"Sometimes I just want to know more. I'm always trying.": The Role of Interest in Sustaining Motivation for Self-directed Learning

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Abstract

As part of a four-year longitudinal study, the researchers investigate how learners of English at a university in Japan sustain their motivation to engage in self-directed study outside of class. Interview data are analysed drawing on the theoretical models of the self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone, 2009; Sansone & Thoman, 2005) and research in the area of interest development (Hidi & Renninger, 2006). Results show that participants have goals-defined motivation, experience defined motivation or a combination of the two. Different phases of participants' development of interest are also evident in the case study data.

1 Introduction

The focus of this article is on how learners of English in a university in Japan sustain and regulate their motivation to continue directing their own language learning outside of class. The authors present some results from the first two years of a longitudinal study which will follow nine learners through their four-year undergraduate degree and beyond. Although regulation of motivation is important for language learning in general, it is particularly crucial for independent language learners where students are either studying language by distance or outside the classroom, for example in a self-access centre (Hurd, 2008). There have been relatively few studies of motivation in such learners, and further research in settings that can be described as examples of "learning beyond the classroom" is needed (Benson & Reinders, 2011).

The purpose of the longitudinal study is to see how language learners working outside the classroom are able to maintain their motivation over time. The research question has remained the same throughout the study: "How do learners maintain their motivation for learning English outside the classroom?" The first phase of the study involved the analysis of 89 students' weekly reflective language learning journals over two eight-week periods (McLoughlin & Mynard, 2015). Particular attention was paid to the participants' weekly written responses to the question which asked "How was your motivation this week? Why?" followed by a rating scale (1 2 3 4 5). The analysis revealed that many factors influenced the students' motivation, but the importance of *interest* in addition to goals became very clear. Regulating their levels of engagement and interest was a key factor in

helping learners maintain their motivation. Nine of the original participants agreed to be interviewed each year of the study. In the present article, the authors first describe findings from interviews with all nine participants in their first year. In addition, data for the three of the participants who were interviewed in Year 2 will be discussed as separate case studies in order to explore their experiences in more depth. The self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone, 2009; Sansone & Thoman, 2005) and Hidi and Renninger's (2006) model of interest development are used as theoretical frameworks.

2   Literature review

2.1   Self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model

As mentioned in the previous section, McLoughlin and Mynard (2015) found that students were regulating their motivation. Motivation, rather than being stable, varies over time and across situations. Furthermore, dimensions of motivation, such as the quantity of motivation or the direction of motivation, can be intentionally regulated by an individual (Sansone & Thoman, 2006). This self-regulation is particularly important in self-directed learning contexts. As Sansone, Fraughton, Zachary, Butner, and Heiner (2011) point out, in the context of learning online, when students can control what, when, where, and how they learn, the question of how to sustain motivation becomes crucial. Self-regulated learning can be understood as a process (or set of processes) in which individuals activate *and sustain* cognitive, affective, motivational, and behavioral states that are oriented toward achieving particular goals (Zimmerman, 2000). Characteristics of effective self-regulated learners include: setting good learning goals; using effective learning strategies; monitoring progress toward their goals; seeking help when necessary; persistence; and setting new, more effective, goals after meeting previous goals (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2009).

Typically, models of self-regulation focus on motivation *solely* in terms of goals (Hidi & Ainley, 2009; Sansone & Thoman, 2006). For example, expectancy-value models consider individuals' expectations of achieving goals and how much they value their goals (Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2010; Sansone, Smith, Thoman, & MacNamara, 2012). As shown in McLoughlin and Mynard (2015), however, there are different ways in which self-directed learners maintain their motivation, namely through regulating the experience of interest as well as regulating goal-focused behaviour. The self-regulation of motivation (SRM) model (Sansone & Thoman, 2005, 2006) integrates these different types of motivation into one self-regulatory process and is therefore a useful framework for the study described in this chapter.

