

The Effects of Extracurricular English Learning on Public Elementary Students' Motivation

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Introduction

The research described here examines the motivation of learning English among Japanese third and fourth graders in a public elementary school. The purpose is to better understand where their motivation to learn comes from, by analyzing data qualitatively. Although several metrics were considered including a self-assessment of their motivation, proficiency, favorite activities in class and affective variables of each grade, the amount and nature of their English learning experience outside of classrooms was found to be highly significant. Therefore, this report will focus on the effects of experience outside the classroom on motivation to learn, overall enjoyment and subsequent proficiency.

Background

It is well established that positive attitudes are a key factor in helping students become successful language learners (Shin, 2014). Liking of English and building confidence are among the most influential factors. Chung and Huang (2010) suggested the importance of researching how students like learning foreign language. Nikolov (1999) suggested the importance of the development of confidence in learning English, especially for young learners. Although previous studies have reported that children generally start learning foreign language with positive attitudes (Asmali, 2017; Carreira, 2006; Nikolov, 1999), research focusing on children's motivation and impression toward English at the early stage of learning has not been explored adequately yet. It is quite meaningful to conduct a study examining students' motivation (Chung, I. F., & Huang, Y. C., 2010) at early stages, especially when English has become a regular subject for

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upper graders. In order to ensure that students have a positive motivation and to maintain it well into their future, first of all, it is worthwhile to investigate the reasons why they like English and why they think they are good at English at the early stage of learning English.

Participants

A total of 195 students (107 third graders, 88 fourth graders) participated in this survey. Students were given classes for English activities once a week when they were in first and second grades, and taught by a homeroom teacher and an ALT. Both the third and the fourth graders were taught by the researcher when they were in third grades: The third graders were taught by the researcher in 2020, and the fourth graders were taught by the researcher in 2019. The third and fourth graders were chosen as participants, since they were in the middle grades and considered mature enough and experienced enough with English classes to be able to state their impression of English learning.

Curriculum in the Research Site

The research site was in one of the districts in which a JTE and a homeroom teacher or an ALT and a homeroom teacher co-teach. Students in A ward encounter English classes in the first grade for the first time at school. Here in this stage as first and second graders, class objective is to make students familiarize with English and to let them enjoy learning English. Therefore, it is called *Foreign Language Activities* and it does not have a formal textbook to use. Each class has an ALT (Assistant Language Teacher) and a homeroom teacher. The Homeroom teacher co-teaches with the ALT and most children expect to have fun and engaging moments in the classes. For the third and the fourth graders, who are the participants of this study, the name of the class is still *Foreign Language Activities*, however, each student is given a sub-textbook that is called "Let's try! 1" for the third graders, and "Let's try! 2" for the fourth graders, published by MEXT. For fifth and sixth graders, they have classes twice a week and English is a regular subject, so they started to get report cards. From 2020, they have also started to use textbooks called *NEW HORIZON Elementary 5* for

fifth graders, and *NEW HORIZON Elementary 6* for sixth graders, these were newly published by *Tokyoshoseki* in 2019. The content of the classes are based on these activities as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Flow of the Class for the Third and the Fourth graders

Length of time (45 minutes)	Activity
0-5 min	① Activities for warm up or Songs
5-10 min	② Activities for literacy (ABC)
7-10 min	③ Joint Storytelling
10-20 min	④ Textbooks

Procedure

A questionnaire was distributed in the last class in December 2020 and the participants completed it in ten minutes. Since they usually evaluate their work at the end of the term in an open-ended question format, the familiar method of evaluation made them comfortable. The permission to conduct the questionnaire was given by a principal of B elementary school.

The data were gathered with the help of six different homeroom teachers of the participants. They were in the classroom to watch students and help the researcher distribute the questionnaire and make sure that the classroom environment was organized enough for the questionnaire. In addition to the homeroom teacher, the researcher was in the classroom of the third grade as a JTE; the researcher and the JTE for the fourth graders were in the classroom of the fourth grades. The researcher and the JTE for the fourth grade had discussed and prepared for the survey.

The researcher started the survey with an explanation that the questionnaire would not affect their grade and they were asked to state their honest feelings. They were told not to answer to please the teachers. Then, the JTE and a homeroom teacher gave out the questionnaire. The participants were asked to write their names, and then to answer the questions one by one, while the JTE read each item on the questionnaire aloud. Some of them needed more time to

write their answers for open-ended questions, and they were given enough time to write as much as they liked using the recess time after the class.

Method

The study described here was initially conducted as part of a master thesis investigating motivation. In order to investigate motivation toward English learning among young learners, as Appendix 1 and 2 shows, a questionnaire was developed with nine items for the third graders, and 11 items for the fourth graders. All the questions were written in Japanese. Two questions were biographical yes/no questions about their background: their experience of studying English outside the class, which is the focus of this paper, and their experience of going abroad. In the main part of the questionnaire, there were questions, asking participants to evaluate how much they like English and how good they think in English, in a four-point Likert scale, from poor (=1) to good (=4). They were also asked to write why they judged themselves in this way.

