

Motivation and the Self Access Center

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The learning situation at Chiba University regarding English classes could be said to be reasonably typical of that of other Universities in Japan where English is a required subject for graduation but not the focus of study. At the Center for Language Education in Chiba University, English is taught to a variety of majors whose English requirements for graduation can vary slightly with department policy. These students take classes in homogenous groups from each department in the first year. However, from the second year onward, there is no separation of departments and classes are a random mix of students from the university population. The eclectic nature of this mix of students is also evident in their motivation to be engaged in English. Not surprisingly, motivation to study a subject that might be perceived as secondary to their studies and nearly completely extrinsically necessitated is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Working with the student base, it is easy to observe a variety of extrinsic factors in action. The need for course credit is omnipresent, but other external pressures typically include achievement on standardized testing, overseas study requirements, and a perceived need to learn English in order to enhance post graduation employability and increase financial benefits. Such extrinsic motivational factors can be beneficial if the goals are tangible and attainable. In addition to motivational factors originating from outside pressures, students may also be influenced to varying degrees by intrinsic factors as can be seen below. Unfortunately, whatever the individual goals, students cannot be expected to reach their goals with only one or two 90-minute classes per week over one to three terms.

This report is an attempt to investigate some of the different needs and motivations of students and to suggest a support system that would work to enhance the learning environment at Chiba University outside the classroom. As mentioned above, student motivation is often dominated by extrinsic factors even though research suggests that intrinsic motivation, which is encouraged by autonomy, can be more beneficial to learning. It is hoped that by discerning the types of support needed by students outside the class, it may be possible to encourage students' autonomous development, and intrinsic motivation, to continue learning.

It is commonly thought that autonomous learning fosters motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, as people who are intrinsically motivated act of their own volition without pressure from external forces. This in turn may work towards more effective learning. Dickinson (1995) states that

“... there is substantial evidence from cognitive motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning, and perceiving that their learning successes or failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control.”

This raises two points. Firstly, success and increased motivation depend on learners being responsible for and controlling their own learning and secondly that perceived success can be attributed to their own efforts. With regard to the first point, Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed that intrinsic motivation, which is based on the core values of interest-excitement and enjoyment, is a construct experienced through autonomy or autonomy-supported learning. This type of motivation is said to be highly self-determined in that the action is done for some personal satisfaction. Deci and Ryan (1985) also state that self-determination, the capacity to choose and have choices free from outside pressures or drives, leads to intrinsic motivation and thus more effective learning. By controlling their learning, learners develop motivation patterns that lead to greater learning (Deci 1978, as cited in Benson 2001). However, as Deci (1985) notes, one must possess the skills to manipulate the elements of one's environment to be truly self-determining. The second point was that learning success depends on the learner understanding that his or her own efforts are the key to success. This is the essence of the attribution theory, which holds that learners' perceptions of successes and failures shape their future performance. Both the self-determination theory and attribution theory make a direct link between learner control and motivation (Benson 2001).

Extrinsic motivations, on the other hand, are those that seek a reward or end that is not linked to interest in the activity itself. Originally, self-determination was thought to be solely of an intrinsic nature but Deci and Ryan (1985), Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan (1991) proposed that there are varying types of extrinsic motivation, some of which are more self-determined than others. Vallerand et al. (1992) distinguished three levels of extrinsic motivation: external, introjected, and identified regulation. External regulation is behavior that is generated by reward or punishment, an exam-

ple being working for course credit (Noels, Clement & Pelletier 1999). This would seem to describe a typical scenario found in most required 1st year classes. Once the credit is awarded, motivation to continue studying ceases to exist. The second form of extrinsic motivation, introjected, is a response to some type of pressure that has been internalized. This could be feeling of guilt or a need for praise. The third level, identified regulation, is when an individual performs an activity because she views it as a worthy expenditure of time and effort (Deci and Ryan 1995 in Noels et al. 1999). The latter form, the most closely linked to self-determination, reasons that an individual participates in the activity because she sees value in performing it.

In their research on junior college students, Sumida, Nonaka and Seki (2010) found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are important to continuing foreign language growth. In his 2005 study, Hiromori (2006) showed that, in an L2 setting, the three aspects of self-determination theory: autonomy, or experience of self-determination; competence, or proving oneself capable of achievement; and relatedness, which is feeling connected and appreciated, could increase intrinsic motivation. This study also showed that learners with higher motivation required more autonomy while less motivated learners benefit particularly from feelings of competence and relatedness. To sum up, autonomy and feelings of competence and relatedness can increase motivation, which in turn, may improve foreign language learning.

