

Relationships Between L2 Motivation and Oral Communication Strategies Among Japanese University EFL Students

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ABSTRACT

Some previous research on second and foreign language (L2) learners has associated high motivation with more frequent use of language learning strategies. Although there seems to have been little or no research investigating a similar relationship between L2 motivation and the use of oral communication strategies (CS), it would seem reasonable to postulate a comparable correlation here. However, what remains even more unclear is which particular aspects of L2 motivation (and other related affective constructs) might be related to which specific categories of CS. The development of two data-gathering tools presents an opportunity to explore this question, especially with respect to Japanese learners of English: (1) Nakatani's (2006) Oral Communication Strategies Inventory (OCSI), and (2) Ryan's (2009) Motivational Factors Questionnaire (MFQ). This exploratory study used the OCSI and MFQ with 140 Japanese university students, all of whom had received training in oral communication strategies for English. Several significant correlations were found, though they were all relatively weak. Overall, the most salient CS categories and motivational-affective components were: social-affective speaking strategies, attempt-to-think-in-English speaking strategies, non-verbal speaking and listening strategies, word-oriented listening strategies, attitudes to learning English, interest in foreign languages, attitudes towards the L2 community, instrumentality, travel orientation, ethnocentrism, cultural interest and desire for international contact.

KEY WORDS

L2 motivation communication strategies EFL Japan proficiency

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Among the many substantial subfields of research on the teaching and learning of second and foreign languages, there are many interdisciplinary areas, points of mutual cross-reference and intersections. Three such subfields appear in this paper. One subfield that has been growing steadily concerns learners' use of communication strategies, which include oral communication strategies, or conversation strategies. In this paper the focus is on conversation strategies, but all three of the above terms are used interchangeably and are commonly denoted by "CS". The effective use of CS is a form of strategic communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), considered pivotal in overcoming, alleviating or avoiding communicative difficulties and breakdowns (e.g., Brown, 2011; Dörnyei, 1995; Færch & Kasper, 1983; Nakatani, 2005, 2006, 2010; Tarone, 1977, 1980). Such communicative problems include the failure to hear or understand part of one's interlocutor's utterance, insufficient vocabulary or grammatical knowledge to express one's thought, temporary linguistic memory failure, long silences due to the time taken in mentally preparing one's utterances, and insufficient interactive support provided by one interlocutor for the other. These difficulties always have the potential to occur even in first language communication, but even more in second language communication, such as that which involves Japanese learners of English. A related, overlapping and more established area concerns language learning strategies (see e.g., Macaro & Cohen, 2007). This has only indirect relevance to this study, but it is mentioned because the two fields can be considered to overlap in at least two ways: (1) it has been argued that some kinds of CS can also function as language learning strategies (LLS), if learners can access extra comprehensible input and experience negotiation of meaning and pushed output by using CSs to trigger interactional modifications and conversational

adjustments, thereby facilitating language acquisition (e.g., Rubin, 1987; Kasper and Kellerman, 1997); and (2) both phenomena concern the notion of strategy and therefore some degree of conscious, rational and self-directed effort to overcome or avoid difficulties. The abilities to use LLS and CS are thus often considered desirable traits of a self-reliant and resilient learner and user of a second language. The third area, on which there is a particularly large and diverse literature, is that of L2 motivation (motivation to learn a second or foreign language). It is widely considered that L2 motivation is a key factor in learners' degrees of success in acquiring communicative competence in a target L2 (see e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

Some of the general kinds of questions often dealt with in these three fields include: (1) What kinds of CS do effective L2 communicators use? (2) Which kinds of CS are particularly useful in particular situations? (3) What effects does CS/LLS use have on communication, interaction, language learning and perceived proficiency? (4) How can we teach CS/LLS to learners who we consider to lack them but need them? (5) Which kinds of LLS are useful in particular situations, and how can we encourage learners to use them? (6) How does L2 motivation affect language learning and language use? (7) Which kinds of personal, environmental and situational factors influence learners' L2 motivation? (8) How can we initiate and maintain learners' L2 motivation? Much literature shows that there is a likely interactive (mutually influential) relationship between L2 motivation and certain kinds of learning experiences, yet there seems to have been little or no substantial research investigating the relationship between L2 motivation and CS. The principal aim of this study, therefore, was to investigate the statistical associations between Japanese university students' self-reported frequency of use of oral communication strategies and their self-reported levels of multiple L2-motivation-related factors, and any role that L2 proficiency may have in mediating this relationship. It is hoped that discovering trends in Japanese learners' L2 motivation and CS use may provide insights into (1) how to predict communicative behavior based on motivational attitudes, beliefs and orientations, and (2) how to motivate students to use CS more.