The SRM model, as the name suggests, has at its core the idea that regulation of motivation, not just of cognition and behaviour, is an important regulatory task (Sansone et al., 2011). In this model, it is not simply the level of motivation at the onset of learning, but the type of motivation, that must be considered. This is because what initially motivates students might not remain the same (Sansone et al., 2011). The SRM model distinguishes between *goals-defined* motivation and *experience-defined* motivation (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). *Goals-defined* motivation (Sansone, 2009; Sansone & Thoman, 2005, 2006) is motivation oriented towards the achievement of particular goals and includes behaviours such as setting goals, choosing appropriate strategies to meet those goals, and evaluating progress towards those goals. A distinction can be made between *target goals*, which reflect the *what* of activity engagement (completion of task, high scores in a test) and *purpose goals*, which reflect the *why* (to achieve, to enjoy; Sansone, 2009). However, the ability to persist with learning may depend not only on goals-defined motivation, but also on *experience-defined* motivation (Sansone, 2009; Sansone et al., 2012). This is motivation that arises from enjoying and being interested in the experience of learning itself. It was this type of motivation which McLoughlin and Mynard (2015) found played an important role in helping some learners maintain their motivation to continue their course of self-directed learning. The concepts of goals-defined and experience-defined motivation overlap to some extent with the concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. What we term extrinsic motivation is when "goals are defined in terms of reaching some outcome

as the result of engagement, rather than in terms of engagement as its own end" (Sansone & Thoman, 2006, p. 1698), while what we term intrinsic motivation is the motivation associated with the experience of learning itself. The terms goal-defined and experience-defined motivation are used "to highlight the relative roles of these two kinds of motivations *within a single self-regulatory process* [emphasis added]" (Sansone & Thoman, 2006, p. 1700).

As the above quotation indicates, in the SRM model, there is an interplay between goals-defined motivation and experience-defined motivation (the experience of interest). An individual's actions may be oriented in the same or opposite directions by the two types of motivation (Sansone & Thoman, 2006). For example, a learner who has strong goals-defined motivation may also be interested in the tasks and activities designed to reach her goals, so experience-defined motivation and goals-defined motivation can be described as being complementary. In other words, both forms of motivation will orient the learner's actions in the same direction. If the tasks are uninteresting, however, the learner's experience-defined motivation will lead her toward quitting, unless there are other reasons to continue, such as goals, personal values, or extrinsic rewards or punishments (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). The SRM model suggests that if goals-defined motivation is present and is sufficiently strong, "it may overcome the conflicting urge to quit that is created by the lack of interest" (Sansone & Thoman, 2006, p. 1705).

Therefore, although short-term goals may be enough to initiate learning behaviour, "when goals are no longer firm or require choices among multiple options" (Hidi & Ainley, 2009, p. 83), the presence of interest may be necessary for goal-directed action to continue. Over the longer term, for sustained long-term engagement to occur, both goals-defined and experience-defined motivation are necessary (Sansone et. al, 2012). In the SRM model, as part of the self-regulation process, learners can use strategies that help them regulate both their goals-defined motivation and experience-defined motivation (Sansone, 2009). For example, they can regulate goals-defined motivation by employing strategies that enhance their motivation to reach a goal, such as focusing on the consequences of their behaviour by administering their own rewards for completion of goals or engaging in goal-oriented self-talk to keep themselves on track (Wolters, 2003). In addition, learners can use strategies to regulate their experience-defined motivation. Learners can change how they perform tasks so that they become more interesting (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). For instance, learners can alter some aspect of a task to make it more challenging, or they can try to make studying more like a game (Wolters, 2003). While strategies that make learning more interesting may have the negative effect of diverting learners from their goal and lowering performance, in the long run, they may lead to greater persistence and ultimately improved performance (Sansone, Weir, Harpster, & Morgan, 1992; Sansone, Wiebe, & Morgan, 1999).

