the country before. (1) - I was interested in the characters (writing system). (2) - It's similar to Chinese. (1)	** I wanted to study something unique. (11) * I'm planning to visit the country. (6) * I want to speak with my family/relatives. (5) - I was interested in the characters (writing system). (2) - My friends speak it. (1) - I like the challenge. (1) - I took it in high school. (1) - My friends are in the class. (1) - My advisor recommended it. (1)

“I Wanted to Study Something Unique.”
“I Like the Challenge.”

The majority of the students responded that they wanted to study something unique. Studying a “unique” language appears to reflect the students’ own self-perception. When asked why they wanted to study a “unique” language in the interview, most participants stated that the reason is because they perceive themselves as different from others. One student of Japanese said, “I’m just, I’m such a weirdo. Studying Japanese is definitely something to make me more non-typical—accepting that fact that I’m weird.” One student of Chinese said, “I’m usually different. I would say that I’m the different one in any group of twenty people.” These students seem to believe that being non-typical is a positive characteristic and studying a unique language complements their personalities.

Several students mentioned the challenge that accompanies studying a LCTL. One student of Japanese said, “I realized that it

was something rarer; something more exciting, you know. It was something exotic and interesting and a challenge, almost.” One student of Russian said, “I wanted something unique. I decided that Russian would be a nice, exotic language I never learned.” These students stated that they normally try to take challenging courses rather than easy courses regardless of a subject matter.

“My Friends Speak It.” “I’m Interested in the Culture.”

A desire to communicate with friends and cultural interests were also widely stated among participants. These integrative motivational factors were also dominant in Wen’s (1997), Ueno’s (2000), and Yang’s (2003) studies. Cultural interests were especially high among learners of Japanese. Many of these students had interest in specific elements of Japanese culture rather than the overall, general culture of Japan. One student of Japanese said, “I’ve been always, always interested in Japanese culture ever since when I was little. I’ve been watching *anime* ever since when I was ten years old.” Another student of Japanese said, “I have an interest in Japanese history; I’m very interested in feudal Japan, the medieval period.” This high personal interest among learners of Japanese is consistent with the findings of Yang (2003). Ueno (2000) also claims that students of Japanese tend to have specific cultural interests.

***“It’s Useful for Future Employment.”
“I’m Planning to Visit the Country.”***

Future employment was especially prevalent among learners of Chinese and Japanese. Strong instrumental motivational factor among learners of Chinese was also apparent in Yang’s (2003) study. In Wen’s (1997) study, however, it did not emerge until the intermediate level. Students who mentioned future employment did not have a specific career plan, however. They said that studying the target language would help them get a better job, but none of them knew how they wanted to utilize their language skills in their future employment. This does not correspond to Ueno’s (2000) finding, in which the stu-

dents had specific career plans using Japanese. It may be that specific career plans arise at a later stage of the learners' language study as the participants in Ueno's study were students of intermediate-level language classes.

A desire to travel is also considered as instrumental in this study. At the college where this study was conducted, a majority of the students participate in an overseas study experience for one term. Many of the participants stated that they would like to visit the target country because they heard about the positive experiences of other students who went to the country.

“I Want to Speak with My Family/Relatives.”

Many students of Chinese and Russian stated that their heritage was a strong motivating factor for their decision to study the target language. It is noteworthy that heritage was listed as a strong motivational factor despite the limited diversity of the student population of this research setting. The research setting for this study is a small liberal-arts college with approximately 2,000 students. The majority of the students in this college are Caucasian. This characteristic of the research site may explain why none of the learners of Japanese mentioned heritage as a reason for studying Japanese. This finding is, however, consistent with Yang's (2003) study, in which heritage was a weaker motivation variable for Japanese learners than for Chinese and Korean learners. Further research is therefore recommended to examine the motivational factors of Japanese heritage learners.

Motivational Change Among LTCL Students

Table 4 shows the summary of the participants' responses to the questions, “How have your reasons to study this language changed over time, compared to the time when you first started to study it?” and “Compared to the very first time you started to study this language, do you feel more/less strongly about studying? Why?” For the first question in the questionnaire, the majority of the participants responded that their reasons remained the same as before.

