

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263782357>

Supplementing the elementary foreign language course of study with a self-determination framework

Article · March 2014

CITATIONS

9

READS

157

2 authors:



[W. L. Quint Oga-Baldwin](#)

Waseda University

50 PUBLICATIONS 825 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)



[Yoshiyuki Nakata](#)

Doshisha Univ

11 PUBLICATIONS 748 CITATIONS

[SEE PROFILE](#)

<Research Article>

Supplementing the elementary foreign language course of study with a self-determination framework

W. L. Quint OGA-BALDWIN and Yoshiyuki NAKATA

Teachers and teacher educators often look to the course of study (CoS) for elementary foreign languages (MEXT, 2008) for guidelines on how to conduct the newly implemented curriculum for 5th and 6th grade students. In comparison with other levels of education, the current CoS places a greater emphasis on students' affect and motivation. In order to provide teachers with a clear theoretical framework for improving students' motivation, this paper seeks to use the self-determination theory (SDT) of motivation to supplement the course of study. Recognizing connections between the larger motivational perspective offered by SDT and the practices and principles outlined in the CoS, teachers and researchers may develop strategies for building learning motivation and positive affect for the foreign language.

Key words: Course of study, elementary foreign language, motivation, self-determination

Background

Researchers and teachers in Japan for years have recognized student motivational issues in English education (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Nakata, 2006). Common motivation-related concerns include assessment and high-stakes testing (Berwick & Ross, 1989; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009), and issues with the relationship between the national curriculum and tests (Underwood, 2012). To date, a focus on the summative features of foreign language learning has been presented by the Ministry of Education (MEXT; Tahira, 2012). With the recognition that learning motivation has become a problem within Japanese education (MEXT, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2008d), the course of study (CoS) is slowly moving from an outline of content goals towards a greater focus on processes, teaching methods, and classroom interactions influencing motivation and learning (Tahira, 2012; MEXT, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2009).

Traditionally, the role of the CoS has been to determine the general direction and content of foreign language classes in Japan (Tahira, 2012). Since the 1960s, the Ministry of Education has focused on discrete testable grammar points, leading to the use of the grammar-and-translation method as the main method for language transmission (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). Elements of this continue in the current CoS for secondary education (MEXT, 2008b; 2009), though with emphasis on the use of English as an instructional language. However, a difference can be seen with the introduction of the elementary CoS for foreign languages activities (FLA; MEXT, 2008a), specifically with the focus on the affective rather than linguistic and cognitive elements in language learning. These

changes have been instituted as part of a greater effort to improve students' desire to learn and be lifelong learners (MEXT, 2008d).

The current directions of the elementary CoS are not uncontroversial, and critics and proponents have noted numerous philosophical and practical issues beyond the scope of this review (see Otsu, 2004; Butler, 2007; Hashimoto, 2011, etc. for a further review). From a motivational perspective, the CoS offers principles for building positive affect for language learning; principles notably lacking in previous courses of study (Tahira, 2012). At the same time, the focus on affect has not been clearly and uniformly understood among elementary teachers, policy makers, and teacher trainers (Fennelly & Luxton, 2011; Mayeda, 2010; Sakai, 2011). In order to promote positive motivation towards the foreign language, it is our position that a strong theoretical perspective on the realities and principles of language learning motivation may offer teachers and researchers insights into how to address foreign language learning in elementary schools.

The purpose of this paper is to describe how the elementary CoS can be supplemented by Deci and Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory of motivation (SDT) in order to satisfy students' needs and build the desired foundation of positive affect for learning. To achieve this, we will first introduce passages from the elementary course of study which support motivation, then discuss reasons for the appropriateness of SDT for supplementing and interpreting the CoS. We will conclude with pedagogical suggestions.

Addressing motivation in the course of study

One of the major differences between the elementary and secondary courses of study is the recognition of the importance of affect. The Ministry of Education, in their explanation for the reasons behind the changes in the current CoS, cites an increasing need to nurture a "zest for life" and desire to learn for the purpose of lifelong education (MEXT, 2008d). The preface in each document clearly cites the need to improve learning motivation and establish study habits among young people (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 1-2; 2008b, pp. 1-2). At the same time, while affective and emotional terms are very rarely mentioned in the body text of the secondary school documents (MEXT, 2008b; 2009), significant portions of the 29 page elementary CoS guidelines (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 1-4, 10-12, 16-19, 21, 23, 25, 29) use terms referring to motivation, positiveness, fun, interest, and enjoyment in connection with experiential learning, demonstrating the importance of affect in the current course of study. Table 1 summarizes the breakdown and frequency of the different passages referring directly to motivation. Throughout the document, and underlying all of the motivational elements, a strong emphasis is also given to experiential learning (体験的学習). Passages and quotes refer to this concept in 57 passages on 24 of the 29 pages (MEXT, 2008a). While passages explicitly related to motivation are few by comparison, the sense in which this term is used implies personal agency and active student participation in communicative interaction. Indeed, the very title of the study area, foreign language activities, strongly suggests personal engagement and motivated behavior in the learning process.