2.2   Interest

When talking about experience-defined motivation, what is meant is the level of engagement and interest an individual has in the learning experience. Interest has been defined as a basic, positive emotion (Sansone et al., 2012), made up of interacting affective and cognitive components (Hidi & Ainley, 2009), a characteristic that distinguishes it from other positive emotions like happiness (Sansone et al., 2012). Interest causes individuals to choose and initiate an activity, persist in that activity, and reengage in the same (or a similar) activity in the future (Sansone et al., 2012). Interested learners study more, read more deeply, persist longer, remember more, and get higher grades (Silvia, 2008). Moreover, interest is not only important, because it can lead to better performance and achievement, but in its own right, as "essential with respect to adjustment and happiness in life" (Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2011, p. 43). Researchers distinguish between two types of interest: *situational interest* and *individual interest* (Hidi, 1990). Situational interest refers to the psychological state that is triggered by a specific stimulus (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002). Individual interest refers to one's relatively enduring predisposition to reengage with particular content(s) (Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004), and is "associated with a psychological state of positive affect and persistence" (Ainley et al., 2002, p. 545). How do "momentary experiences of interest" (Sansone &

Thoman, 2005, p. 177) lead to individual interests? In other words, how do traits come from states (Silvia, 2001)? The experience of situational interest sparks exploration, which can lead to a broadening of experience and an increase in knowledge about the object of interest (Fredrickson, 1998). This may lead to an increase in knowledge, which in turn leads to greater competence with its attendant positive affect, which in its turn leads to an increase in perceived value, thus motivating further interest, engagement, and learning (Harackiewicz & Hulleman, 2011).

Hidi & Renninger (2006) propose that there are phases of interest development, going from situational interest to individual interest, beginning with external input before becoming the result of self-generated processes. Phase 1 is *Triggered Situational Interest.* In this phase, interest is triggered by an external stimulus and tends to be externally supported. It involves focused attention and an affective reaction that tends to be positive, such as excitement or pleasure. If the initial interest is supported, it can progress into Phase 2, *Maintained Situational Interest.* This phase is also characterised by focused attention, which now lasts longer. Once again, interest is usually externally supported, through interaction with others, for example. If situational interest is to develop into individual interest, the affective reaction during this phase should be wholly or predominantly positive (allowing for occasional negative affect such as temporary frustration).

Phase 2 is a precursor for Phase 3, *Emergent Individual Interest.* This phase shows the first signs of an enduring dispositional interest marked by continued efforts to seek out further engagements with a particular topic or content area. During this phase, we see the beginnings of self-generated interest and emerging self-regulation. Interest becomes more stable during this phase, knowledge accumulates, and the learner assigns greater value to that knowledge. Phase 4, *Well-Developed Individual Interest*, witnesses increased self-regulation and greater self-reflection. Knowledge and value increase beyond the levels evident in Phase 3. Interest is largely self-generated, although for this phase to be maintained, some external support may still be necessary. In this article, the authors will explore interest development as well as motivation orientation of learners in their study.

3   Context

3.1   Self-access learning

The context of the study is the Self-Access Learning Center ("The SALC") at a small private university in Japan specialising in languages and cultures. The SALC was established in 2001 and its purpose is to promote language learner autonomy by providing spaces, facilities, materials and support for both English language study and English language use. The SALC supports ubiquitous learning by promoting and supporting language learning outside the classroom. There are various forms of support available to students including a language advising service provided by a team of professional learning advisors (LAs). An LA has a language teaching background, but is a specialist in facilitating one-to-one dialogue with students outside the classroom in (Kato & Mynard, 2015). Whereas the classroom teacher normally has the responsibility of ensuring that the students taking the course achieve curriculum goals, the LA can help the learner to identify and pursue personally relevant learning opportunities not necessarily linked to the curriculum.