They elaborated their responses, however, in the follow-up interviews. Many participants' responses to these two questions, "How have your reasons to study this language changed over time, compared to the time when you first started to study it?" and "Compared to the very first time you started to study this language, do you feel more/less strongly about studying? Why?" overlapped in both the questionnaire and the interviews. In order to avoid redundancy, their responses are presented in one table. Two asterisks indicate that the response is from 50% or more participants. One asterisk refers to the responses that came from 25% or more participants. Other comments are from less than 25% of the participants. The actual numbers of the frequencies are shown in parentheses.

Table 4:
Motivational Change among LTCL Students

Chinese learners (N=6)	Japanese learners (N=12)	Russian learners (N=6)
** The reasons remained the same. (6)	** The reasons remained the same. (11)	** The reasons remained the same. (6)
** I feel more strongly. (6)	** I feel more strongly. (10)	** I feel more strongly. (5)
** I enjoy the language more because of my accomplishment. (6)	** I enjoy the language more because of my accomplishment. (10)	* I enjoy the language more because of my accomplishment. (2)
* I decided to study abroad. (2)	* I want to study more because the class is more challenging. (5)	* I want to study more because the class is more challenging. (2)
- I now have a specific career plan. (1)	- I decided to study abroad. (1)	- I decided to study abroad. (1)
	- I now have a specific career plan. (1)	- I feel less strongly. (1)
	- I decided to minor in Japanese. (1)	- I study less because I know how the class is run. (1)
	- I want to be more cultured. (1)	
	- I feel less strongly. (1)	
	- I want to study less because the class is getting more challenging. (1)	

“I Feel More Strongly.”

“I Enjoy the Language More because of My Accomplishment.”

The majority of participants answered that they feel more strongly about studying the language, or rather, they enjoy studying it because they feel that they have accomplished something by studying it. The students' responses suggest that they have started to develop intrinsic motivation at stage two. Intrinsic motivation is by definition self-sustaining because the motivation comes from the subjective rewards such as enjoyment and satisfaction that arise naturally from engagement in the learning task or activity (Ushioda, 1996). One student of Japanese, for instance, said, “I think last term I had trouble trying to get to understand the language and everything, but this term I don't know, maybe it's the teacher, but I get it better. It's not that the material is easier, but I understand it more. So before, it was just so I could go to Japan, but now I kind of like the language and I like learning it.” This learner started to study Japanese because she wanted to go to Japan. Her extrinsic motivation has become intrinsic at stage two, when she began to enjoy learning the language itself. What triggered her enjoyment was her sense of accomplishment—understanding the course materials better.

The development of intrinsic motivation does not necessarily mean that the learners' initial motivational factors have faded. Rather, it is added to their overall motivational thinking and becomes a crucial drive for their language learning. A student of Chinese said, “Now I feel like I wanna continue just for me, like not so much because, you know, it is wonderful that I can speak Chinese with my best friend but I wanna learn it for me because I feel a pretty big accomplishment to be able to speak Chinese.” This student clearly expressed how she wants to study Chinese mainly for herself though she still enjoys the benefit of being able to speak to her friend in Chinese.

What triggered this change for many students is a sense of accomplishment. It is important to note here, however, that their sense of accomplishment is not perceived due to the impact of an external factor, such as their course grades or good scores on tests.

Rather, it results from a feeling of understanding or attainment. One student of Japanese said, "One day, I was like watching a drama, a Japanese drama, and then I actually found one sentence, I, I totally understood a full sentence. I was like 'Oh my goodness!' I realized that I know more now. It motivated me. That's why I want to keep learning." Thus, the students' accomplishment is something personally meaningful to them that is developed internally in their learning experience.

"I Want to Study More because the Class is More Challenging."

Several students stated that they want to learn even more because of the challenge of the class. They actually enjoy the challenge and gain satisfaction through overcoming it. The enjoyment of facing a challenge seems to be an intrinsic motivational factor, and a sense of accomplishment, i.e., conquering the challenge, plays a significant role in this regard as well.

"I Decided to Study Abroad."

"I Decided to Minor in Japanese."