However, even though autonomy may be generally seen as beneficial with regard to motivation of students, there is not always agreement on what is meant by autonomy. Benson (2001) defines it as “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning”. By capacity he means the ability to do something, combined with both the freedom and the desire to do it. Within the idea of “taking control”, Benson includes control over learning content, over learning management and over the cognitive processes involved in learning. Littlewood (1996) separates autonomy into the proactive, when learners have control of their own aims and goals, of the way in which they reach those goals and the evaluation of the achievement; and the reactive sense, in which learners can organize how they reach a goal which has been set by an outside force. Additionally, recent studies (Iyengar and Lepper 1999, Spratt et al. 2002, Hiromori 2006, Sumida et al. 2010) assert that culture can have an important role in successes and failures of learner autonomy. It is now argued that individual and collectivist societies react differently to this concept. Littlewood (as cited in Kojima 2006) proposes five generalizations with regard to autonomy in the East Asian context.

1. There is a higher level of reactive autonomy both in individuals and groups.
2. Groups will develop high levels of both reactive and proactive autonomy.
3. Experience with proactive autonomy will have been limited.
4. The capacity of East Asian learners for autonomy is no different than any other group.
5. The language classroom can help develop the capacity for autonomy.

As Littlewood says, there is no reason to suspect that East Asian learners cannot develop autonomy in the same way as any other learner despite the possibility that taking control of their own learning is not necessarily something that students have been equipped to deal with. The problem from the point of view of the teacher may be how to encourage students towards autonomy. Sanprasert (2010) found with his research on Thai University students that the development of learner autonomy depends first on the actions of the instructor. The teacher needs to focus on a student-centered learning environment. Rather than having students entirely dependent on the teacher for direction, teachers may play a variety of new roles and their goal in a learner-centered situation is to identify needs, interests, learning styles and strategies, conduct learner training and help develop independence (Kojima 2006). Perhaps in Japan, where it could be said that English language students are generally given tasks to achieve and told how to do them to varying degrees, the ability and desire for autonomy according to Benson's definition are present but there are very limited opportunities for "taking control" and for the freedom to do so.

Self-access centers and autonomy have a long-standing relationship. However, many SACs don't seem to have been constructed with any particular pedagogical rationale in mind (Benson 2001). Just having access to additional learning materials will not foster autonomous learning. In our situation, we hope to develop a center that fits the needs of our student population and that can be used to enhance student motivation by facilitating student autonomy.

Method

For the purposes of this study, students from both first year and mixed-year "intermediate" or "advanced"¹ English classes were surveyed. The four 1st year classes, total-

¹ In Chiba University the criteria for entering an intermediate class is either 500 TOIEC score for Intermediate 1 or 600 TOIEC score for Intermediate 2. The criteria for entering an "Advanced" class is 700 TOIEC score or to have completed an Intermediate 2 class.

ing 100 students, were from the faculties of technology (2 classes), horticulture and medicine, nursing and pharmacy. Of the 22 students in the two advanced classes, 12 were 1st year students with the remainder being: one student in the 2nd year, four in the 3rd year and four in the 4th year, as well as one Masters' degree student. Five intermediate classes comprising 114 students (87 first years, 18 second years, 6 third years and 3 fourth years) were also surveyed. In total, 199 of the 236 students surveyed were first year students. The aims of the survey were to find out the following: firstly, the importance of English to the students; secondly which aspect of English students would most like to improve; thirdly, whether students do any activities to try to improve their English outside of the classroom environment and finally, for what purposes and how often/when they may consider using a self-access centre. The survey was distributed in the form of a questionnaire in Japanese (see appendix). Its composition included two open-ended questions intended to find out the perceived importance of English in the student's field of study and then more specifically the importance to that particular student. The remainder of the questionnaire is predominantly a series of multiple answer sections.

Results

The first item on the questionnaire was an open question, "How important is English to you?" Being an open question, there were a huge variety of answers, almost all in Japanese. These were classified into those indicating that English is important or very important, such as "More important than my own subject", those indicating fair importance such as "yaya" or "sokosoko" and those indicating little importance such as "not very" or "not really". There were also classifications into more specific reasons why English is important. With regard to those who answered generally, there appears to be a difference between the answers from first year classes and intermediate or advanced classes. With both sets of students the most common answer was that English was very important, or words to that effect: 31% of first year class students and 25% of others replied in this way. However, a further 26% of students in ordinary first year classes said that English was not very or not important, whereas this percentage for intermediate and advanced students (in total) was around 8.5%.