From the data, according to the chi-square test for independence, two relations were found to be statistically significant: students' positive motivation for English and their self-evaluation of their English and students' positive motivation for English and their experience learning English outside the class. Four main reasons why students like English were mainly investigated. These were as follows; (1) they enjoy or get interested in English, (2) they are good at English, (3) they have experience learning English outside school, and (4) English is useful. The results indicated that 88% (92 out of 105) of the third graders and 80% (70 out of 88) of the fourth graders had positive attitudes towards English. In general, these results were both vague and expected as these grades tend to be positive about everything and the instrument to collect data, a 4-point self-rating scale, was not precise enough to capture more than just descriptive data. More robust and significant data from a more comprehensive survey would be required to draw further conclusions. The survey was however successful in isolating one key variable which can be clearly and concretely correlated with increased motivation. This was the category of (3) "they have experience learning English outside school". Therefore, this paper focuses on category, (3)

investigating their motivation by considering whether or not they have exposure to extra-curricular English and how that exposure influences their motivation.

Results

(1) The Relationship between Liking of English and Learning Experience outside School

In the questionnaire, there was a question asking whether they were learning outside school. Among the students who answered the question (107 third graders, 88 fourth graders), 49% of the third graders and 47% of the fourth graders had English learning experience outside of classroom.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relation between their fondness for English and their experience of learning English outside school. In order to conduct the chi-square, those who chose scales of 1 and 2 in the question asking how they like English as one group and the rest as the other group. Table 2 and 3 below show the cross-tabulation data. In Table 2, 2 responses from 3rd grade students are not included in a chi-square test,

Table 2. Cross Tabulation Data of the Third Graders: Liking of English and Their Experience Learning English outside the school

3rd Grade Students		Attitude towards English		Total
		Dislike	Like	
External Experience	Yes	0	53	53
	No	13	39	52
Total		13	92	105

Table 3. Cross Tabulation Data of the Fourth Graders: Liking of English and Their Experience Learning English outside the School

4th Grade Students		Attitude towards English		Total
		Dislike	Like	
External Experience	Yes	2	39	41
	No	16	31	47
Total		18	70	88

because they did not fill out the questionnaire completely.

The relation between these variables among the third graders was significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 105) = 15.223, p < .005, \phi = .381$. The relation between these variables among the fourth graders was also significant, $\chi^2(3, N = 88) = 15.128, p < .005, \phi = .415$. For both the third and the fourth graders, those who have experience of learning English outside of classrooms were more likely than those without the experience to feel that they like English. Examples they stated as an extracurricular English are, learning at a cram school, English communication school, special events such as English camp, being taught by family members or with self-study materials.

(2) Students' Actual Comments

This section will introduce all students' actual comments. The comments in Japanese were expressed and recorded verbatim by the participants, and English comments were translated by the researcher. To obtain information about sources of their extracurricular English, the reasons are classified into broad categories, trying to find the commonality. The categories are (1) English learning experience at cram school (2) Parents' influence (3) special events outside the classrooms (4) self-study at home (5) joy of learning caused by no extracurricular English.

● From third graders

【10 comments from students who like English (students who chose 3 or 4 on the Likert scale)】

*Students' comment who have no extracurricular English are represented by the symbol \ominus , and students' comments who have experience learning English outside the class are represented by the symbol \oplus to differentiate these two groups.

Category 1. English learning experience at cram school (5 comments)

\oplus Because I play with my friends at English cram school while taking in English.

えいごのじゅくでえいごでいいながら、あそんだりしているから。

⊕ Because I have learnt English since 3 years old.

3才からずっとなっているから。

⊕ Because I have learnt English since 3 years old.

3才からずっとなっているから。*Exactly same answer from the above.

⊕ Because I have learnt English through GI materials which is first grades in junior high school level, from KUMON. I love it.

くもんのGI教材(中学1年生の教材)をやっているからです。大好きです。

⊕ Because I get used to learn English thanks to cram school.

じゅくでなれてるから。

Category 2. Parents' influence (2 comments)

⊕ Because, my dad told me a lot so I love English. (*the answer was written in English.)

⊕ Because both my mom and dad are perfect in English, they enrolled me in an English school and I got to like English.

おかあさんとおとうさんもえいごがかんべきでスクールとかにいれられたりしてすきになりました。

Category 3. Special events outside the classroom (1 comment)

⊕ Because of Hakodate camp. I go to cram school and there was an event to go to Hokkaido. There was a someone who got to like me there, which made me like English as well as being good at English.