1.2 CS (*Communication strategies, oral communication strategies or conversation strategies*)

Definitions and taxonomies of CS are many and varied. Having reviewed the psycholinguistic and interactive viewpoints of CS, including the negotiation of meaning, Nakatani (2010) concludes:

In actual communication, interlocutors have to use many strategies, such as maintaining discourse and buying time to think. [...] It is reasonable to consider that CSs consist of any attempts to solve communication problems and enhance communication with interlocutors. Therefore, it is appropriate to analyze learners' discourse data by focusing on not only negotiation devices but also other strategies for maintaining and developing interaction. (pp.118-119)

With the aim of developing a tool for CS research, Nakatani (2006) reviewed a series of tools primarily aimed at measuring learners' use of LLS, and concluded that although they also made useful advances in measuring CS use, they were still inadequate for CS research. Oxford's (1990, 1996) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) did not include a sufficient range of communication strategy items specific to classroom tasks, while others (Cohen *et al.*, 1998; Huang & Van Naerssen, 1987; Politzer, 1983; Politzer & McGroarty, 1985) paid insufficient attention to the validity and reliability of questionnaire items for interaction. To address this, Nakatani (2006) developed the Oral Communication Strategy Inventory (OCSI) through a multi-stage process of item formation based on learners' answers to open-ended questions, selection and removal of items through factor analyses and reliability analyses, and validity confirmation through examination of correlations with SILL in relation to a specific task. The OCSI consists of a speaking strategy part and a listening strategy part. The speaking components are: (a) social affective strategies, (b) fluency-oriented strategies, (c) negotiation for meaning while speaking, (d) accuracy-oriented strategies, (e) message reduction and alteration strategies, (f) nonverbal strategies while speaking, (g) message abandonment strategies and (h) attempt to think in English strategies. The listening components are: (i) negotiation for meaning while listening, (j) fluency-maintaining strategies, (k) scanning strategies, (l) getting the gist strategies, (m) nonverbal

strategies while listening, (n) less active listener strategies, and (o) word-oriented strategies. The OCSI contains 58 items with 5-point Lickert scales.

The characteristics of CS mentioned so far suggest that it is desirable for learners to be able to use CS. Indeed, some findings have suggested that there may be significant benefits of training in CS (Brown, 2011; Dörnyei, 1995; Senda, 1995; Nakatani, 2005). Focusing on the relationship between CS use and oral proficiency, Nakatani (2005) investigated achievement strategies in a program in which there was a significant autonomy element involving students' self-reflections and self-planning. The CS training group significantly improved in oral proficiency, whereas the non-CS general conversation group did not. This was found to be related to the CS training group's increased use of CS for fluency maintenance and negotiation of meaning. Subsequently, Nakatani (2010) found significant correlations between oral proficiency and self-reported use of CS related to both production and reception, especially those related to discourse maintenance and negotiation of meaning.

1.3 Motivation in LLS use

As mentioned above, there seems to have been little or no significant research on the relationship between CS and L2 motivation; on the other hand, the relationship between LLS and L2 motivation has featured in a number of models and studies, and CS are closely related to LLS. Among the research, some psychologically-based self-regulation models have been proposed. Zimmerman's (2000 & 2001, as cited in Oxford & Schramm, 2007) reviews of these included: (a) strategies, (b) monitoring of LLS use and effectiveness and making adjustments in LLS use, (c) motivation to self-regulate (e.g., to achieve a goal or to boost self-confidence), and (d) deeper motives for self-regulation, such as attitudes, beliefs and identity. In addition, Macaro (2001) pointed out three factors other than proficiency level that may influence LLS use: (1) the multiple simultaneous cognitive processing required for LLS use may be restricted by working memory limitations, (2) the ability to use particular kinds of strategies may depend on particular kinds of linguistic resources, and (3) considerable motivation is conceivably required to deploy multiple strategies simultaneously. As for empirical results, Jones, Palinscar, Ogle and Carr (1987) found motivation to be a major component in self-regulation. Successful and highly motivated learners employed more strategies, particularly planning, evaluation and monitoring. In contrast, those with low motivation employed a narrower range of strategies, and were less likely to act strategically. Furthermore, a study involving 36 learners of Japanese and 36 learners of Spanish (Okada, Oxford & Abo, 1996) revealed strong associations between metacognitive, cognitive and social strategy use and several motivational components in both groups, and Mochizuki (1999) reported more frequent LLS use in all six categories of SILL (Oxford, 1990) by highly motivated Japanese university students than less motivated ones.