3.2   Self-directed learning modules

To further support students and prepare them for self-study outside the classroom, the SALC has offered optional self-directed learning "modules" since 2003. The modules were first offered, because students were unable to direct their learning outside of the classroom, as they had had no prior experience in doing so. A needs analysis and curriculum renewal process conducted from 2011 to 2013 indicated students still needed considerable support in managing their self-directed learning (Takahashi, Mynard, Noguchi, Sakai, Thornton, & Yamaguchi, 2013; Thornton, 2012, 2013). The modules promote ubiquitous learning, as they provide a structure for integrating self-directed study into one's everyday life (Kato & Yamashita, 2013). The modules remain popular and around 300

students take them each year. Students not only benefit from learning about how to learn languages effectively and manage their learning (Curry, Mynard, Noguchi, & Watkins, 2017), they are able to benefit from knowing how to use the SALC. In addition, the requirement to submit weekly reflections helps them to manage their time and stay motivated and focused (McLoughlin & Mynard, 2015; Mynard, 2012).

At the time of the study, the Effective Learning Modules (ELM) were eight-week self-paced courses designed to help students to learn about being a self-directed learner, set language-related goals, and implement a course of study with support from an LA. Students can choose a paper, an online, or a blended version of the module to make it convenient. ELM 1 is the introductory module which contains four input units, before learners design and implement their own plans for four weeks (illustrated in Table 1). ELM 2 begins with learners designing their own plans and implementing them for the entire duration of the module (see Table 2). The modules were originally incentivised with points (maximum 10) that were added onto a student's final class grade. Students do much of the module work in the SALC, where they have access to resources and a community of English language users, but students can choose where and when to complete the module. Another popular place for completing some module work is on public transportation, as many students travel more than two hours each day from home to the university. Most students choose to complete the work in handwritten form, then physically submit their module pack each week to their advisor in order to receive feedback.

Table 1. Overview of effective learning module 1

Timeframe	Content	Support from LAs
Weeks 1-4	Four input units to introduce learners to the concepts of goal-setting, strategies, resources and making a learning plan. Weekly written reflections submitted to LAs.	2 workshops. Weekly written comments. Optional individual advising sessions on request.
Weeks 5-8	Implementation of learning plans. Details, documentation and weekly written reflections submitted to LAs.	Weekly written comments. Optional individual advising sessions on request.
After completion	Final report and documentation submitted to LAs.	Final written feedback. Optional individual advising sessions on request. Evaluation using a rubric.

Table 2. Overview of effective learning module 2

Timeframe	Content	Support from LAs
Week 1	Make a learning plan. Discuss the plan with an LA.	1 workshop. 1 individual advising session.
Weeks 2-8	Implementation of learning plans. Details, documentation and weekly written reflections submitted to LAs. Attend advising sessions.	Weekly written comments. At least 2 individual advising sessions.
After completion	Final report and documentation submitted to LAs.	Final written feedback. Optional individual advising sessions on request. Evaluation using a rubric.

4   Methodology

4.1   *Focus of the research*

As the research will span four or more years and papers will be published at key stages, a brief overview of the project is provided in Table 3 in order to situate the research in the present paper (Phase 2 in Years 1 and 2).

Table 3. Overview of the overall research project

Phase 1	Phase 2			
April 2014 to March 2015	***November 2014 to January 2015 (year 1)**	***November 2015 to January 2016 (year 2)**	**November 2016 to January 2017 (year 3)**	**November 2017 to January 2018 (year 4)**
Analysis of 89 weekly reflective journals in ELM 1 and ELM 2.	Interviews with nine participant volunteers who completed ELM 1 and were completing ELM 2.	Interviews with five of the original nine participants.	Interviews with as many of the original nine participants as possible.	Interviews with as many of the original nine participants as possible.

* The present research

The research question for Phase 2 is: How did the learners generate and maintain motivation for learning English outside the classroom? This question is being investigated through semi-structured interviews held near the end of each academic year, a process which will continue for four years.

The study is a multiple case study which is longitudinal in nature and falls within an interpretative paradigm (Hatch, 2002). It aims to understand the motivation orientation and interest development of the individual participants over time. It adopts qualitative approaches to data collection

drawing on well-established models from the psychology of motivation that are little known or used in applied linguistics, but appropriate for understanding the role of interest.