きっかけは、はこだてキャンプです。わたしは、えいごをならっていて、そこで、北海道へ行って、わたしをすきになってくれる人がいたので、すきになったし、とくいにもなりました。

Category 4. Self-study at home (1 comment)

⊕ Because I read English books.

英語の本をよんでいるから。

Category 5. Joy of learning caused by no extracurricular English learning (1 comment)

- ⊖ Because I haven't learnt English outside the class, it is fun.
ならったことないからおもしろい。

【2 comments from students who don't like English (students who chose 1 or 2 on the Likert scale)】

Category 1: Negative impression or lack of confidence caused by no experience learning English outside the class (1 comment)

- ⊖ Because I don't study English that much.
あまりやっていないから。
- ⊖ Because I don't go to any cram school, and I don't understand English.
えいごはならっていないからわからないから。

● From fourth graders

【8 comments from students who like English (students who chose 3 or 4 on the Likert scale)】

Category 1. English learning experience at cram school (5 comments)

- ⊕ I go to English cram school and I can speak English.
えい語に通っていて、しゃべれるから。
- ⊕ I have studied English since I was 3 years old.
3 さいからやっているから。
- ⊕ I have studied English for many years.
何年もやっているから。
- ⊕ Because I go to English cram school.
えいごをならっているから。
- ⊖ I used to go to cram school.
昔にえいかいわスクールに通っていたから。

Category 2. Parents' influence (1 comments)

- ⊕ Both my mom and dad speak English for work at home. It made me want to be good at English. Then, I started reading English books or writing diaries in

English, which made me get to like English.

私は、お母さんやお父さんが、家で仕事などで話していて、自分も上手になりたいと思い、英語の本を読んだり、英語で日記を書いたりしているうちに好きになったからです。

Category 3. Special events outside the classroom (1 comment)

⊕ Because of the TGG, the Likert scale changed from 2 to 3.

前は2だったけど、TGGに行ったことにより、2から3になった。

Category 4. Self-study at home (1 comment)

None.

Category 5. Joy of learning caused by no extracurricular English learning (1 comment)

⊖ Because we don't speak English outside the school, I become more excited.

学校以外で英語を話さないなのでその分楽しみだから。

There were no students in a less motivated group (students who chose 1 or 2 on the Likert scale) who made comments related to having extracurricular English.

Discussion of Third Graders Comments

Whether they used to learn or have learned English outside the classroom (N = 5) accounted for the majority of positive statements: "I have learned English from 3 years old." or "I used to go to an English cram school."

Other than that, a few statements included "I read English books.", "I went to English camp, ~", "because, my dad told me a lot so I love English.", all showing family or parents environment in English learning. It was already claimed that young learners' motivation to learn a foreign language depends partly on parental influence (Ohlshtain et al., 1990). Not so many students implied influence of their parents, but it was obvious, by looking at a few answers, that growing up in an environment where their parents spoke English in daily life or for work could be inspiring. They could feel that English is valu-

able, and they would like to practice more to be like their parents.

The comment about experiencing English camp, are difficult to interpret but are nevertheless significant in gaining insight into the students' experiences and attitudes towards learning English outside the class as well as their perspectives on using English as a form of social interaction. This student could connect with someone using English, and the experience lead her to both get to like English and have confidence in learning English.

It is also important to note that a student wrote, "It is interesting because I have never had the chance to learn English outside of the classroom." It was rare to see the relationship between not learning English outside the classroom and the student's love of English. It's probably because the student enjoyed it because it's something new and unique to him.

Negative statements under this category ($N = 2$) suggested that they do not like English because they do not learn English outside the classroom. Comments are "Because I don't study English that much." and "Because I don't go to any cram school, and I don't understand English." implied that they know and understand that they have to learn English as much as possible to be good at it. It seems that they feel guilty for not trying to learning English as much as possible. Here, although they judged their fondness of English poorly, it's good to know why they judged in this way. The students logically concluded that if they have a lack of time learning English, they will not get to like English. This can be positively influenced. Teachers can help, guide and support their English learning at home so that they can feel they have learnt English enough to get to like English.

Discussion of Fourth Graders Comments

The majority of positive statements were related to whether they used to learn or have learnt English outside the classroom ($N = 5$), for example, stating "I have learnt English for many years." A statement was about having been to TGG, which was a special opportunity given for all 4th graders as a part of English curriculum. Two statements implied positive influence from their parents, for example, stating "My mom and dad speak English for work at home..." The

statement also included the statement that she does self-study at home by writing an English diary or reading English books autonomously. It is also important to note that a statement clearly showed positive influence of not having a chance to learn English outside the classroom, "I don't speak English except for at school, so I am looking forward to English class." It seemed to imply new and fresh things are appealing for the student. There were no negative statements in this category for the fourth-grade group.