Conversely, significant increases in motivation and self-efficacy following strategy instruction have also been reported (Chamot, Bernhardt, El-Dinary & Robbins, 1996). As Takeuchi, Griffiths and Coyle (2007) point out, the cause-effect direction remains unclear: "whether motivation spurs strategy use or, conversely, strategy use leads to better language performance, which in turn increases motivation and thus leads to increased strategy use [...] Few studies, however, have been conducted so far to ascertain causality" (Takeuchi *et al.*, 2007:72). Indeed, the relationship may be truly interactive (Oxford & Schramm, 2007).

1.4 Motivation and experiences of learning and communication

L2 motivation itself is complex and multifaceted, and it can be misleading to refer to "L2 motivation" as if it were a singular entity which applies uniformly to all kinds of language learning activities. For example, Student A might be highly motivated when it comes to oral activities in the L2, but poorly motivated when it comes to paying attention to grammatical accuracy in writing; in contrast, Student B might be highly motivated to complete practice exercises in grammar, reading and test preparation, but apparently uninterested in engaging in discussions. Most experienced L2 instructors would agree that in L2 classrooms, each different type of learning activity creates a different class atmosphere and different individual processes, bringing out and demonstrating different aspects of learners' personalities and specific abilities. In addition, research has shown that many different factors can influence the degree of a student's overall intended effort to learn a L2 (Dörnyei, 2001). These include the students' backgrounds of L2 study and their attributions of successes and

failures, the degree to which they feel the L2 to be relevant to their current lives and future goals, their social and cultural identities (*Ibid.*), their ideal and possible L2 selves (Dörnyei, 2009), their intrinsic interest in the L2 and the cultures and societies associated with it, their self-confidence with respect to using the L2 and self-efficacy with respect to particular tasks, and their anxieties about studying and using the L2 (Dörnyei, 2001). In addition, and in relation to these, is the quality of the learning experience, which includes the learner's social image, the intrinsic enjoyment of participating in learning tasks, learner autonomy and self-regulatory learning (*Ibid.*).

This brings us back to the interactive relationship between L2 motivation and LLS, as exemplified by the research by Chamot *et al.* (1996) mentioned earlier. In relation to self-determination theory and L2 learning, Dickinson (1995:173-4) has also pointed out, "There is substantial evidence from cognitive motivational studies that learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning successes and failures are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control." In a similar vein, this time reporting on 'identified regulation', Noels, Pelletier, Clément and Vallerand (2000:75) remark, "[our findings] may suggest that those who enjoy the feeling of learning a L2 may not necessarily feel personally involved in the learning process — they may view language learning as a puzzle or a language game that has few repercussions in everyday life. In order to foster sustained learning, it may not be sufficient to convince students that language learning is interesting and enjoyable, but that it is also personally important for them." This may be relevant to the relationship between CS use and L2 motivation, especially regarding learners' awareness of the importance and benefits of CS use, which often appears to be low among students who have mainly studied English in order to pass exams, often with materials that lack authenticity in communicative style and interactive patterns. Improving L2 communicative competence, especially strategic communicative competence, perhaps through effective use of CS, may also lead to increased general L2 motivation through increased identification with the L2. This would concord with Clément and Noels (1992), who claimed that acquired communicative competence in the L2 will have a 'washback' effect on the learner's identity.