4.2 Participants

In the second phase of the study, there are nine participants, three males and six females. All of them had participated in Phase 1 and completed two modules in their first year. They were selected, as they responded to an email invitation sent to everyone who was nearing completion of their second module. The email invited them to be interviewed each year about their motivation. All but one of the participants is Japanese and one is Chinese. All of them are majoring in English.

4.3 Methods

Annual semi-structured interviews were deemed the most appropriate method, as the participants were no longer taking modules and asking them to keep reflective journals would have been too inconvenient. Each interview was conducted in English by one of the researchers (the same researcher for all of the interviews in the study). They were conducted in a private advising room in the SALC and lasted around 30 minutes. The participants were told that the researchers were interested in how they sustained their motivation for self-directed study. As *interest*, in addition to goals, had appeared as a significant feature of sustained motivation in the written reflective journals in Phase 1, the interviews probed the role of interest and/or goals in the participants' learning. All of the interviews in the first year included questions designed to understand how participants maintained their motivation for doing two consecutive modules, even though they were already very busy with their required coursework. Questions included the following, but the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed for responses and follow-up questions to be tailored to the individual participant (Hatch, 2002):

1) Why did you decide to take a second module?
2) Does your motivation ever drop? What do you do in that case?
3) How do you think you will continue to study English (outside the classroom)?

In the second year of the study, all of the nine interviewees were contacted again. None of them continued to take modules (which were by now non-credit bearing). Due to personal circumstances, only three of the participants were available to be interviewed face-to-face, and two others participated in extended email exchanges instead, as they were studying abroad or too busy at the time. Only the data from participants who were interviewed face to face will be shared as case studies in this chapter. It is anticipated that, in subsequent years, more students will be available for interviews; nevertheless, as the researchers are taking a multiple case study approach for Phase 2 of the research, this is not a severe limitation. Interviewees were told in advance via email that they would be asked questions such as the following:

1) Do you do any independent English study (apart from homework)? Why / Why not?
2) How do you study?
3) How do you think you will continue to study English (outside the classroom)?

The interview roughly followed these questions, ensuring enough detail was obtained about whether/how the participants engaged in self-directed learning and what they did to sustain their learning, ensuring opportunities for them to discuss the roles of both goals and interest (if relevant) without being leading.

The recordings and transcripts were analysed by the two researchers discussing it together and identifying elements from the theoretical frameworks which best fitted the ways in which the participants described their motivation and self-regulatory behaviours.

5   Results and discussion

5.1   Summary

The initial analysis allowed the researchers to examine and present evidence as to whether participants had experience-defined motivation, goals-defined motivation, or a combination of both. A summary of the analysis of the interviews conducted in Year 1 is presented in Table 4 and discussed in detail in the subsequent sections.

Table 4. Summary interview data from Year 1

*Name		Main Motivation Orientation	
		Year 1	**How s/he keeps motivated**
Jun	M	Experience-defined ("English is really my passion")	It's part of his identity, enjoyment
Ayumi	F	Goals-defined (target: TOEFL score)	Works with others, rewards
Hiroko	F	Goals-defined (purpose: improving reading skills)	Enjoyable activity, routine
Miki	F	Goals-defined (target: TOEIC score)	Takes regular tests, enjoyable resource
Takeshi	M	Goals-defined (purpose: be a teacher)	Future dream, record keeping
Yuta	M	Goals-defined (target: EIKEN score)	Imagining achieving the score, routine
Atsuko	F	Goals-defined (purpose: to live abroad)	Future dream, fun activities
Yukino	F	Experience-defined (focus on improving speaking skills)	Enjoyable resource, identity
Kiiko	F	Experience-defined (focus on improving listening skills)	Interesting resources, correct level

*pseudonyms

5.2   Discussion of results: Year 1

5.2.1   Goals-defined motivation

Seven of the nine participants mentioned goals in the first interview. Some of these goals were target goals such as achieving an exam score, and some were purpose goals such as being able to study abroad. This extract from an interview with Yuta demonstrates how powerful a target goal can be in regulating motivation. All participant quotations in this chapter use students' original language without modification.