Some students made a short-term plan or goal at stage two. Their sense of accomplishment seems to be closely related to their decisions. For example, even though study abroad was already a prevalent motivational factor at stage one, the students at stage two said that they made a definite decision about this because they felt that they could survive in the target country with the language skills that they had acquired.

"I Now Have a Specific Career Plan."

"I Want to Become Cultured."

At stage two, some students seem to have discovered how learning the target language would fit into their lives beyond just academic achievement. In the interview, they talked about establishing

long-term goals using the target language and shaping their personal philosophy around learning the target language. One student of Chinese said, "I never thought of a possibility until after the last term, but I decided it since I knew what I like. I knew I really like to learn the language and stuff, like East Asian history or culture, and I know that I love to teach. So I decided that I wanna become a college professor." One student of Japanese said, "I realized just how more reasonable it is to learn a language to become more cultured and experienced in today's society. I mean, I still want to go to Japan just as much as I wanted to back then and I'd love to become fluent, but I put it into a more realistic perspective. My interest has been applied to how the world works now." It is evident from these responses that their motivational thinking has moved to a different level at stage two compared to stage one. Language learning has become personally meaningful to them.

Discussion

Initial Reasons to Study LCTL's

This study shows that one of the dominant initial motivational factors of the students of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian is a desire to study a different or uncommon language. This finding is consistent with Ueno's (2000) previous qualitative study. This variable normally does not appear in surveys or questionnaires used as instruments in L2/FL quantitative motivation research. It is fair to say that it is a motivational factor unique to the learners of LCTL's. This study also found that these students regard themselves as atypical or different from others, and they enjoy being different.

Another unique motivational factor in this study is the learners' desire to study a challenging language. Their preference for challenge is not consistent with Wen's (1997) finding, in which the participants decided to study Chinese because Chinese classes were less demanding. The participants in Wen's study, however, were Asian or Asian American students. Students with no Asian backgrounds may hold different views. Teachers and administrators may benefit from using approaches that take these learner characteristics into account

when recruiting students. They should also consider other factors, such as integrative and instrumental motivational factors, learners' heritage status (Chinese and Russian), and strong cultural interest (Japanese).

Importance of Learners' Sense of Accomplishment in Motivation Development

The data gleaned from the second stage suggests that learners have also developed intrinsic motivation. Their enjoyment of language learning seems to be derived from a sense of accomplishment, such as understanding the materials better, being able to speak with their friends in the target language, or understanding a scene from a movie or a TV drama in the target language. This sense of accomplishment appears to merge with their initial motivation and propels the students forward with a desire to continue studying the target language. This finding implies that the academic grades that the students receive from an external source (i.e., an instructor) may not always generate a sense of achievement. Ushioda (1996) also discusses that "students" perceptions of success in language learning, however, may not necessarily derive solely from performance outcomes measured in terms of academic grades or criteria (p. 32). Additionally, the students who continue to study the target language seem to develop attitudes towards language learning on a personal level. They have found ways to integrate their language learning into their personal lives and have modified their long-term goals and personal beliefs.

An internal perception of achievement or success may be particularly essential for learners of LCTL's. For native speakers of English, LCTL's are more challenging. According to the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) and Defense Language Institute, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean are classified as Category 4 languages, meaning that they take English-speaking students the longest to attain high levels of speaking proficiency. Category 4 languages are contrasted with Category 1 languages, which include languages such as Spanish and French. The FSI estimates that 1320 hours of instruction are necessary for students of Category 4 languages to achieve the same

proficiency level obtained in 480 hours of instruction in Category 1 languages (Jordan & Lambert, 1991; Walker, 1991). Due to the challenging nature of LCTLs, the sense of achievement may also be greater. The challenge, however, can also be intimidating. For example, the difficulty of learning Japanese has been demonstrated to provoke anxiety in many American students (Saito & Samimy, 1996). In this same vein, Samimy and Tabuse (1992) assert that learning LCTLs can induce strong negative affective reactions from students, which may hinder their learning motivation.