Table 1. Passages from the Elementary Course of Study (MEXT, 2008) displaying the centrality of motivation

<u>Motivational concept</u>	<u>Number of passages</u>	<u>Pages</u>	<u>Illustrative phrases</u>
<i>Motivation, desire</i> (意欲)	4	1-2, 19	"The improvement of learning motivation and establishment of study habits...is indicated through the revisions to the course of study." (p. 2)
<i>Fun, enjoyment</i> (楽しさ)	10	10-12, 19, 23, 29	"Instruction should be given...in order to help pupils...experience the joy of communication in the foreign language." (pp. 10-11)
<i>Interest</i> (興味・関心)	7	9, 16-18, 21, 23	"...in order to promote pupils' self-driven desire to communicate, using materials and activities related to student interest is important..." (p. 17)
<i>Positive</i> (積極的) [attitudes, behaviors]	26	4, 7-12, 14, 17, 19-21	"Emphasizing the nurturing of positive attitudes toward communication through the use of the foreign language" (p.7)

The CoS indicates that a feeling of necessity helps students recognize why they should engage with the material, creating an internal feeling of motivation toward the subject. One facet of this can be found in the idea of the relationship with the junior high school curriculum (MEXT, 2008a, p. 7). Specific elements of the elementary curriculum such as the alphabet are intended to support students as they graduate from primary to secondary school (MEXT, 2008a, p.22). From our experience both in teaching and researching in elementary and junior high schools, students with more experience in elementary school are often more motivated towards learning the foreign language based on that foundation. The employment of native speaker ALTs and guest teachers is also meant to provide a sense of necessity, where non-Japanese individuals may be used in order to provide additional opportunities for communication above those created by the homeroom teacher (MEXT, 2008a, p. 14). As mentioned above, all of these elements appear designed to promote active, experiential learning. Creating opportunities for natural use through a rich foreign language environment is theorized to improve students' feelings of the necessity for English, and thereby increase desire to learn it.

The document also recognizes the need to involve students' individual hopes and desires in classes, referencing the need for teachers to find what students hope to accomplish in life in a passage stating, "in addressing student dreams for the future, in order to appropriately elicit student-centered self-expression, teachers must necessarily first look into what students' dreams are" (MEXT, 2008a, p.23). By knowing their students as individuals, homeroom teachers are in a better position to help students to express their desires. Beyond the simple concept of foreign language proficiency for its own sake, teachers must provide opportunities for students to connect the concept of language learning with the larger life goals students are forming in fifth and sixth grades.

The emphasis on pair and group activities may also help develop positive relationships between peers. A quote from page 11 reads, "in order to build rich interpersonal relationships, the acquisition of linguistic communication abilities is necessary" (MEXT, 2008a). Further discussion of interpersonal relatedness can be seen in a discussion of the 6th year curriculum on page 28 reads "maintaining important relationships with friends and classmates, students should experience communication activities regarding daily life and school life, including experiences which promote international understanding" (MEXT, 2008a). These activities are carried out through

between-student interaction, with the intention of “raising students’ understanding of others, as well as their self-respect, by confirming the positive aspects of their classmates and selves through interactions with their peers” (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 28–29). By practicing communicative interactions with each other, students build meaningful relationships and develop interpersonal skills.

Within the document, the role of proficiency in the foreign language is replaced by the idea of “familiarization” (*nareshitashimi*, MEXT, 2008a, p. 10). While “familiarization” as a way of learning a language seems unclear, this describes the first step towards real proficiency for many successful language learners. Repeated exposure and practice creates a feeling of being “accustomed” to the language; providing extensive exposure can promote feelings of having experienced and used the language. The impetus for this comes from recognition within the document of the need to address students’ reported lack of self-confidence (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 1–2).

Finally, the focus on providing students with positive experiences is balanced with clear warnings regarding activities that are perceived to damage students’ internal motivational resources. From page 9, “...teaching with an overemphasis on pattern practice...does not align with the goals of foreign language activities” (MEXT, 2008a). The warning hinges on *overemphasizing* rote memorization without active use. Other passages recognize the danger of controlling methods as damaging to motivation. On page 16, the document continues, “making students mechanically memorize words, phrases, and sentences...may cause students to lose their sense of self-expression” (MEXT, 2008a), and follows with the caution that “...teachers should be careful not to take away students’ desire for self-expression and interest in communication” (MEXT, 2008a, p. 18). Language involving the idea of making students do something (*-saseru*) is often followed by a warning that this does not fit with the current goals of elementary FLA. Focusing on the ways which the desire to learn can be both built and thwarted further shows the importance of motivation and affect with regard to elementary education.