Concerning those students whose answers were more specific with regard to reason, those who considered English as being very useful for the future or for communication accounted for around 13% and 22% respectively for intermediate/advanced students and around 12% and 7% of first year classes. Furthermore, 13% of the intermediate/advanced class students thought English was important in order to travel, work or

study abroad as opposed to only 8% of first year class students who considered only traveling abroad, not study or work. Furthermore, around 6% of students in the intermediate or advanced classes need English in order to enroll on a Masters course. Broadly speaking, 87% of intermediate/advanced students indicated that English was important as compared with 68% of first year class students.

Students were also asked which aspect of their English ability they would most like to improve. This part of the questionnaire was in the form of a list of nine aspects from which they could choose with no limit to the number of choices.

The results can be seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Aspects of English that students would most like to improve

	spoken interaction	presentation	pronunciation	writing	reading	listening	vocabulary	grammar	exam skills
1 st years 100 students	62	8	7	13	25	17	12	2	4
Intermediate 114 students	68	19	8	8	16	22	13	3	5
Advanced 22 students	16	5	2	3	0	2	3	1	2

N.B In these results, the total number of aspects that students would like to improve is greater than the number of students because in some cases students selected more than one aspect.

Not surprisingly, given the reasons why students think that English is important, the majority of students appear to want to improve their spoken interaction. 62% of first year students in first year English classes, around 60% of intermediate students and 73% of advanced students would like to improve their ability to converse. For first year classes, the second most important area for the students was reading with 25%, while listening was more important for intermediate students (19%) and presentations for advanced students (23%). For first year classes, listening was the third most popular choice at 17%. For both first year and intermediate classes the aspect that was chosen the fewest times was grammar while for advanced students no one prioritized reading.

Students were asked what they actually do outside of the classroom in order to help their English. All of the choices were theoretically easily available to the students with the possible exception of friends who speak English. As can be seen from Table 2, the most popular activities were listening to music for students in ordinary first year classes and intermediate classes and using books or magazines for those in advanced

classes. Music is arguably the most widely available, the most closely associated with everyday student life, and the most flexible activity with regard to time. This means that music could be regarded as involving the least effort among the choices while being enjoyable and having a high level of interest for the students. It would be interesting to investigate to what extent students listen with a focus on English and to what extent music actually does help to develop students' English but these questions were not covered in this survey.

Table 2 Question: What do you use outside of class to help you with your English?

	Internet	Music	Books mags.	Research	TV/radio	Friends	Nothing	Other	Total
1 st year	17	27	22	1	11	5	36	4	123
Intermediate	27	41	34	4	15	8	21	6 film	156
Advanced	10	9	11	2	5	2	1	2 lesson newspaper	42
	54	77	67	7	31	15	67	12	321

With regard to using a self-access center (SAC), it was found that the vast majority of students, 231 out of 236, had never used a self-access centre before, either because they had never found one or had never considered using one. The students were asked, if they were to use one, what the most convenient time would be for them. The most popular time was in students' free time in the afternoon (122 students). The second most popular was the evening (54) and the third, in the morning and on Saturday (27 each). The least popular time was lunchtime with only 6 students preferring this time.

The other questions regarding a self-access center were focused on the type of activity that students would consider doing and the frequency of their visits to a SAC.

Students were asked about the frequency with which they feel they would use the SAC. There were five choices: A) >1x a week², B) 1x a week, C) 1-3x a month, D) only if necessary, E) never. Students were asked to assign a frequency to each service the SAC might provide, for example, writing support or test preparation.

Table 3 shows the average number of SAC services the students answered A, B or C for i.e. that they would use once a month or more, the average number of D answers, i.e. that they would only use if they had to, and the average number of E answers i.e.

² This was unfortunately mistranslated from <1x week.

students say they would never use those services.

Table 3

	Average number of A, B or C answers per student	Average number of D answers per student	Average number of "would not use" answers per student
First year classes	2.9	7.7	3.8
Intermediate classes	3.1	6.1	2.2
Advanced classes	6.8	5.0	2.3

The final table show the different types of services that the SAC could offer, how many students said they would use them and with what frequency.

Table 4 Types of SAC usage and frequency.

