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## Primary EFL in Japan

–A snapshot of L2 motivation at 11+–

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**Abstract:** The motivation of Japanese primary pupils to learn English as a foreign language (EFL) was examined in a pilot study of Japanese sixth form students (aged 11–12 years). The main aim is to verify the hypothesis that Japanese primary pupils learn EFL under a clear understanding of second language (L2) instrumentality, and examine whether the latest conceptual framework of L2 instrumentality can be applied to their EFL learning. The pupils completed a questionnaire that included 39 question items about different L2 motivational variables: integrativeness, and prevention- and promotion- driven instrumentality. The results were obtained based on factor analyses to examine how related L2 motivational variables are identified. Findings indicate that a clear distinction is drawn between integrativeness and instrumentality in learning EFL and that an explicit notion of L2 instrumentality is held among Japanese primary EFL pupils, based on the conceptual frameworks of L2 motivation. In particular, their L2 instrumentality substantiates that prevention-driven and promotion-driven instrumentality are distinct constructs within the conceptual framework of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS): significantly, these two internal constructs were identified as distinctive types by the participating pupils.

**Keywords:** *Primary EFL, L2 motivation, L2 Instrumentality, the SE model, L2MSS*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In the state primary sector in Japan, primary level English as a foreign language (EFL) gained compulsory status in 2011, and learning EFL will be officially introduced as a school subject in 2020 [1, 2]. Accordingly, the present study suggests that this mandate of *English for all young learners* needs careful examination in terms of its goals within the Japanese context.

Investigating how Japanese primary pupils will manifest their motivation to learn EFL prompts reconsideration of current EFL pedagogical approaches which emphasise eliciting an intrinsic aspect of their motivation to learn EFL [3]. By focusing on their L2 motivation, I will also explore the possibility of alternative pedagogical approaches to improve understanding between teacher and learner in terms of students' motivation to learn EFL. This paper also discusses the administrative and social realities influencing EFL education in Japan.

Current L2 motivational studies have frequently revealed interesting dispositions of L2 motivation among EFL learners; they showed particularly high endorsement of practical reasons associated with L2 instrumentality for learning EFL in terms of its global status: its usefulness and necessity for their further education and future career opportunities [4–8].

Despite this trend, sourcing L2 literature on the motivation of young L2 learners is difficult; primary pupils have not been the focus scant research only when compared with studies on higher education students. Only 5% of all L2 motivational studies are estimated to be

related to L2 motivation among primary pupils [9–11]. Moreover, the motivational constructs, integrativeness and instrumentality are presumed not to be fully distinguishable by young L2 learners [10–12].

Investigating L2 motivation among Japanese primary pupils is relatively popular [3, 13–18]. However, questioning their L2 instrumentality was intentionally eliminated in at least one study examining L2 motivation, because this variable was considered inappropriate for them [15]. This limited view of L2 instrumentality among primary pupils is indicative of the current trend in domestic L2 motivational studies.

Significantly, the actual dispositions of young L2 learners seem to contradict popular developmental views that explain how they self-assess across school years and the extent to which they can comprehend differences in the conceptual frameworks for their self-assessments by the age of 12 [19–26]. As such, this study focuses on the L2 motivational variable instrumentality. It complements the findings of previous L2 motivational studies which are mainly associated with young L2 learners, in both domestic and overseas contexts [3, 10–18].

Accordingly, this study attempts to amalgamate a traditional conceptual framework of L2 motivation with contemporary ones including the Socio-Educational (SE) model [27] and the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) [28] to avoid obscuring the results of the study. Utilising these models together is among the most popular recent approaches in L2 motivational research studies [9]: it enables researchers to look at static aspects instrumentality among Japanese primary EFL pupils and to deal hypothetically with the more sub-divided aspects

of this of this motivational variable.

The research questions are as follows:

1. Do the Japanese primary EFL pupils own L2 instrumentality?
2. Is it possible to draw a clear distinction between the L2 motivational variables of integrativeness and instrumentality, and between promotion- and prevention-driven instrumentality?

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1 Participants

Participants were 66 final form pupils aged 11-12 (32 boys, 34 girls) from a state primary school (School A) in a Tokyo suburb. All participants identified Japanese as their first language. They have English classes once a week, and those present on the day the questionnaire was administered took part in completing it.

### 2.2 Instruments

Data were collected using a quantitative method; the main research instrument was a questionnaire for primary EFL pupils, written in English. It has been extended theoretically based on the social psychological approach, and by referring to the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) [29], and the Motivational Factors Questionnaire (MFQ) [5, 30] to which much attention has been paid.

In the questionnaire, the generalised aspects of L2 motivation were conceptualised in terms of two main constructs, integrativeness and instrumentality, with two subdivided components for each. These four motivational variables are among the most common domains investigated in previous L2 motivational studies [31], and they receive empirical validation in this study. The questionnaire employs four motivational variables; the number of items for each motivational variable varies from 5 to 15 (see Table 1).

