From L2 learner to employment as an English teacher: A longitudinal study of an English education major in Japan

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This longitudinal case study explored the L2 journey of a Japanese learner of English. Drawing on interviews and a wide range of supporting data using a dynamic systems approach, the study offers insights into the L2 experiences of an individual in various learning environments including study abroad, and further documents the transition from L2 learner and pre-service teacher to L2 teacher. While the study utilized a retrospective approach to explore earliest recollections about formal English study prior to university, the remaining data collection was carried out in real time over six years, from the first year of university to the second year of employment.

The study provides a holistic view of the intricate interplay between educational, geographical, professional and social factors influencing L2 motivation and language learning beliefs as experienced from the perspective of a learner, pre-service teacher and in-service teacher. The results of the study reveal the complexity of the interaction between individual differences including learner style, beliefs and goals, learner contribution, motivation and career choices. Furthermore, the impact of the L2 experience on individual differences brought about by the transition of study at home to study abroad and back again, and the transition from learner to teacher is also highlighted.

Keywords: L2 motivation, study abroad, teacher education.