Motivational theory for foreign language activities

Many of the above passages have prompted questions and uncertainties among teachers expected to enact the course of study (Fennelly & Luxton, 2011; Mayeda, 2010; Tahira, 2012). Considering the importance placed on the course of study by both administrators and teachers, a framework for clear application is necessary. We have chosen to look at the CoS in terms of the motivational elements involved, and hope to provide theoretical guidelines that can be applied to the policies stated above and bridge the gaps between teachers, researchers, and teacher educators (Nakata, 2013).

While motivational perspectives exist specifically for language learning (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005), consideration of the school context must be added to any discussion of foreign language education in Japan (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 1–2). One clear focal point of the document is the promotion of affect / enjoyment in order to support learning, a perspective supported by the empirical literature (Cornelius-White, 2007). This perspective coincides with that of self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000), which posits that human beings engage in tasks which are enjoyable and allow personal agency. Based on the recommendations and policies set about in the above course of study, specifically the central ideas of enjoyment and self-expression, this motivational perspective may offer teachers a theoretical and practical method for interpreting the CoS to address students’

needs and improve long-term motivation.

Self-determination theory has been used in numerous foreign language learning contexts, including Japan (Carreira, 2012; Hiromori, 2003; Nishida, 2013; Noels, Pelletier, Clément, & Vallerand, 2000; Wu, 2003). Kimberly Noels has further suggested the applicability of SDT for promoting Japanese learners' motivation (Noels, 2013). SDT has also been used in other East Asian general educational situations (Jang, Kim, & Reeve, 2012), making it an ideal match for the collectivist school-based motivational climate of elementary FLA (MEXT, 2008a). Working from the assumption that language learning motivation in Japan is tied to school and human motivation (Carreira, 2011), addressing the most basic of motivational needs, rather than theorized needs specific to language learning, will offer improved perspective on how to engage students with learning materials.

Self-determination theory hypothesizes that for motivation to be self-directed, it must come from within and reflect that person's interests, personal goals, and values (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Accordingly, individuals have inner motivational resources which share a reciprocal relationship with the classroom environment; students respond to teachers' motivating styles by adapting their internal psychological needs, interests, and values, and teachers respond to students' motivation and engagement in class by becoming controlling or autonomy supportive (Reeve, 2012). This aligns with focus in the course of study on helping students to express individual ideas and opinions (e.g. MEXT, 2008a, p. 16). An illustration of this interaction can be seen in figure 1. According to this model, teachers create a motivationally supportive environment through the use of timely feedback, judicious use of rewards, appropriate evaluation, level appropriate challenges, activities which draw student interest, and culturally appropriate expectations and interactions. Following these principles, we will address ways these theories may be applied to the current course of study to provide teachers with a theoretically valid while practice-oriented approach to interpretation.

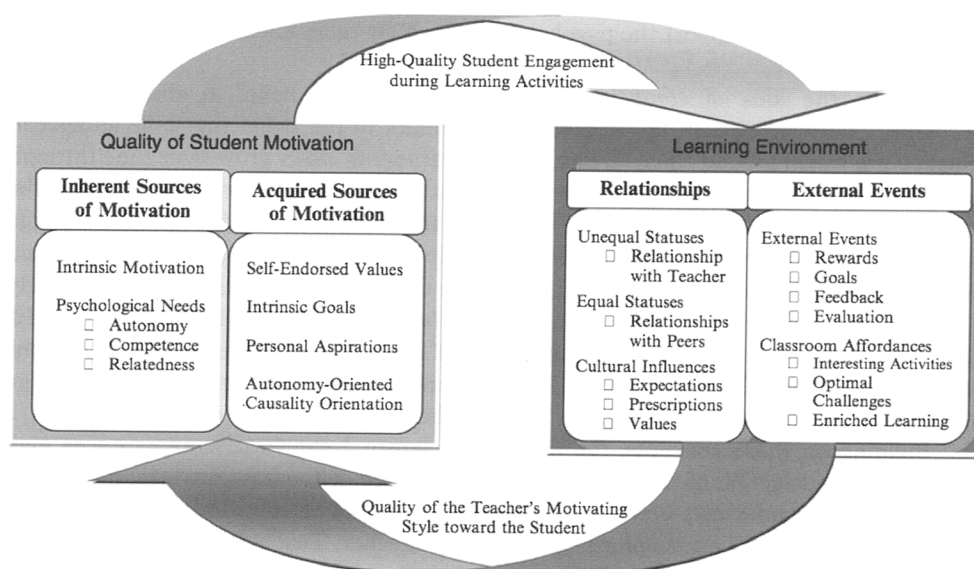


Figure 1. The dialectic framework of self-determination theory (from Reeve, 2012).