**Table 1:** The main variables in the questionnaire and the number of items for each

Variables	Number of items
<u>Instrumentality</u>	28 (Total)
Instrumentality prevention	15
Instrumentality promotion	13
<u>Integrativeness</u>	11 (Total)
Attitudes towards an L2	5
Attitudes towards the L2 learning	6

### 2.3 Data analysis

All data obtained from the questionnaire were

coded and processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for Windows 10. A negatively worded statement was reversed positively (e.g. Item 7: I am not interested in English is processed as 5 = Strongly agree in the case of a response as 1 = Strongly disagree). The analytical procedure consisted of two phases:

1. Checking reliability coefficients
2. Conducting factor analyses to form unitary groups from heterogeneous sources

First, as can be seen in Table 2, the related figures meet acceptable levels of reliability and the translation activity and validation process were successful.

**Table 2:** Number of items, reliability coefficients and sample items for all scales

Motivational scales	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	Sample items
Instrumentality prevention	15	.94	I have to learn English; otherwise I will not be successful in the English class.
Instrumentality promotion	13	.88	Learning English will help me with advanced study.
Integrativeness	11	.88	I really enjoy learning English.

Second, factor analysis was used to examine the motivational variables at two phases based on the conceptual frameworks of L2 motivation from the viewpoint of the SE model and the L2MSS. In particular, an attempt at a more detailed categorisation of the motivational variables in instrumentality was made in the latter model.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Findings

The results are correlated with the assumptions and requirements of this research: all factors identified in the analyses were, as expected, significantly associated with the related motivational variables, prevention- and promotion-driven instrumentality, and integrativeness. These factors contained clusters of items of the motivational variables that were relatively easy to interpret in determining each factor.

Within the context of L2MSS, four factors have been identified. Two major factors are also identified in the SE model that places integrativeness and instrumentality as the main motivational variables. Concerning Factor 1, this factor obtains a reasonably high correlation with instrumentality prevention: it has 15 items as its internal constructs; noticeably, this scale received near salient

loadings from 11 items concerning prevention -driven instrumentality.

Factors 2, 3, and 4 do not fall into the initial assumption in a precise way as correlations between the motivational variables and the factors. Both Factors 3 and 4 are associated with the same motivational variable of promotion-driven instrumentality, which was initially assumed to be one factor. Moreover, Factor 2 is highly correlated with integrativeness as a whole. This motivational variable is associated with its two internal categories, attitudes towards an L2, and L2 learning.

The four factors identified in the factor analysis are labelled, in numerical order, on the basis of the motivational variables they are most correlated with. Thus, all the sub-scales are presented with their factor labels as follows:

- Factor 1: Instrumentality prevention-driven Type
- Factor 2: Integrativeness-driven Type
- Factor 3: Instrumentality promotion-driven Type 1
- Factor 4: Instrumentality promotion-driven Type 2

As a whole, instrumentality-driven types are somewhat pervasive among all four sub-scales: three have been identified as being associated. The process of identifying these factors conforms to the initial assumptions of the motivational variables that are mainly associated with the conceptual frameworks of the SE model and L2MSS. The distribution of the factor items in instrumentality-driven types and integrativeness indicates that an explicit distinction can be made between prevention- and promotion-driven instrumentality as well as between instrumentality and integrativeness.

In this sense, the results indicate positive responses to the first and second research questions. The dispositions of the Japanese primary EFL pupils manifested L2 instrumentality and its internal constructs, prevention- and promotion-driven instrumentality and identified such as distinctly featured within instrumentality, and as distinct from the other motivational variable, integrativeness.

### 3.2 Limits of the study

The small sample size constrains the generalisability of the findings of this study. With regards to the research methods, a quantitative method focusing on the cross-sectional analysis is introduced. While the quantitative approach is still popular in L2 motivational studies [9], using a range of methods could provide greater insight into the L2 motivation of primary pupils. Additionally, a longitudinal approach would provide still deeper perspectives on their L2 motivation.

## 4. CONCLUSION

All Japanese primary pupils are now targeted for EFL education and they fully understand that learning EFL is now compulsory in their schools. In keeping with this, it seems that their L2 instrumentality, at the administrative level, has long been relegated to second position in terms

of obtaining a full picture of their L2 motivation. This is because, as mentioned previously, when considering appropriate EFL pedagogical approaches much attention is currently being paid to the intrinsic aspects of students motivation to learn EFL [3, 13, 14].

Consequently, from the theoretical point of view of L2 motivation, focusing on L2 instrumentality among Japanese primary EFL pupils to promote an L2 instrumentality-based approach is a possibility to consider when suggesting different types of pedagogical approaches to implement Primary EFL properly within the Japanese context.

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