> When my motivation goes down, I think about how I will feel when I get the score. (Yuta, year 1)

In the interview, Yuta went on to give details about how he shows persistence in his learning in order to achieve his goal (a test score):

> Study is become my custom. It's like a job. If my motivation goes down, I take a day off and start again tomorrow. I study 2 hours everyday … If I don't feel like studying, I force myself. (Yuta, year 1)

Similarly, Atsuko sustained her motivation by focussing on her dream to study abroad. Her motivation is also goals-defined, but with a purpose instead of a target.

> My goal is to study abroad. When my motivation drops, I think about my dream. (Atsuko, year 1)

5.2.2 Experience-defined motivation

Experience-defined was also the main source of motivation for three of the participants interviewed in Year 1, but a further three participants mentioned enjoyment in learning in the first round of interviews. Movies were one example of an "experience" that helped to sustain learner motivation as these excerpts indicate:

> I choose new interesting topics every week. (Kiiko, year 1)

> I choose a movie, something I have been interested in since I was a child … It's fun to shadow the main character. (Yukino, year 1)

5.2.3 Complementary nature of the two types of motivation

In some cases, experience defined and goal-defined motivations were complementary to sustaining motivation. For example, Miki explained how using a motivating resource helped her maintain her study where her goal was to achieve a desired score on a test:

> If I feel I don't want to study for TOEIC, I use TED or another resource. (Miki, year 1)

In some cases, although a combination of experience-defined and goals-defined motivations were mentioned by the participants, they are not complementary and are unlikely to help the participant to achieve her goal. However, as this example shows, the experiences seemed to help the participant to sustain self-study, at least in the first year.

> Sometimes my motivation is low, so I change something. Do something fun like drawing pictures or watching movies. (Atsuko, year 1)

Analysing the interviews from Year 1 was helpful for understanding key ways in which the participants sustained their self-study. Turning now to the second interviews held in Year 2, the researchers were particularly interested in discovering what, if anything, had changed from Year 1 to Year 2. For that reason, the results will be presented as case studies using a narrative to describe the learners' experiences.

5.3 Case studies

5.3.1 Case study 1: Jun

Jun is a student majoring in English. He was extremely willing to be interviewed and saw it as an opportunity to speak English and maybe learn something. He showed great interest in the research project and was quite baffled as to the reason why students might struggle with motivation to learn English. His assumption was that students majoring in English should be as naturally motivated as he is. He had chosen to do a module initially, as he wanted to take every opportunity to engage in English study, to make the most of his time at university and to excel.

5.3.1.1   Year 1

It was clear in the first interview with Jun that he had not thought about motivation before, as he already has a strong and established sense of what Hidi and Renninger (2006) term *individual interest* (Phases 3 and 4), as this extract indicates:

> English is really my passion and I want to learn and that's why I can keep myself motivated.

He has been interested in English songs, movies and dramas since middle school and English is an integral part of his life. In fact, Jun does not mention goals at all in the first interview. The opportunity to add ten points onto his English grade to ensure an A+ was also important to Jun. He was able to keep doing the module for two semesters, as this extract indicates:

> I wanted to force myself to finish. If I quit, would just stay at home sleeping. I want to use my time well.

In addition, he wanted something to force him to learn or, in his words, "some power force to push me." It was clear that he could get an A+ even without the module points, but he kept going.

While doing the first module, he noticed that his weakness was speaking, so he used the opportunity to improve his speaking skills. He felt that his work in this first module was inefficient and he did not realise this until he began the second module. Specifically, his activities did not match the goals he had set for the module.

5.3.1.2   Year 2

In the interview in the second year, it was clear that Jun had maintained his individual interest for learning English and described daily activities that used English as much as possible:

> … I like games. I play mobile games now and I always set the language for the game - always English. I'm trying to do what I like to do in English like live streaming while I'm cooking and when I'm not busy, I just put it there – commentators talking about the game and other things and that's a good way because I can keep doing it for a long time.
>
> … I think it's very important to find something interesting. And do it with English. It works for me. It became part of my life. … Just small things in life. I do everything in English.