As seen in figure 1, SDT theorizes three basic needs underlying students' inner motivational resources: *autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence* (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which share a reciprocal relationship with the teachers' motivating style and interactions between teacher and student (Reeve, 2012). Events in the environment which support individuals' interests, values, strivings, and needs are theorized to promote motivation originating in the self. In the same way, classroom events which are overly restrictive or out of accord with students' internal resources may hinder motivation and engagement. Teachers in turn have been shown to respond to students' displays of engagement and motivation, with teachers nurturing and supporting students who are responsive and adopting more controlling and commanding instructional styles (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This interaction informs the theory of how teachers' behaviors, attitudes, and choices may influence students' learning motivation. The current course of study (MEXT, 2008a) has also recognized the importance of this reciprocal relationship.

Autonomy can be understood beyond the idea of freedom, although this is an element. More than choice, autonomy offers students a sense of agency and volition with regard to their engagement in the classroom (Reeve & Assor, 2011). Agency, the idea of the capacity and will to act within sociocultural norms and structures (Gao, 2010; Mercer, 2012), shows how the desire to act springs from within the individual. Autonomy supportive classrooms build students' desire to participate willingly by addressing interests and preferences while also giving understandable reasons for why some inclinations may not be feasible (Reeve & Assor, 2011). The importance of autonomy is emphasized throughout the course of study through the inclusion of the concept of experiential learning. As argued above, personal agency is implied within the idea of active experiential learning as it is used throughout the elementary CoS (MEXT, 2008a).

The second need, *relatedness*, represents how connected members of the group feel. Teachers build the feeling that students are part of a caring group by creating interaction and developing positive in-class relationships. Student-teacher and peer relationships have been shown to be crucial for building motivation and engagement (Cornelius-White, 2007). The course of study emphasizes this shared classroom culture in Japanese elementary schools to support the psychological need for relatedness (e. g., MEXT, 2008a, pp. 11, 28, etc.).

Finally, the idea of *competence* represents students' belief in their ability to successfully perform certain tasks. Competence refers to the belief that individuals can influence the world around them (White, 1959). As students' skills grow over time through use and exposure, they gradually come to feel that they can be successful, and find the task worthwhile due to both ability and becoming accustomed to the task. In the language classroom, we recognize this as students' ability to understand the environment and produce language to get a desired effect. While the concept of competence is not explicitly a part of the course of study, familiarization (*nareshitashimi*; MEXT, 2008a, p. 10) represents the first step towards competence, and many of the communicative functions listed within the text (MEXT, 2008a, p. 24) are connected with the idea of using language to interact with and influence students' surroundings.

Building on these concepts, the diagram in figure 1 shows how experiences may influence the satisfaction of the three needs and damage or increase intrinsic motivation within the SDT framework. Classroom experiences may be interpreted as controlling or supportive according to the emphasis given by the teacher. Teachers may focus students toward a single desired behavioral outcome using a controlling aspect, or may focus on providing students with the resources to make decisions on their own by focusing on

autonomy support. Accordingly, controlling commands and evaluative assessment (Reeve & Jang, 2006) may damage students' feelings of intrinsic motivation. On the opposite side, teacher behaviors such as positive feedback, focusing on relevance and rationales (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002), and encouragement (Reeve & Jang, 2006) support students' feelings of competence and autonomy. Thus, similar to the CoS recommendations for motivational classroom practices (e.g. MEXT, 2008a, pp. 9, 16, 18), teachers must necessarily focus on the motivational impact of their practices in relation to students' basic needs. For this purpose, we offer examples of how currently observed classroom practices under the current course of study may align with and promote students' self-determined motivation.

Theoretical commonalities and commentary on current practice

By providing a theoretical supplement the course of study, we hope to allow teachers to better interpret the current policy while finding ways to use the principles of autonomy, relatedness, and competence support to improve both their students' and their own self-determined motivation for FLA. Based on observed practices currently in use in FLA classes, practices and activities often recommended by both central and local curriculum planning groups, we hope to illustrate how teachers may use the principles of SDT to motivate students through classroom activities.

One of the primary insights from self-determination theory is the idea of supporting students' autonomy and sense of agency. In the elementary context, this means helping students to understand the goals and intentions of an activity, avoiding rigid commands, and allowing students to express opinions and preferences. Many teachers already support students' autonomy by demonstrating the lesson point at the start of class. The statement of goals (*jugyou no meate*) practiced by many teachers is an autonomy supportive practice by providing students with a reason for the selected classroom activities. This practice is unfortunately not a universal one, especially among schools without a strong connection between regular staff and native English speaking teachers, who may be unaware of the routine. Instituting this commonly used practice from non-foreign language class periods in lessons run by both native and non-native teachers may better support students' autonomous engagement in class.