For students whose native language is English, learning a different character set or writing system alone can be very time-consuming and daunting. Even though the students who discontinued taking the target language could not be contacted, one of the participants talked about his experience of learning Chinese in high school when he explained the reason why he decided to take Russian in college. This student of Russian said, "I wanted something different. I did take a class in Chinese, I mean Mandarin, in high school, but I had poor handwriting so I didn't really grasp the concept of it. I had to quit. I had a lot of difficulty." If a sense of accomplishment can drive a student to keep learning the target language, a sense of failure can also discourage students from continuing on. Wen (1997) claims that when students first start learning Chinese, they may not be aware of the amount of time required to learn Chinese characters. One student of Japanese in this study also mentioned that she feels less strongly about studying Japanese because the class is getting more difficult. These students might have had expectations that did not necessarily involve an intense time commitment for achieving their learning goals. Without strong intrinsic motivation or a personal connection to learning the target language, they may not be willing to modify the values they perceive in studying.

All of the students who discontinued studying the target language listed a desire to study something unique as an initial reason to take the class. The tendency towards the unique might not have been strong enough to impel further study, especially when the language demands more time and effort. After all, studying LCTLs is not the only option these students have to become different from others. On the contrary, students may have quit due to something external, such

as course scheduling conflicts. The reasons of their discontinuance cannot be discussed beyond the level of speculation in this article. Future research is recommended to investigate the reasons why students decide not to continue studying LCTL's. Their decisions in relation to their motivational factors should also be studied. Additionally, students at a college with a foreign language requirement may have different motivational development and therefore may continue to study longer. Further analysis of the motivation of LCTL learners in schools with a foreign language requirement and its influence on attrition rates also need to be explored in the future.

Based on the findings of this study, however, a learner's sense of accomplishment appears to increase motivation and prompt the students to continue studying. Teachers and administrators will benefit from taking this element into consideration when trying to retain students in their programs.

Implications

Some pedagogical implications are made based on the results of this study. First, teachers should recognize the value of a learner's sense of success, which may not necessarily be related to their academic grades. This perceived success, or a sense of accomplishment, is indispensable for learners to shape their intrinsic motivation. With intrinsic motivation, learners are more likely to desire to continue studying the language because it brings them enjoyment. Ushioda (1996) also claims that "motivation that is intrinsic is by definition self-sustaining, since it is defined in terms of subjective rewards (enjoyment, satisfaction, feelings of success or competence, pride, etc.)." It is particularly critical for the students of LCTL's to develop intrinsic motivation because the challenge of studying these languages is likely to cause stress and anxiety to students. They may discontinue studying these languages more easily than students of more commonly taught languages if they are not willing or ready to make a commitment to deal with stress and anxiety. This may be the case especially for students who are not under institutional pressures, such as those exerted by a foreign language requirement. Even though a

learner's sense of accomplishment stems from the learner herself/himself, an instructor's positive feedback should also help them build their confidence, especially at the beginning level when it is more difficult for students to assess their own performance. It is also important to create a non-threatening learning environment to prevent the learners from being further discouraged by already existing stress and anxiety.

Second, teachers should help learners develop interest and take joy in studying a language by exposing them to the target culture and real-life communication. The attraction towards uncommon languages that the participants in this study expressed implies that they are open to learning new ideas and concepts. They may have greater potential to enjoy learning something different because many of them claim to be atypical. Their overall interest or curiosity towards something unique may gradually shift to something personally meaningful as they experience the target culture or successful communication in the target language. The target culture can be introduced through extracurricular activities, such as film nights, a cooking workshop, or field trips to historical monuments. In the classroom, the target culture can be incorporated through the use of authentic materials, such as TV commercials, scenes from a film, and magazines. Simply presenting students with authentic texts may not be sufficient to engage students' intrinsic motivation (Ushioda, 1996). Nonetheless, authentic materials offer opportunities to foster student interests and help them make a stronger association between language learning and the students' personal lives. Teachers can also integrate real-life communication experiences into their class by inviting native-speaker guests to the class or by having an electronic mail exchange project. Real-life experiences tend to have a crucial impact on learners' perceptions of their skills and communicative competence (Ushioda, 1996). Through these experiences, students can gain a feeling of success, and consequently their intrinsic motivation will be enhanced.

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8. Please write your e-mail address if I can contact you for a follow-up interview. The interview will take about 10 minutes.