

Modified Blended Learning: De-motivated Japanese College EFL Learners Sustain Motivation to Improve English Listening Skills

Yuichi Todaka

Corresponding author email id: todaka@miyazaki-mu.ac.jp

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Abstract – Blended learning is described as a mixture of online and traditional face-to-face planned class activities. Students were found to work more autonomously and to be focused while becoming more responsible for their own learning. Authentic materials such as YouTube can help students understand the real world outside. The use, however, of mobile phones in class as a pedagogical technique does not work for those students who are more inclined to use conventional devices such as CD or DVD players. We therefore did not utilize mobile phones in class; instead, we provided various YouTube sites on which information relevant to student hobbies and interests can be found with mobile phones as learning support outside the class. Based on our findings, our modified blended learning helped most of this study's freshmen students sustain motivation to improve their English listening skills, even during the summer break.

Keywords – Blended Learning, De-Motivated College EFL Learners, Learning Motivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Research on ESL/EFL students' English language learning is proliferating as motivation becomes more recognized as a crucial requisite for successful second language learning [6]-[12]-[13]-[14]-[16]-[28]. However, researchers have not agreed upon what roles different components of motivation such as individual differences and cultural factors play. Nonetheless, many intervention activities with emphasis on imagery have been proposed in recent years.

The use of imagery training has become conventional in sport psychology, and imagery training involves 'a specific set of dimensions (e.g. vividness, controllability, duration, the difficulty in evoking an image, the ease of formation of an image, perspective taken) and modalities (e.g. visual, kinesthetic, auditory, tactile, gustatory and olfactory [8].' In addition, research indicates that imagery abilities can be improved through training, which implies that they are better described as a skill rather than ability, making full use of the six senses (i.e. visual, kinesthetic, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory [32] cited in [8].

However, little is known regarding how learners use their imagination or how it can be utilized to facilitate learning [41]; and since only a few possible selves/visionary motivational programs have been carried out (e.g. [34]-[35], future investigators could conduct interventions with an emphasis on imagery. These investigations could examine the effects of the different conditions (e.g. perspectives, frequencies of imagery use, process versus outcome, and the use of technology) on L2 motivation.

Nevertheless, some studies have found evidence of the effectiveness of intervention activities with an emphasis on imagery. For instance, Chan [8] indicates the importance of the use of examples of imagery to help students understand both the benefits and the process of imagery use. Furthermore, Chan [8] explains that the benefits of imagery use are best attained if imagery is linked with a strong desire, specifically grounded in reality, and accompanied with a concrete plan. Todaka [50]-[53], reports on the importance of establishing new and concrete

English study reasons to help Japanese college freshmen sustain their motivation to study English. We speculate that the establishment of concrete English study reasons can be a crucial prerequisite for intervention activities that focus on imagery to help Japanese college freshmen set short-term/long-term goals and sustain motivation to study English.

A goal is a desired result that an EFL learner would like to achieve. It is important however for any EFL learner to truly understand why she/he wants to study English in the first place. This is because Agawa et al. [1] cited in [44] reported the following:

In a university setting, uncovered amotivation, in which the participants noted ‘no interest in foreign languages, cultures or people’ and ‘not understanding for what purpose English is being studied’ (my translation, [45]).

Sampson [45] also reports the following:

The literature suggests perceived relevance of English study to be an integral influence on the motivation of Japanese students. Sitting in classrooms week in week out as part of a set of compulsory subjects, many learners may have only a vague idea of the purpose of their EFL studies and be uncertain as to how they might use English in the future.

Because most Japanese high school students study English only to pass college entrance exams, Todaka [53] reports on the importance of concrete English study reasons for college students.

As Todaka’s [50] study reveals, it takes quite some time for Japanese college freshmen to realize the importance of concrete English study reasons/purposes. This study also suggests that it might be important to provide students with concrete samples that show why motivated Japanese EFL learners are able to sustain their motivation to study English in class. For even though students understood the importance of concrete English study reasons, many still couldn’t sustain their motivation to study English. In other words, it is just as difficult for Japanese college freshmen to perceive the relevance of English study, as it is for secondary school students. Jahedizadeh et al. [24] also indicate that students’ perceptions of interest and joy affect their mastery of goal orientation. Also, because there is actually little use of English in day-to-day life in Japan, it is important for instructors to carefully plan to provide Japanese college freshmen with ample examples of concrete English study reasons so that they are able to visualize their ‘future EFL selves’ by the second year of college [60]-[61].