Real autonomy support also recognizes students' desires for what they want to learn. The summarized English version of the CoS states, "teachers should focus on the foreign language sounds and use letters of the alphabet and words as supplementary tools for oral communication (MEXT, 2008c, p. 3)." Studies have also found that many junior high school students expressed interest in learning more about reading and writing in elementary school (Benesse Educational Research Development Center, 2011). Considering the recognition of the importance of students' long term goals and how they may relate to learning a foreign language (MEXT, 2008a, p. 23), as well as supporting their learning in junior high school (MEXT, 2008a, p. 22), some element of reading and writing instruction may be appropriate for supporting student autonomy. From our experience, students in elementary schools are interested in English language writing, and often ask teachers about readings and meanings of words found on t-shirts and pencil cases, illustrating a desire for meaningful interaction with the English in their environment. Considering how the alphabet is already a part of the recommended curriculum, some introduction of receptive letter sounds and reading may support student autonomy and motivation.

At the same time as we promote the idea of autonomy, cautions against thwarting autonomy should not be interpreted as recommending excessive permissiveness. Literature on self-determination theory has endorsed the concept of structure in classrooms in order to provide students with the support and direction they need for good learning (Jang, Reeve, & Deci, 2010). Structure provides students with direction, goals, pacing, and expectations for behavior and learning without authoritarian strictness. This allows students the concept of “freedom within limits” (Rogers, 1969), and can help promote achievement (Mouratidis, Vansteenkiste, Michou, & Lens, 2013). In this context, autonomy can be seen as how teachers and students negotiate the necessary social structures and constraints of the school environment to express their individual agency (Nakata, 2011; Brophy, 2004). Our own previous research has also indicated the importance of classroom procedures in promoting positive student engagement (Oga-Baldwin, 2012). In one class we observed, the teacher would stop class when students failed to adequately prepare for class on time or became overly boisterous. At the same time, her strictness did not prevent students from relating to her class positively. In another class, the teacher would take the first fifteen to twenty minutes to ask students “How are you?” and wait for a response, all the while ignoring the other students’ private conversations or misbehavior. This class had a great deal of later difficulty completing basic tasks due to students’ unwillingness to engage with the material, accompanied by stress on the part of the teacher. Thus, autonomy support in the classroom should not be equated with the idea of lack of teacher authority, but rather how teachers organize, plan, and direct learning activities within classroom structures and strictures so as to draw students’ interest and attention without referring to controlling methods.

Structured autonomy support emphasizes how teachers can allow student agency in classroom decisions bounded by limitations. This may be related to how games are played, such as allowing students themselves to decide the penalty for grabbing a card too quickly in a *karuta* (card slapping) game (e.g. sit out one turn, return one card, etc.). In some classes we have observed, students were allowed to build their ideal school lunch, but must show that it contains a balance of nutrients. In other classes, autonomy supportive teachers structured choices by allowing students to decide on an ideal class schedule based on the realities of school (e.g. “We need to have 5 math and Japanese classes, and we can’t have P.E. every day because other classes need the gym”). We have seen teachers promote agreement by explaining the reason for certain rules (“This game won’t be fun if you show your card to your partner”) or demonstrate rules by acting out the part of a student who does not follow the rules and is then penalized gently but appropriately. If activity choices remain perfectly free, they stay in the realm of fantasy and have little bearing on students’ deeper satisfactions (Brophy, 2008).

Promoting student competence must also not be overlooked. If students are to develop true *familiarization* with English, a large degree of repetition and practice are necessary, and students must hear teachers producing a large amount of language. While overemphasis on pattern practice, drills, and memorization may not be desirable, the use of repetition in the form of songs has been indicated to help with language acquisition and memory (Schön et al., 2008), demonstrating the importance of music in elementary language classes for competence building. Teachers who wish to familiarize students with the L2 should also model the behaviors they wish students to emulate. Imitation has been shown to be instinctual (Lyons, Damrosch, Lin, Macris, & Keil, 2011), a finding supported in other educational research (Schunk & Gunn, 1985). For teachers, this means using and modeling the target language as much as possible in order to help students

recognize the value of the language (Brophy, 2008; Oga-Baldwin, 2012; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2013).