	Would use 1+ / month (A, B & C)	Would use if necessary (D)	Total would use (A, B, C+D)	Would not use (E)
Writing support	71	92	163	27
Presentation help	68	111	179	27
Workshops	48	101	149	44
Test preparation	53	131	184	23
Guest speakers	48	81	129	56
Language practice	60	74	134	52
Reference materials	35	95	130	47
Checking out materials	35	117	152	46
Language advice	30	114	144	36
Specific language problems	32	125	157	31
Study abroad preparation	33	117	150	56
Global issues seminar	49	85	134	52
Casual conversation	97	71	168	30
Cultural events	44	94	138	50
Movies	83	74	157	41
Book club	44	66	110	79

As can be seen from Table 3, advanced students appear to be much more likely to use a SAC than either intermediate or students in first year classes. For these, stu-

dents the majority of answers were “if necessary”, i.e. if they had some kind of extrinsic motivation to visit the SAC.

From Table 4, it can also be seen that for almost every purpose, more students would use the SAC “if necessary” than by choice. In other words, if students had to use the SAC, they would do so but not otherwise. The two exceptions are using the SAC for “casual conversation” and for watching movies. Of all the sixteen suggested purposes for using the SAC, casual conversation was the most popular, which may be expected considering the results of the other questions. Around half of the advanced students, 20 of the intermediate students and 15 of the students in first year classes say they would come to the SAC once a week for conversation. Other productive skills, such as writing support and presentation help, were also relatively popular with 11 and 13 advanced students respectively saying they would go to the SAC at least once a month for these reasons, as would 32 and 35 intermediate students and 28 and 20 students in first year classes. With regard to the most popular uses by student type, for first year classes, the most popular use of the SAC was watching movies (37 people would go at least once a month) and the second most popular was conversation (35 people). For intermediate students, the most popular was conversation (45 people) followed by presentation help (35) and for advanced students the same with 17 and 13 people respectively willing to go at least once a month.

If reasons for going to the SAC were tentatively grouped into intrinsically and extrinsically motivated reasons, extrinsically motivated reasons could include the following: presentation speech support, test preparation and study abroad preparation, which have clear goals that are set by external forces, and writing support, language practice, language advice, use of reference materials and specific language problems, which could involve goals set by the student as a result of a self-identified need or possibly goals set by a teacher, for example an essay assignment. The total number of times that students said they would use a SAC for these reasons was 1241.

Intrinsically motivated reasons could include workshops, guest speakers, global issues seminars, casual conversation, cultural events, movies and book club. Students said a total of 985 times that they would visit a SAC for these reasons.

Discussion

As stated above, it is hoped that students can be encouraged towards autonomy and intrinsic motivation and thus helped to develop their language skills by investigating what motivates them at present and discerning how they might best be helped to work

towards taking more control of their learning.

This could possibly be done through identified extrinsic motivation in which students see a value in doing an activity. This could be something like using reference materials in order to write a better essay or asking for advice from a teacher on how to improve a presentation. From then, students could be encouraged by teachers to work towards reactive intrinsic motivation; for example a student's homework might be to ask himself relevant questions about an issue and find the answers. The student would then decide on his own questions and how to find the answers. Finally, a student may be encouraged by her success to branch out and decide for herself what her needs or interests are and how best she can fulfill them (proactive intrinsic motivation).

To meet this end, a well-functioning SAC could be an essential tool; however, there seems to be a few issues that would need to be addressed. First, students would need to be more cognizant of how a SAC can support their needs. This would seem self-evident with only 5 of 236 students stating that they have actually used a self-access center before. According to the results of the survey, apart from conversation practice and watching movies, a majority of students would, for all other reasons given, only visit the SAC "if necessary." This result should not be surprising as many of the reasons are based specific necessities such as writing support or overseas study preparation. This factor coupled together with a lack of conceptual knowledge a SAC and the typical lack of motivation from students would garner such results. It is encouraging to note that students with intermediate and advanced language skills seem more likely to visit the SAC for intrinsic reasons but then students in these classes have chosen to take that particular class.

The SAC should be able to assist with all these aspects of learning so that the students have not only the desire to do a task but someone on hand to help them to develop their ability to achieve their tasks. Teachers are not always able to deal with each student individually so to have staff at the SAC to guide or to listen to students would be helpful. In addition, all the necessary equipment should be available so that students have the freedom to achieve their goals.

From the results of the survey it could be seen that advanced students were also more likely to visit a SAC than other students. General first year class students appear to be less motivated to work outside the classroom than intermediate or advanced

students as 36% of them said they did nothing extra to improve their English and fewer of them would be willing to take advantage of any language activities in a SAC. This may be for a number of reasons including time pressures. However, the most common “first year” reasons for visiting a SAC were watching films and conversation. These are most likely intrinsically motivated and should be encouraged and facilitated. A further point is that activities which students cannot do by themselves were popular reasons for going to a SAC, especially with intermediate and advanced students; i.e. working on productive skills and making use of specialist knowledge. Thus facilities such as a film library, specific expertise such as the ability to help students who wish to study abroad and opportunities for conversation with English speakers should be provided and at a time most convenient for the students, i.e. in the afternoon or after the fifth period.