Conclusion

It was found that having an opportunity to be exposed to English made them feel that they are good at English and they subsequently like English. Further, it was unexpected and almost shocking to know that a student stated "Because I don't go to any cram school..." as a reason for disliking English. It implies that a student knows that many students other than him learn English outside the classroom and he knows that his English skills are not as good as theirs. The subsequent inferiority he feels probably is a cause of his dislike toward English. In other words, some students could feel inferior to those who learn English outside the class, just because they are exposed to extracurricular English.

Therefore, it can be suggested that encouraging students to have more opportunities to learn English outside the class can be a way to build their confidence and enhance their motivation for learning English. It was also found that the opportunities were not only limited to attending specialized schools of English (juku). Although whether students go to a specialized English school cannot be controlled by teachers, what teachers can do is to create an environment and guide them to do self-study at home, by giving them simple enjoyable homework or videos for reviewing lessons. Informing them of useful English learning Internet sites and Youtube links regularly, may also work. In their responses, one student in the third grade showed her negative attitude toward English (she chose 1 on the scale of 1 to 4), by stating "I don't practice at home." This comment suggests that giving a chance to learn English by herself at home might build confidence toward learning English and developing a 'lik-

ing' of English.

There was a further comment which implies that the lack of extracurricular English could work positively. This is apparent from the statement; "Because I haven't learnt English outside the class, it is fun." However, the opposite wasn't confirmed. There were no students both in 3rd and 4th grades who mentioned that because of having extracurricular English, they don't like English. This statement further supports the notion that extracurricular exposure to English is a positive influence. In conclusion, based on the students' comments and responses, it would seem that having extracurricular exposure to English could really be the key to fostering children's love and confidence toward learning English. Love and satisfaction are great motivators that determine learners' ultimate competence. This is in line with the argument that happy students learn more (Helgesen, 2016). The subjective nature of these influences makes them difficult for teachers to measure and qualify, therefore it is important that teachers encourage and support all students learning experiences both inside the classroom and beyond.

Appendix 1 Questionnaire for Third Graders

えいごじゅぎょうアンケート

() 年 () 組 () 番 名前 ()

はい か いいえ に○をつけてください。

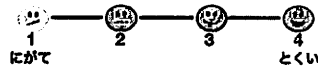
(1) えいかいわスクールやえいごのじゅくに通っていますか？

はい / いいえ

(2) 外国に行ったことがありますか？

はい / いいえ 【はいの場合：国名 ()】

1. えいごはとくいですか？ 1～4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



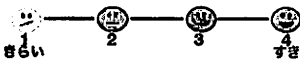
(理由)

2. えいごは好きですか？ 1～4から1つえらび○をつけてください。

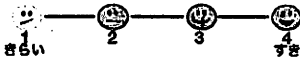


(理由)

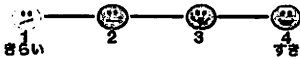
3. アルファベットの学習は好きですか？ 1～4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



4. ジョイントストーリーテリングの学習は好きですか？ 1～4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



5. 教科書の学習は好きですか？ 1～4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



6. アルファベット、ジョイントストーリーテリング、教科書の中で一番好きだった活動は何ですか？

【一番好きだった活動の名前： ()】

(理由)

7. 2学期のえいごのじゅぎょうを終えて、心に残っていることを書いてください。

Appendix 2 Questionnaire for Fourth Graders

えいごじゅぎょうアンケート

() 年 () 組 () 番 名前 ()

はい か いいえ に○をつけてください。

(1) えいごのわくわくやえいごのじゅぎょうに通っていますか?

はい / いいえ

(2) 外国に行ったことがありますか?

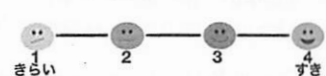
はい / いいえ 【はいの場合: 国名 ()】

1. えいごはとくですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



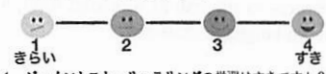
(理由)

2. えいごは好きですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。

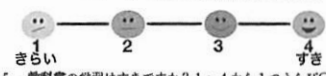


(理由)

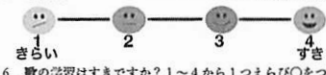
3. アルファベットの学習は好きですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



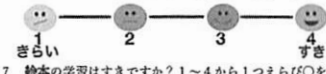
4. ジョイントストーリーテリングの学習は好きですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



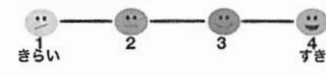
5. 教科書の学習は好きですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



6. 歌の学習は好きですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



7. 絵本の学習は好きですか? 1~4から1つえらび○をつけてください。



8. アルファベット、ジョイントストーリーテリング、教科書、歌、絵本の中で一番好きだった活動は何ですか?

【一番好きだった活動の名前: ()】

(理由)

9. 2学期のえいごのじゅぎょうを終えて、心にのこっていることを書いてください。

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