At the same time, teachers must also be careful not to use coercive methods to engage students, “making” or “forcing” them to participate. The course of study recognizes this perspective in the caution to avoid controlling activities such as overuse of pattern practice (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 9, 16, 18). While competence-building activities such as pattern practice are indispensable, they are only meaningful in support of communication. As such, practice activities promoting competence are desirable in so far as they also promote interest, desire to engage, and interpersonal relationships, and should be recognized as motivationally undesirable should they control students toward simple rote knowledge or negative affect towards the language. To this end, performance or task-like activities *after* sufficient practice (Sato, 2010; Miyasako, 2012) may offer the greatest opportunities for learner agency (Mercer, 2012), and thus avoid feelings of coercion. Past studies have achieved this end through theatrical performances (Nishida, 2013), where students repeatedly practice specific lines and interactions to support competence before performing the final product before an audience. A class play further provides students with a rationale for extensive language use, further supporting autonomy.

Other classes have achieved autonomy and competence support through emphasizing game-like activities focused on the use of the target language may help students to develop both competence and positive affect. Common game-like learning activities such as card-slapping / *karuta*, quizzes, guessing games, and puzzles presented in the L2 *which require recall of language in order to proceed* are likely to promote feelings of student competence (Karpicke & Blunt, 2011). Some teachers we have seen finish class activities five minutes before the bell and allow students to file out of the room early, under the condition that they are able to answer questions related to the day’s lesson point. Especially with young learners, routine activities of this sort in support of competence promote self-determined motivation (Wu, 2003). At the same time, it should be noted that games as games do not lead to the development of proficiency and familiarization with the language (Brophy, 2004, p. 199). In the words of one student we observed, “We always do games, but English games aren’t *games*.” We interpret this to mean that students may not always enjoy game-like activities presented in FLA classes, and thus a balance is needed in order to appropriately support students’ autonomous motivation for learning foreign languages.

A sense of relatedness with the target language community is also needed to build student motivation. To this end, the employment of native speaker teachers and intercultural exchanges may offer a positive influence. While native speaking English teachers may or may not offer positive benefits for schools in terms of language achievement (Butler & Takeuchi, 2008; Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2013). At the same time, international experiences which provide students with chances to interact individually with students from other countries may provide additional motivating experiences (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, & Shimizu, 2004). This perspective echoes the call for intercultural exchanges on page 28-29 of the CoS. From observation of classes where students meet and exchange with international guests, students show autonomous engagement and willingness to communicate. While visits of this sort may be rare, occurring at most once per year at most schools, they offer greater individual interaction time between students and English speakers than is usually available in classes with a single native speaking English teacher, increasing opportunities for individual and self-directed experiential learning.

Finally, in keeping with the focus in the CoS on active experiential learning, looking beyond internal motivations toward *engagement*, where students act on internal drives and external influences (Reeve, 2012), may offer more concrete perspectives on how motivation works in the classroom (Lee & Reeve, 2012). Recent literature from within SDT has also emphasized the importance of engagement resulting from teachers' classroom practices (e.g. Jang et al., 2010; 2012). Looking at how students behave in class, enjoy materials and activities, and process the foreign language will allow both teachers and researchers to better understand how students grow through the process of learning a foreign language with a strong affective foundation.

Conclusion

In opening this dialog on motivational theory and the interpretation of the course of study, we have set out to show how the perspective offered by self-determination theory may offer teachers a theoretical and practical supplement for the course of study. Based on the need to improve student motivation and self-directed learning habits (MEXT, 2008a, pp. 1-2; 2008d), teachers may benefit from greater understanding of motivational theory. With the need for teachers to adhere to the course of study as closely as possible, a clear framework for principled application is similarly necessary.

While other motivational theories may indeed be used for the same purpose, the principles in self-determination theory offer a comprehensive fit for the purpose of classroom implementation. Autonomy, relatedness, and competence are essential to motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and reading the commonalities between the course of study, SDT, and current practices may show effective methods for improving students' self-directed learning (Reeve, 2012). Teachers, teacher trainers, and researchers looking into elementary foreign language motivation may benefit from adhering to the principles and observed practices above in order to create positive affect, achievement, and learning in elementary foreign language classrooms into the future beyond the current course of study.

References

- Assor, A., Kaplan, H., & Roth, G. (2002). Choice is good, but relevance is excellent: Autonomy-enhancing and suppressing teacher behaviours predicting students' engagement in schoolwork. *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 72, 261-278-278. doi:10.1348/000709902158883
- Benesse Educational Research Development Center. (2011). *Shou / chuugakkou no eigo kyouiku ni kan suru chousa (Survey on elementary and lower secondary English education)*. Available from: http://benesse.jp/berd/center/open/report/syochu_eigo/2011/soku/soku_01.html.
- Berwick, R., & Ross, S. (1989). Motivation after matriculation: Are Japanese learners of English still alive after exam hell? *JALT Journal*, 11(2), 193-210.
- Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating students to learn (2nd edition)*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Brophy, J. (2008). Developing students' appreciation for what is taught in school. *Educational Psychologist*, 43(3), 132-141. doi:10.1080/00461520701756511
- Butler, Y. G. (2007). Foreign language education at elementary schools in Japan: Searching