1.5 Motivational factors

It has already been mentioned above that L2 motivation, or more specifically, intended learning effort, is influenced by many social and individual factors. Moreover, the degree of relevance of each factor may depend on the learning context. As Dörnyei (2001, following McGroarty, 1998) argued, "Foreign/second languages are learned in such diverse contexts that a lack of accounting for the contextual differences might render any motivation theory useless. Studying English for example, will have considerably different motivational overtones in, say, a post-colonial environment such as Hong Kong, in a second language acquisition context such as Canada, or in a monolingual and monocultural foreign language-learning context such as Hungary" (p.66). Ryan (2009) developed the Motivational Factors Questionnaire (MFQ) in an attempt to create a tool suitable for the Japanese EFL context. The components included in the MFQ are: (1) intended learning effort, (2) willingness to communicate (WTC) in English, (3) WTC in Japanese, (4) attitudes to learning English, (5) ideal L2 self, (6) L2 self-confidence, (7) anxiety concerning English, (8) interest in foreign languages, (9) cultural interest, (10) travel orientation, (11) instrumentality, (12) attitudes to the L2 community, (13) desire for international contact, (14) international empathy, (15) fear of assimilation, (16) ethnocentrism, (17) perceived milieu for learning English, and (18) reported parental encouragement. The MFQ questionnaire includes 108 items with 6-point Lickert scales.

1.6 Plausible correlations between the OCSI and MFQ

As pointed out above, there has been little or no significant research on the relationship between CS use and L2 motivation. Huang (2010) investigated relationships between CS use and self-reported oral proficiency, motivation and frequency of using English. Unfortunately, motivation was measured by only one question, "I enjoy speaking English", which does not address any of the L2 motivation constructs established in the literature. In sum, there is little previous research that would seem to offer suggestions. Some relationships

between the OCSI and MFQ seem obvious, such as those between intended learning effort and fluency-oriented and accuracy-oriented speaking strategies and word-oriented listening strategies. Other less obvious relationships are also interestingly plausible, such as those between attempt-to-think-in-English speaking strategies, negotiation-for-meaning listening strategies and the strength of the ideal L2 self, international empathy and WTC, since much literature has argued that allowing an L2 to form 'part of oneself' tends to facilitate successful acquisition (Dörnyei, 2001).

1.7 The role of proficiency

Nakatani (2010), compared higher and lower oral proficiency groups' OCSI scores. As for speaking, the higher-level participants reported greater frequencies than the lower-level groups in social-affective, fluency-oriented and negotiation-for-meaning strategies. As for listening, the higher-proficiency groups reported higher-frequency use of fluency-maintaining strategies. According to a review by Takeuchi *et al.* (2007), some studies yielded relationships between LLS use and proficiency, while others did not. Scarella and Oxford (1992) pointed out that other variables might have overshadowed strategy use in predicting proficiency, such as tolerance of ambiguity, self-esteem, risk-taking, field-dependence/ independence and motivation. Based on these findings, it is very difficult to predict what role, if any, proficiency might play in the scheme of relationships between the OCSI and MFQ.

2. Method

The participants were 140 first-year undergraduate students at a Japanese university of education. Their majors had not been determined and their classes were virtually random mixtures of students with various intended majors. The data was collected at the end of an English conversation course which included regular reference to CS. Students were given a list of CS categories and examples of specific phrases exactly the same as that given to participants in Nakatani (2010). As the list only contained CS which could be exemplified by specific phrases, the list did not contain descriptions of social-affective, accuracy-oriented, non-verbal, message-abandonment, word-oriented or less-active listener strategies. The generic lesson pattern was somewhat similar to that in Nakatani (2010). In each lesson, after the topic and task and been introduced, the students selected CS which they considered would be useful for the given task. After the performance of the given task, the students and instructor evaluated the use of CS, and the students wrote down the CS they had actually used in the main communicative task in their weekly English journals. The sequence of topics constituting the flow of the course was as follows: (1) Examining the lyrics of an English song, singing the song and then sharing opinions on it; (2) Listening to a presentation about the instructor's country (the UK) and asking questions about it; (3) Going shopping in an English-speaking country; (4) Going to a restaurant; (5) Communicating with a host family; (6) Examining the lyrics of an English song, singing the song and then sharing opinions on it; (7) Asking for and giving directions in an English-speaking country; (8) Listening to a presentation about Christmas customs in the instructor's country and asking questions about it; and (9) Explaining aspects of Japanese culture to a foreigner.