Todaka [50], therefore, provided students with ample examples of concrete reasons that motivated Japanese learners of English have to study English, and of future jobs that they can hold with improved EFL skills. In addition, intervention activities with an emphasis on imagery (Dorynei & Chan, 2013), and with an emphasis on cooperative social networks in class [44] were conducted. Based on the findings of the present study, our activities helped almost three times as many freshmen this year as last year to sustain their motivation to study English during the two-month summer break. In addition, the number of students who were able to sustain their motivation to study EFL increased throughout the 2017 academic year, regardless of their English proficiency levels. It is unfortunate to note however that only 30% of our freshmen were able to sustain motivation to improve their English listening skills during the summer break.

Over these last two decades however mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has dramatically altered ESL/EFL learning. This is because use of mobile phones have become attractive and widespread as pedagogical support tools [10]. Cho et al. [10] describe the reasons why teachers and students rely on mobile technologies:

Mobile phones are nearly always present in daily life;

Smartphones can be used as hand-held computers to support learning activities with integrated technologies such as voice recorder/player; and numerous mobile applications are being developed for educational activities.

Ozer & Kilic [39] report that mobile learning technologies can assist EFL teachers in vocabulary teaching [7]-[27] and grammar teaching [21]. Additionally, mobile language technologies can help EFL learners improve writing skills [23], and pronunciation/communication skills [22]. Ozer & Kilic [39] report that EFL students who studied in a mobile-assisted language learning environment experienced a statistically significant improvement in academic achievement.

Viberg and Gronlund [57] report on the advantages mobile-assisted language learning: “low cost, small size and user-friendliness, researchers are exploring how to use mobile technology to support language learning [57]. Viber and Gronlund [57] further describe MALL as follows:

‘Experiment’ (non-strictly defined) is the most commonly applied method in the reviewed studies (47%), followed by interpretive case studies (28%). Together these two methods make up 75% of the research published 2007-2012. Most studies are small-scale, exploratory, and conducted within a short period of time, which makes them rather anecdotal in terms of reliability. This is not surprising given that the field of MALL is in its developmental experimental phase and still needs more solid empirical evidence and guidance in order to underpin conclusions about how mobile technologies can assist language learning acquisition and in order to build theoretical models specific to this field. It is hence still an open question to what extent MALL in the L2 area is indeed different from MALL in other areas.

In addition, most studies did not take learning strategies and learning styles into consideration when studies employed mobile devices for their language learning [57]. Furthermore, “it is still unclear whether the use of mobile devices in language learning is more effective than other instructional approaches, such as language learning with computers or print-based materials [10].” Nonetheless, Cho et al. [10] report that mobile devices can be effective for language learning in the classroom as well as for learning support out of class.

Still, Balbay & Kilis [2] report that “advancements in information and communication technology have transfigured the notion of teaching and learning in terms of strategies, context, and methods. One of the most remarkable tools used in teaching and learning in the 21st century is YouTube, especially in language education.” Thus the use of YouTube in education can be an excellent tool in teaching ESL/EFL students [18]-[43]-[42] cited in [62]. Since thousands of video clips on various topics in many languages can be found on YouTube, conversation, speaking and listening activities utilizing YouTube were conducted (e.g. [46] cited in [62]-[59]).

Benmouhoub [5], however, describes the disadvantages of any technical tool such as YouTube are (1) time constraints, (2) limited software, (3) passive viewing, and (4) fear of technology. This is where blended learning comes in.

Prihastiwi et al. [40] describe blended learning as “a mixture of online and traditional face-to-face planned class activities.” Larson [29] cited in [3] found that “students were found to work more autonomously and to be focused while becoming more responsible for their own learning.” In addition, Banditvilai [3] reported that blended learning improved all four language skills of Thai EFL students as well as autonomous learning and learner motivation.