The interviewer asked him whether he focussed on any particular goal, or whether he just did things he enjoyed. Jun mentioned that he needed to take the IELTS exam, so his strategy was to work on that intensively for a month, but he would be unable to sustain his motivation by focusing on exam study:

> I can keep doing IELTS maybe for only one month and then I can't exist doing IELTS for half a year it's impossible. Stressful.

This is an example of a situation where adding an external goal (IELTS) can decrease interest (Sansone & Thoman, 2005). The participant recognizes this and limits the amount of time spent focusing on IELTS study.

It is quite clear that for Jun, English study and use continued to be an integral part of his life. An example of this is when he described how studying vocabulary had become routine:

> Sometimes I just want to know more. I'm always trying – when I'm listening – I'm trying to catch the keywords and slang and I'll find out how to use them.

Jun told the interviewer that he had become more motivated in Year 2.

5.3.2   Case study 2: Miki

Miki is also majoring in English and initially signed up to take a module because getting extra points on her English grade was appealing. She had not really thought about what the module could

offer her and did not seem particularly engaged in developing her awareness of how to learn (the purpose of the module). She seems to struggle with motivation so the module seemed to offer her a way to keep going by building self-study into her everyday life.

5.3.2.1 Year 1

In her first semester, Miki set a vague goal related to speaking skills in English. She managed to complete the module, even though she did not notice particular learning benefits. Her main motivation for completion was that her learning advisor was "kind." In her second semester, Miki set a more specific target goal of achieving TOEIC 700. The reason for setting this very different kind of goal was that she wanted to be "strict on myself." In the interview conducted at the end of Year 1, she was reflective and looked back at her development over the first year at university in terms of her self-study. It was clear that, in the second module, she had begun to see that the activities she did in the module actually had a bearing on her learning, as this extract indicates:

> I used to think I had to study, but now I want to study because I see my progress.

In the interview, she admitted that, although generally her activities are not particularly enjoyable, having the target kept her going. She self-regulated by choosing enjoyable resources when she did not feel like studying for TOEIC and the resources (listening to presentations on the TED.com website) seemed to be somewhat helpful for her goal.

5.3.2.2 Year 2

In the interview in Year 2, Miki told the researcher that she continues to pursue the same goal – to achieve a specific score on the TOEIC test. Reflecting back on her learning journey, she knew from experience that focusing on an exam score was necessary in order to sustain her self-study. As in Year 1, Miki mentioned that additional interesting tasks – not TOEIC study – are also necessary in order to sustain motivation so that she is able to achieve her desired score. This approach now seems to be largely unconscious. Whereas, in Year 1, Miki was constantly reflecting on her learning approaches, in Year 2, she now manages her learning effectively with automaticity. Miki stressed two "facts" about learning effectively and these are summarised with these two extracts:

> I will take TOEIC test to make me study more.

> I think the most important thing to keep high motivation, is just enjoying studying.

Miki still recognizes the importance of goals; at the same time, however, she increasingly appreciates that she cannot sustain her study unless she engages in interesting tasks. This awareness of the need to maintain interest indicates that Miki may be moving to the second phase of interest development (maintained situational interest) outlined by Hidi and Renninger (2006).

5.3.3 Case study 3: Yuta

Yuta is also majoring in English and was interested in participating in the study and to have the opportunity to talk about his learning in a reflective way. He initially decided to take the module in order to gain additional points for his English class grade. The module suited him as he could routinely build English study into his everyday life. Yuta does not think about how he maintains his motivation, he just keeps going. The interviews seem to have the effect of encouraging him to reflect on the bigger picture.