At the end of the course, the students took an English conversation test. This involved getting into pairs and performing and recording three short communicative tasks. After taking the test, the students self-evaluated themselves using the 7-point Oral Communication Assessment Scale for Japanese EFL Students used in Nakatani (2010). For grading purposes, the instructor also used this scale to assess the students' performances in their recordings. Subsequently, these participants filled in the OCSI questionnaire, then the MFQ questionnaire, and finally took the Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) to measure their general English language proficiency.

All of the data was inputted into SPSS 17 for analysis. The raw OOPT scores were converted into European Common Framework (ECF) levels (A1, A2, B1, etc.) for descriptive analysis, and the item ratings on the OCSI and MFQ were amalgamated into mean scores for each of the CS categories and MFQ components. Reliability analyses were carried out for all of these components, and the Cronbach α coefficients are shown in Table 1 in the results section. It is necessary to note that while most of these were sufficiently high, some of them were low. This will be discussed later.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive reports

3.1.1 Proficiency

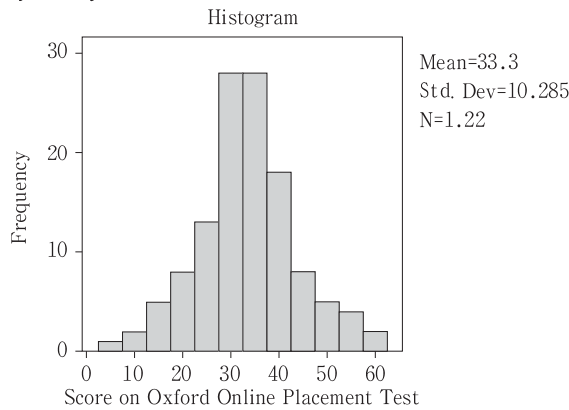


Figure 1: Frequency histogram of raw OOPT scores

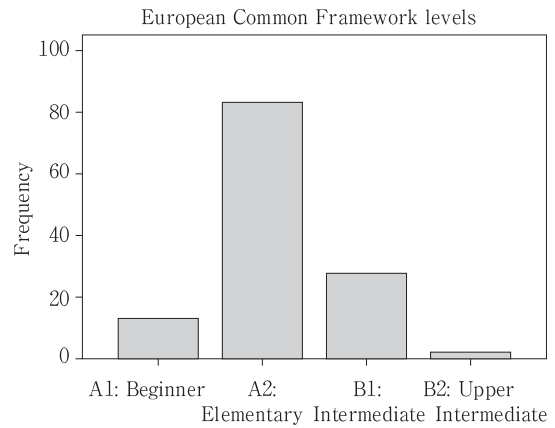


Figure 2: Frequencies of ECF levels

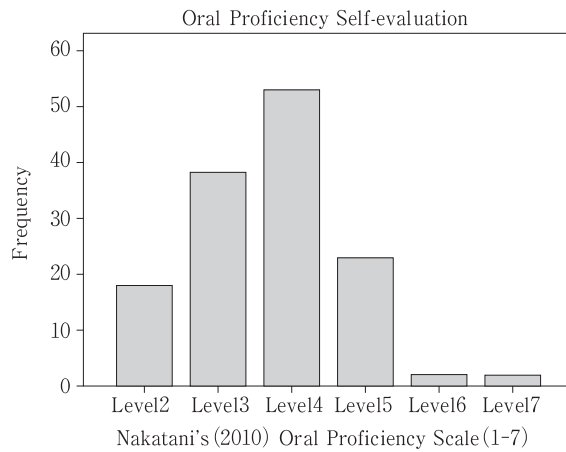


Figure 3: Frequencies of self-assessed oral communication proficiency (SAOCP) levels

Figure 1 suggests that the OOPT scores followed a normal distribution curve, Figure 2 shows that the most common ECF level was A2 (Elementary), and Figure 3 shows that the most common oral proficiency levels in the participants' self-evaluations were Level 4, followed by Level 3, Level 5 and Level 2.

