

Motivation and Self-Confidence in Second Language Acquisition: Attitudes towards English Learning among Japanese University Students

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Abstract:

This paper aims to analyze attitudes towards English learning among Japanese undergraduate students using the socio-educational model of second language (L2) acquisition. It examines the differences between the students enrolled in the General English (GE) course and the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course at Kyoto Tachibana University using a survey at the end of their freshman year. The results revealed significant variations between the two cohorts, particularly in their types of motivation. Whereas GE students were primarily driven by instrumental motives, such as obtaining credits, EAP students expressed a stronger preference for integrative motives, such as a desire to connect with other cultures. The overall low levels of motivation and self-confidence among GE students hindered their willingness-to-communicate (WTC) in English, presenting a considerable challenge for Japanese higher education. Raising self-confidence, especially in speaking, is crucial for L2 proficiency and requires a deeper understanding of students' motives as well as the causes of their language anxiety. Therefore, demotivators in L2 acquisition need to be further analyzed, and new methods of effective classroom instruction need to be investigated, such as deep active learning methods or increasing learner autonomy and self-regulation.

Keywords:

motivation, self-confidence, second language acquisition, socio-educational model.