- for solutions amidst growing diversification. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 8(2), 129–147. doi:10.2167/cilp115.0
- Butler, Y. G., & Takeuchi, A. (2008). Variables that Influence Elementary School Students' English Performance in Japan. *Journal of Asia TEFL*, 5(1), 65–95.
- Carreira, J. M. (2011). Relationship between motivation for learning EFL and intrinsic motivation for learning in general among Japanese elementary school students. *System*, 39(1), 90–102. doi:10.1016/j.system.2011.01.009
- Carreira, J. M. (2012). Motivational orientations and psychological needs in EFL learning among elementary school students in Japan. *System*, 40(2), 191–202. doi:10.1016/j.system.2012.02.001
- Cornelius-White, J. (2007). Learner-centered teacher-student relationships are effective: A meta-analysis. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 113–143. doi:10.3102/003465430298563
- Dörnyei, Z., (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Fennelly, M., & Luxton, R. (2011). Are they ready? On the verge of compulsory English, elementary school teachers lack confidence. *The Language Teacher*, 35(2), 19–24.
- Gao, X. (2010). *Strategic language learning: The roles of agency and context*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Hashimoto, K. (2011). Compulsory foreign language activities in Japanese primary schools. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 12(2), 167–184. doi:10.1080/14664208.2011.585958
- Hiromori, T. (2003). What enhances language learners' motivation?: High school English learners' motivation from the perspective of self-determination theory. *JALT Journal*, 25(2), 173–186.
- Jang, H., Kim, E. J., & Reeve, J. (2012). Longitudinal test of self-determination theory's motivation mediation model in a naturally occurring classroom context. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104(4), 1175–1188. doi:10.1037/a0028089
- Jang, H., Reeve, J., & Deci, E. L. (2010). Engaging students in learning activities: It is not autonomy support or structure but autonomy support and structure. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102(3), 588–600. doi:10.1037/a0019682
- Karpicke, J. D., & Blunt, J. R. (2011). Retrieval practice produces more learning than elaborative studying with concept mapping. *Science*, 331(6018), 772–775. doi:10.1126/science.1199327
- Lee, W., & Reeve, J. (2012). Teachers' estimates of their students' motivation and engagement: Being in synch with students. *Educational Psychology*, 32(6), 727–747. doi:10.1080/01443410.2012.732385
- Lyons, D. E., Damrosch, D. H., Lin, J. K., Macris, D. M., & Keil, F. C. (2011). The scope and limits of overimitation in the transmission of artefact culture. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 366(1567), 1158–1167. doi:10.1098/rstb.2010.0335
- Mayeda, A. (2010). English in elementary school: Voices from the frontline. *Teachers Learning with Children*, 15(3), 29–32.
- MEXT. (2008a). *Shogakkou gakushuu shidou youryou kaisetu: Gaikokugo katsudouhen [Explanatory commentary for the elementary school curriculum guidelines: Foreign language activities]*. Retrieved 8/26/10 from http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2009/06/16/1234931_012.pdf
- MEXT. (2008b). *Chugakkou gakushu shidou yoryo kaisetsu gaikokugo hen [Explanatory comment for the new study of course guideline for foreign languages in junior high*