However, just having facilities available is not enough. Clearly the SAC must be well-publicized so that students are aware of its range of facilities. Additionally, students may need more in-class encouragement to become more autonomous. As the research indicates, autonomy in learning typically needs to be cultivated and guided. As Dornyei and Otto wrote (1998), “motivation is not a static state but rather a dynamically evolving and changing entity.” The importance of the language instructor is thus, to encourage gradually increasing levels of autonomy and provide opportunities to enable it. This could possibly be done via assignments that work through reactive intrinsic motivation. The role of the SAC would then be to provide support materials for coursework in this case. Gilles (2007) in his research on SACs noted that the SAC does not have the same appeal for extrinsically motivated students. Thus he calls for a stronger reactive link between the classroom and the SAC. If teachers provide the opportunity for more student-determined work, for example setting a homework task that needs students to think about how to achieve it, students would be able to use the SAC rather than relying on the textbook or on unreliable internet searches. For students who are more teacher-dependent, the teacher or SAC staff could help students to identify their own gaps in their knowledge or skills, for example how to discern whether information on a website is reliable, and guide the student towards a workable solution. On this point, student counselors, who were regularly and frequently available would be helpful in order to sit down with students and coax them towards developing their own English in the way that they want. This is because if a student is advised to do a task, the student often does not take the advice, but if the student suggests an activity himself in the course of conversation, that activity is more likely to be done. In other words, students make more effort if they determine by themselves what

that effort should be.

To sum up, encouraging autonomy, motivation and learning development is an issue for the teacher, the student, advisors and the university body in charge of facilities. To begin with especially, the student cannot be expected to suddenly adopt an autonomous attitude but needs to be helped towards the goal of gaining control of his own learning.

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Appendix

学年 1 2 3 4 大学院

学部 _____

あなたの専攻では英語がどの程度重要ですか。

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あなた自身にとって英語はどの程度重要ですか。

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以下のうち、最も伸ばしたいスキルはどれですか。

<input type="checkbox"/> 会話	<input type="checkbox"/> プレゼンテーション	<input type="checkbox"/> 発音
<input type="checkbox"/> ライティング	<input type="checkbox"/> リーディング	<input type="checkbox"/> リスニング
<input type="checkbox"/> 語彙	<input type="checkbox"/> 文法	<input type="checkbox"/> 英語関連試験対策

英語力を伸ばすために、授業以外では何を利用していますか。

<input type="checkbox"/> インターネット	<input type="checkbox"/> 本・雑誌	<input type="checkbox"/> TV・ラジオ
<input type="checkbox"/> 音楽	<input type="checkbox"/> 情報収集	<input type="checkbox"/> 英語が話せる友人
<input type="checkbox"/> 何もしない	<input type="checkbox"/> その他	

これまでに英語の授業を聴講したことはありますか。 はい いいえ

これまでに英語学習のためのセルフアクセスセンター（自律学習センター）を利用したことがありますか。

はい（いつ／どこで／何のために）

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いいえ（その理由）

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千葉大学に英語学習のためのセルフアクセスセンターがあり以下のサポートが受けられるとしたら、どの程度利用すると思いますか。A～Eの記号で記入してください。

A＝週1回以下 B＝週1回 C＝月1～3回 D＝必要なときだけ
E＝利用しない

	ライティング・サポート		学習方法に関するアドバイス
	プレゼン&スピーチ・サポート		英語に関して個人的な質問 例 旅行のための会話 友人宅へ招待された時の準備
	英語でのワークショップ 例 スライドショー インターネット教材 発音練習ソフト		海外留学準備 例 短期留学／卒業後
	試験対策		グローバルな諸問題に関するセミナー
	ゲストスピーカー		会話
	自習		文化的イベント
	参考教材		映画鑑賞
	教材の貸し出し		読書クラブ
	その他（具体的に）		

上で利用すると思うと選択したサポートのうち、1～2個選択し、その理由を記入してください。

上記のサポートを利用するとしたら、いつ最も利用すると思いますか。(ひとつだけ選択)

- 午前中の空き時間 午後の空き時間 土曜日
 昼休み 5限後

その他自由コメント