3.1.2 Motivation and CS use

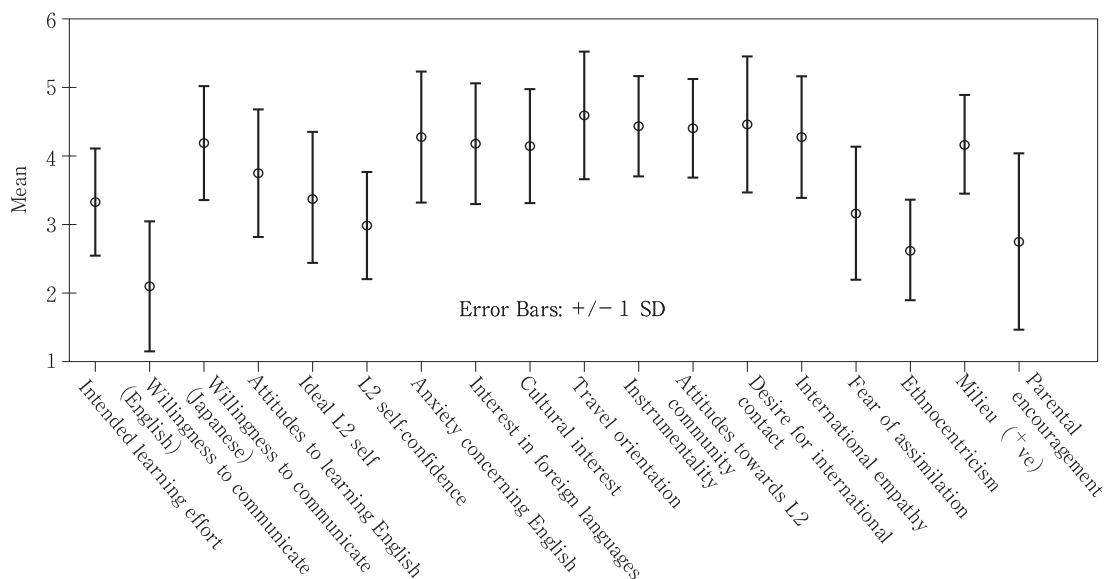


Figure 4: Means and standard deviations on the MFQ components

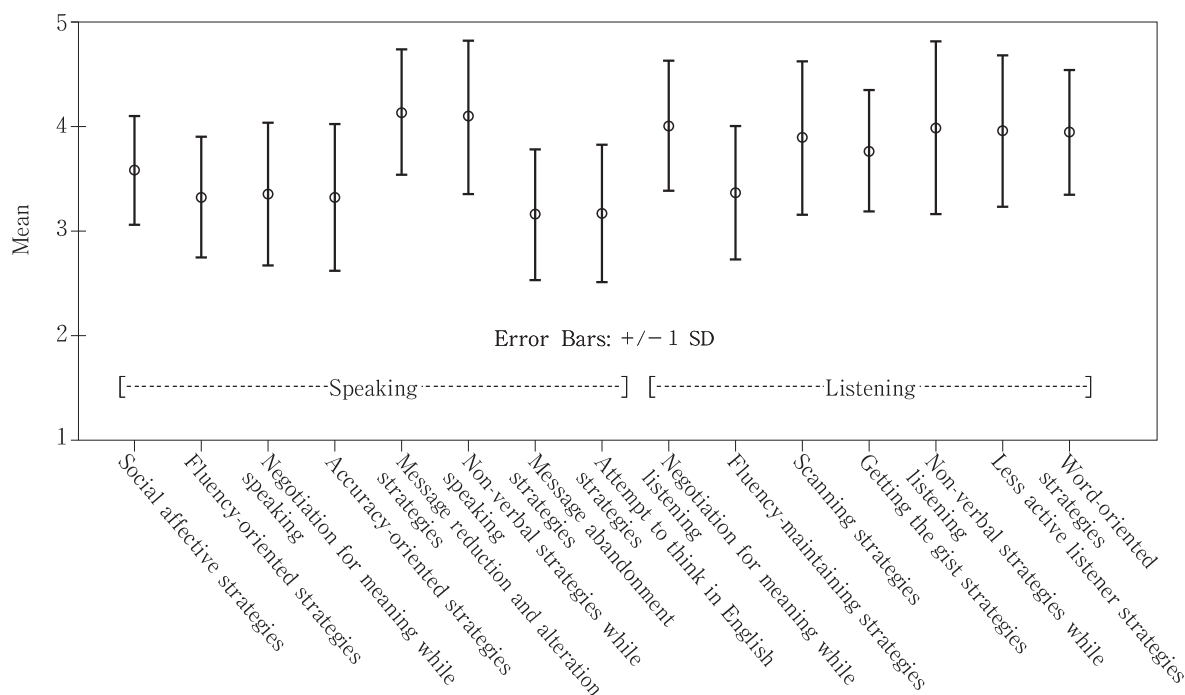


Figure 5: Means and standard deviations on the OCSI categories

The means for MFQ shown in Figure 4 show that, although reported willingness to communicate in English tended to be very low, and mean L2 self-confidence and perceived parental encouragement were also relatively low, ethnocentrism also tended to be low, and the means for other components such as travel orientation, desire for international contact and attitudes towards the L2 community were moderately positive. Somewhat disconcertingly, mean intended learning effort was just below the middle point. As shown in Figure 5, the means for reported frequency of CS use were in the top half of the scale for all CS categories. The eight CS which tended to receive the highest ratings were: (1) message reduction and alteration strategies, (2) non-verbal strategies while speaking, (3) negotiation for meaning while listening, (4) non-verbal strategies while listening, (5) less-active listener strategies, (6) word-oriented strategies, (7) scanning strategies and (8) getting-the-gist strategies.

3.2 Correlations

Table 1 shows the significant Pearson correlations revealed between the MFQ and OCSI components. It also shows Cronbach α coefficients for each component. Of the α values for the 15 OCSI categories, eight are over .7, six are between .58 and .69, and one (H: Attempt-to-think-in-English strategies) was -.002, indicating a weak inverse relationship between the items and a significant reliability issue for that scale. Of the α values for the 18 MFQ components, 13 were over .7 and the other five were between .60 and .68. On examining the Pearson correlations, a number of clusters