5.3.3.1 Year 1

Yuta's original focus was to get a good score on the Eiken test (a Japanese test for English often required by employers) for job-hunting purposes. His goal could be described as goals-defined (target). Although, ultimately, his exam score might be useful in job hunting, he seemed to be also motivated by visualizing how satisfied he would be would be when he achieved his ideal score. He showed a high degree of awareness of what he needed to do to sustain motivation: do a lot of tasks and treat studying "like a job"; that is, not something enjoyable. The key was to establish a routine in order to keep going, and the module fulfilled this purpose in Year 1. He explains his approach to self-study in these terms:

> I study 2 hours everyday. Study has become my custom.

5.3.3.2 Year 2

This extract from an interview in the second year shows how a shift in motivation appears:

> English is just a tool. In the first year I just focussed on studying and exams, but now I focus on people, connections and what I want to do in the future (3D design modelling).

Whereas, in Year 1, Yuta's self-study was an individual project, in Year 2, he started the important role that other people play. For example, he makes a point of connecting with people in his chosen field and asks for introductions. He even has a mentor who has influenced him. These examples of self-generation of interest suggest that Yuta is moving from the first two phases of interest development (situational) to Phase 3 (emergent individual interest) proposed by Hidi and Renninger (2006). He still engages in some self-study, for example, teaching himself valuable design and computer skills. In addition, he recognises that English proficiency tests are important, but he seems to have more of an awareness that he will need to use English, if he achieves his dream to work for a large international company. He still enjoys the feeling of doing well in a test, but that seems to be only part of his motivation, as he now seems to view the experience more holistically and with increased maturity. Looking back at his first year, he felt that his focus was misaligned:

> I think I missed the point.

6 Limitations

The main limitation is that only one interview is being conducted per year and this may just represent a snapshot in time. If time and resources allowed, more frequent interviews or other sources of data such as reflective diaries could have been considered. However, in order for the study to be practical and not too intrusive, it was decided that annual interviews only would be conducted. In order to overcome this limitation to some extent, in the final year of the study (Interview 4), each participant will take part in a longer interview of around one hour. They will be asked to read and comment on the researchers' analysis, look at the interview transcripts and copies of modules, and comment on their motivation over the four-year period. This will help the researchers to ensure that each case study is an accurate account.

7 Conclusions

In the first year of the project, the researchers established that in their context, goals and interesting/enjoyable experiences are both important for maintaining motivation for self-access learners (McLoughlin & Mynard, 2015). In the second phase of the research, the focus is on investigating whether the motivation orientation and self-regulation had changed.

From Year 1 to Year 2, there were some shifts in motivation regulation in all three participants. In the cases of Jun and Miki, their general motivation orientation stayed the same, yet appeared to be stronger and more developed. Jun's individual interest had strengthened and he claimed that his

motivation for learning English had increased. He demonstrated good control over his motivation regulation, for example, when required to prepare for an exam, he intentionally structured the preparation for a limited period only, as he was aware that he would not be able to maintain his motivation by an exam-focused (goals-defined, target) approach. Miki became more aware that she needed to focus on a specific goal (an exam score) in order to maintain her motivation, yet she became better at ensuring that she built in some interesting tasks (i.e. incorporating an experience-defined orientation when needed), thus displaying a more enduring form of situational interest. Yuta continued to rely on a goal to sustain his motivation, but there was a switch from a target (Eiken exam) to a purpose goal (to connect with people). Along with this switch was a greater holistic awareness of the purpose of self-directed study, as well as signs of emergent individual interest. Through sustained self-directed learning, each of the three participants deepened their self-knowledge ensuring that their learning was ubiquitous.

In the remaining two years, it is hoped that as many of the original nine participants as possible be interviewed. The researchers will continue to explore how motivation for self-directed learning is managed over the four years and how interest develops. The four-year study will help the researchers to have a greater understanding of the potential role of the modules, advising and the self-access learning center. This understanding will help to shape the kind of support given to other students at the university in order to best promote ubiquitous learning.

Notes

[1] The modules became fully credit bearing in 2017. They remain optional, but require 15 weeks of self-directed work instead of eight.

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