- schools*]. Retrieved 8/26/10 from http://www.mext.go.jp/component/a_menu/education/micro_detail/__icsFiles/afiedfile/2011/01/05/1234912_010_1.pdf
- MEXT. (2008c). *Shogakkou gakushuu shidou youryou: Gaikokugo katsudou eiyakuban kariyaku [Course of study guidelines for foreign languages in elementary schools; provisional English version]*. Retrieved 8/26/10 from http://www.mext.go.jp/component/english/__icsFiles/afiedfile/2011/03/17/1303755_011.pdf
- MEXT. (2008d.) *The revisions of the courses of study for elementary and secondary schools*. Retrieved 8/26/10 from: http://www.mext.go.jp/english/elsec/__icsFiles/afiedfile/2011/03/28/1303755_001.pdf
- MEXT. (2009). *Koutougakkou gakushu shidou yoryo gaikokugo eigoban kariyaku [Course of study guidelines for foreign languages in senior high schools; provisional English version]*. Retrieved 8/26/10 from http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/new-cs/youryou/eiyaku/1298353.htm.
- Mercer, S. (2012). The complexity of learner agency. *Apples-Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 6(2), 41-59.
- Miyasako, N. (2012). How wide is the gulf between PPP and TBLT? *Journal for the Science of Schooling*, 13(1), 1-13.
- Mouratidis, A., Vansteenkiste, M., Michou, A., & Lens, W. (2013). Perceived structure and achievement goals as predictors of students' self-regulated learning and affect and the mediating role of competence need satisfaction. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 23(C), 179-186. doi:10.1016/j.lindif.2012.09.001
- Nakata, Y. (2006). *Motivation and experience in foreign language learning*. Oxford: Peter Lang.
- Nakata, Y. (2011). Teachers' readiness for promoting learner autonomy: A study of Japanese EFL high school teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(5), 900-910. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2011.03.001
- Nakata, Y. (2013). Perspectives on L2 motivation: Bridging the gaps between teachers, SLA researchers and teacher educators. In M. T. Apple, D. Da Silva, & T. Fellner (Eds.) *Language learning motivation in Japan* (pp. 309-325). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Nishida, R. (2013). A comprehensive summary of empirical studies of motivation among Japanese elementary school EFL learners. In M. T. Apple, D. Da Silva, & T. Fellner (Eds.) *Language learning motivation in Japan* (pp. 93-109). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Nishino, T., & Watanabe, M. (2008). Communication-oriented policies versus classroom realities in Japan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 42(1), 133-138.
- Noels, K. A., Pelletier, L. G., Clément, R., & Vallerand, R. J. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Language Learning*, 50(1), 57-85. doi:10.1111/0023-8333.00111
- Noels, K. A. (2013). Promoting the motivation of Japanese learners of English through autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In M. T. Apple, D. Da Silva, & T. Fellner (Eds.) *Language learning motivation in Japan* (pp.15-34). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Oga-Baldwin, W. L. Q. (2012). Observed classroom management variables influencing pupils' task engagement in elementary English activities. *Naruto University of Education Elementary School English Education Center Bulletin*, 3(1), 23-33.
- Oga-Baldwin, W. L. Q. & Nakata, Y. (2013). Native vs. non-native teachers: Who is the real model for Japanese elementary school pupils? *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 10(2), 91-113.

- Otsu, Y. (2004). *Shogakko eigo wa hitsuyoka [Is elementary school English necessary?]*. Keio Gijuku Daigaku Shuppan Kai.
- Reeve, J. (2012). A self-determination theory perspective on student engagement. In S. L. Christenson, A. L. Reschly, & C. Wylie (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Student Engagement* (pp. 149–172). Boston, MA: Springer US. doi:10.1007/978-1-4614-2018-7_7
- Reeve, J., & Assor, A. (2011). Do social institutions necessarily suppress personal autonomy? The possibility of schools as autonomy promoting contexts across the world. In V. Chirkov, R. M. Ryan, & K. Sheldon (Eds.), *Personal autonomy in cultural contexts: Global perspectives on the psychology of agency, freedom, and people's well-being* (pp. 111–132). New York: Springer.
- Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 209–218. doi:10.1037/0022-0663.98.1.209
- Rogers, C. (1969). *Freedom to learn*. Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill.
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 25(1), 54–67. doi:10.1006/ceps.1999.1020
- Sakai, H., & Kikuchi, K. (2009). An analysis of demotivators in the EFL classroom. *System*, 37(1), 57–69. doi:10.1016/j.system.2008.09.005
- Sato, R. (2010). Reconsidering the effectiveness and suitability of PPP and TBLT in the Japanese EFL classroom. *JALT Journal*, 32(2), 189–201.
- Schön, D., Boyer, M., Moreno, S., Besson, M., Peretz, I., & Kolinsky, R. (2008). Songs as an aid for language acquisition. *Cognition*, 106(2), 975–983. doi:10.1016/j.cognition.2007.03.005
- Schunk, D. H., & Gunn, T. P. (1985). Modeled importance of task strategies and achievement beliefs: Effect on self-efficacy and skill development. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 5(2), 247–258.
- Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). Motivation in the classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 85(4), 571–581. doi: 10.1037/0022-0663.85.4.571
- Tahira, M. (2012). Behind MEXT's new course of study guidelines. *The Language Teacher*, 36(3), 3–8.
- Underwood, P. R. (2012). Teacher beliefs and intentions regarding the instruction of English grammar under national curriculum reforms: A Theory of Planned Behaviour perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(6), 911–925. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2012.04.004
- White, R. W. (1959). Motivation reconsidered: The concept of competence. *Psychological Review*, 66(5), 297–333.
- Wu, X. (2003). Intrinsic motivation and young language learners: the impact of the classroom environment. *System*, 31(4), 501–517. doi:10.1016/j.system.2003.04.001
- Yashima, T., Zenuk-Nishide, L., & Shimizu, K. (2004). The influence of attitudes and affect on willingness to communicate and second language communication. *Language Learning*, 54(1), 119–152. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9922.2004.00250.x