of significant correlations are noticeable, though these correlations are generally weak or moderately weak, the strongest five r coefficients being -.39, which was between non-verbal strategies while listening and ethnocentrism, and .38, .36, .36, and .35, which were between social-affective strategies and attitudes towards the L2 community, cultural interest, attitudes towards learning English and interest in foreign languages, respectively. The proficiency (OOPT) score and self-assessed oral communication proficiency both correlated with very few components from either the OCSI or MFQ. Nevertheless, among the OCSI components, use of social-affective strategies while speaking correlated significantly with 14 MFQ components and (slightly) with self-assessed oral communication proficiency. Interestingly, use of non-verbal strategies while speaking and non-verbal strategies while listening correlated with 11 and 7 MFQ components, respectively. In addition, use of word-oriented listening strategies correlated with 10 MFQ components, and among other speaking strategies, fluency-orientation and attempts to think in English were each correlated with 8 MFQ components. Negotiation for meaning while speaking, getting the gist, and less-active listener strategies

were not correlated with any MFQ components. Focusing on the MFQ, attitudes towards the L2 community, instrumentality and desire for international contact seemed to generate the greatest numbers of significant correlations with OCSI components. Fear of assimilation did not correlate with any OCSI components. Parental encouragement and willingness to communicate in either English or Japanese each featured in only one or two weak correlations.

Table 1: Correlations between MFQ and OCSI components (and Cronbach α reliability coefficients for each component)

