A year-long study of motivational dynamics for Japanese secondary school students in language learning

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The study was conducted to see Japanese secondary students’ motivational dynamics throughout the course in the use of the mixed method of quantitative and qualitative design. In July 2014 and February 2015, a listening test consisting of 25 questions from EIKEN STEP 5 and a questionnaire were administered to 105 students, aged between 12 and 13 years old. The questionnaire measured intrinsic motivation, autonomy, competency, relatedness, willingness to communicate in language learning, Can-Do, interest in language and culture and Ideal L2 self. In the year-long curriculum, the textbook, provided by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, Sports and Technology, was used and also group presentation activities were included. Repeated measurement of t-tests revealed that listening showed increasing tendencies, whereas, competency, and interest in languages and culture showed decreasing tendencies. Cluster analysis was carried out to ascertain the underlying individual differences in listening abilities, motivation and other affective factors. Five clusters were identified including Cluster 1 with 30 students, Cluster 2 with 20 students, Cluster 3 with 22 students, Cluster 4 with 25 students, and Cluster 5 with 6 students. Cluster 3 with 22 students revealed the highest listening, motivational and affective changes, while Cluster 5 with 6 students showed the lowest tendencies in listening and motivational changes. Semi-structural interviews was conducted to the school principal and the English teacher to capture the students’ changes throughout the year. The interview was specifically focused on Cluster 5, and the data was coded and categorized. These students showed the socio-economic changes throughout the course, including family problems such as parental divorce, financial problems, and/or bullying in the school. The study as a whole thus identified from micro- and macro-perspectives of students’ motivational dynamics in students’ learning languages in the Japanese EFL context.

Keywords: Motivation, Japanese Secondary School Students, Affect.