	Speaking								Listening								OOPT Score	SAOCP
	A: Social-affective speaking strategies ($\alpha = .76$)	B: Fluency-oriented strategies ($\alpha = .75$)	C: Negotiation for meaning while speaking ($\alpha = .77$)	D: Accuracy-oriented strategies ($\alpha = .82$)	E: Message reduction and alteration strategies ($\alpha = .77$)	F: Nonverbal strategies while speaking ($\alpha = .62$)	G: Message-abandonment strategies ($\alpha = .58$)	H: Attempt-to-think-in-English strategies ($\alpha = -.002$)	I: Negotiation for meaning while listening ($\alpha = .78$)	J: Fluency-maintaining strategies ($\alpha = .66$)	K: Scanning strategies ($\alpha = .81$)	L: Getting-the-gist strategies ($\alpha = .67$)	M: Nonverbal strategies while listening ($\alpha = .80$)	N: Less-active listener strategies ($\alpha = .61$)	O: Word-oriented strategies ($\alpha = .69$)			
1. Intended learning effort ($\alpha = .81$)	.26**							.22*										
2. Willingness to communicate (English) ($\alpha = .89$)																		
3. Willingness to communicate (Japanese) ($\alpha = .82$)	.19*							.23*										
4. Attitudes to learning English ($\alpha = .86$)	.36**	.31**						.19*								.22*	.23*	
5. Ideal L2 self ($\alpha = .82$)	.25**	.20*						.21*		.21*								
6. L2 self-confidence ($\alpha = .60$)		.24**															.26**	
7. English anxiety ($\alpha = .79$)	-.24*																-.25**	
8. Interest in foreign languages ($\alpha = .73$)	.35**	.24**			.26**	.29**		.28*				.20*			.26**			
9. Cultural interest ($\alpha = .80$)	.36**					.27**									.20*		.27*	
10. Travel orientation ($\alpha = .77$)	.34**				.27**	.24**		.33**	.21*			.24*			.24*			
11. Instrumentality ($\alpha = .86$)	.31*			.20*		.23*		.30**	.21*		.21*				.23*	.23*		
12. Attitudes towards L2 community ($\alpha = .81$)	.38**	.29**				.29**		.31*	.24*			.22*			.27**		.22*	
13. Desire for international contact ($\alpha = .84$)	.28*	.22*		.20*	.21*	.28**		.26**	.19*		.21*	.26**			.28**			
14. International empathy ($\alpha = .61$)	.27**					.32**						.31**			.25*			
15. Fear of assimilation ($\alpha = .68$)																		
16. Ethnocentrism ($\alpha = .68$)	-.28**	-.28*							-.19*			-.24*	-.39**		-.30**			
17. Perceived milieu ($\alpha = .68$)	.28**	.21*				.31**			.23*			.29**			.33**			
18. Parental encouragement ($\alpha = .88$)									-.22*									
OOPT Score																		
SAOCP	.28**																	

(Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$)

4. Discussion and conclusion

To summarize the findings, most motivational factors were correlated with frequent use of social-affective speaking strategies; non-verbal speaking and listening strategies were used frequently, especially by highly motivated students; fluency-oriented speaking, attempting to think in English and word-oriented strategies were also correlated with several attitudinal and orientational aspects of motivation. Surprisingly, negotiation for meaning while speaking, attempting to get the gist and less active listening were barely correlated at all with motivational variables. It must be stressed that cause-effect directionality cannot be analyzed merely through correlations yielded by data gathered in a temporally singular “snap-shot” observation. Some previous research construes motivation as a predictor of LLS use, while other research stresses the role of autonomy (e.g., LLS use) and quality of classroom activities in driving L2 motivation. To investigate cause and effect relationships between L2 motivation and CS use properly, a survey or experiment involving a longitudinal element with controlled variables would be necessary.

On reflection, a number of methodological issues have arisen from this study. Some items in the MFQ questionnaire may need to be re-examined for validity, especially those concerning willingness to communicate. The items for willingness to communicate (WTC) differ markedly from items and definitions in the L2 WTC literature (e.g., MacIntyre). They seemed to focus on initiating communication in situations which were vaguely defined in terms of intercultural contact. Given that the participants in this study have very few opportunities to initiate communication in English, it may have been difficult for the participants to answer these items meaningfully. As for the OCSI, although the scales and items were rigorously tested for validity and reliability in Nakatani (2006), category H, attempt-to-think-in-English strategies while speaking, yielded an α value of $-.002$ in the present study, suggesting a significant reliability issue. There are only two items in this category, “I think first of a sentence I already know in English and then try to change it to fit the situation,” and “I try to think of what I want to say not in my native language but English.” For some reason, a significant proportion of participants in this study seemed to regard these two items as two different strategies. For the present study, it was not possible to obtain an authentic copy of the original Japanese version, so a new Japanese version was devised (and re-checked) based on the English version in Nakatani (2010). The Japanese version needs to be re-examined. In addition, answering a large total number of items in the MFQ and OCSI combined may have led to “questionnaire-fatigue”, undermining reliability in both questionnaires. Conducting several separate tests may not be the ideal way of obtaining an overall picture of the scheme relationships, especially given the potential for accumulation of statistical errors.

In future research on the relationships between L2 motivational factors and CS use, a range of different kinds of studies is desirable. Questionnaires with open-ended items may be necessary to develop tools for measuring both L2 motivational factors and CS use with more validity and relevance to the local context. Studies with experimental designs involving CS training as an independent variable may yield interesting effects on L2 motivational factors. In order to understand individuals’ processes and conscious thoughts more deeply, qualitative research would be advisable, including interviews, free writing, post-activity reflection protocols and discourse analysis.

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