Additionally, authentic materials such as YouTube can help students understand the real world outside. Cheung [9] describes that “popular culture is a rich source of authentic materials, bridging the gap between formal and informal English learning, and developing learning based on students’ daily experience, personal values, attitudes and feelings.”

YouTube started in 2005 and hosts videos that are viewed more than 2 billion times each day (“Timeline,” 2011 cited in [59]). Watkins and Watkins [59] describe the effectiveness of YouTube on English learning as follows:

First, students can, in their own time, choose to view a YouTube clip in English, evaluate possible limitations of comprehension on their own terms, and finally choose (or choose not) to pursue further academic attention for that particular area. Secondly, after exposure to a YouTube clip, a fairly advanced and linguistically self-aware student can determine approximately which pronunciation and conversation skills are desired and then attempt to acquire them. Thirdly, a student can browse the millions of videos available on YouTube without needing help from any teacher or fellow student. Fourthly, if a student finds a particular kind of clip (or YouTube channel) particularly interesting or useful in language learning, he or she can freely investigate all clips that might be of a similar vein. Finally, if a student feels the material being studied in class is not useful, then an intelligent and self-guided examination into YouTube could be conducted to supplement what the student feels is being overlooked or suppressed by the educational institution.

As described above, previous studies have reported on the effectiveness of intervention activities with an emphasis on imagery and of the improvement of various EFL skills as a result learning within a mobile-assisted environment. However, as Todaka [50] states that EFL learners, especially de-motivated learners, do not have English study reasons to begin with. In addition, the self-determination theory [11] focuses on creating the optimal conditions within which students themselves can motivate themselves rather than how teachers can motivate students. Noels and colleagues [36]-[37] cited in Keblawi [26] showed that students’ motivation is enhanced when teachers allow for more learner autonomy (p. 34). Vohs et al. [56] cited in Keblawi [26] however did find that allowing students too many choices in their study may lead to negative effects on self-regulation (p. 35).

Keblawi [26] warns against a full attention on the long term goal of mastering the L2, though the importance of goals in sustaining L2 motivation has been attested to by other goal theories:

...Concentration only on future goals, particularly long-term goal of mastering the language, might distract teachers’ attention from the fact that learners’ intrinsic enjoyment and innate curiosity are both vital sources of motivation.

We do understand the necessity of future EFL selves with specific goals in order to improve EFL learners’ English skills. In addition, mobile L2 learning can be a useful tool for de-motivated Japanese college EFL learners as they move through the various stages of EFL learning. However, it is important for de-motivated Japanese college EFL learners to understand why they need/want to study English in college in class. And given that our university is a small municipal institution in which most of our students graduate and go on to work for companies where no English skills are required, many study in college with no more consideration for why they should learn English. It is important then to help our students understand that there are other reasons for the study of English, be it for the purpose of finding a more fulfilling career in the future, or simply for the pursuit of a personal hobby, and that they can determine for themselves their own reasons to study English and the future potential use of

English in their own lives. In fact, Keblawi [26] states that the self-determination theory, or “autonomy”, which distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, is one of the influential theories in motivational psychology.

Intrinsic refers to an individual’s motivation to perform a particular activity because of internal rewards such as joy, pleasure and satisfaction of curiosity. Whereas in extrinsic motivation the individual expects an extrinsic reward such as good grades or praise from others. Thus, as mentioned earlier, it is important for teachers to create the conditions where individual learners can associate their hobbies and interests with English study. In addition, the use of mobile phones in class for a pedagogical technique won’t work for those students who are more interested in using conventional devices such as CD or DVD players. Furthermore, learning enjoyment and curiosity are important sources of motivation. We therefore did not utilize mobile phones in class; instead, we provided various YouTube sites on which information relevant to their hobbies and interests can be found with mobile phones as learning supports. Students, who are more interested in using conventional devices, can enjoy improving English listening skills by listening to English songs on a CD player and/or watching favorites movies on a DVD player. Kelson (2009) used YouTube as supplementary teaching aid in the classroom, but found that some of the students responded as “I don’t know how to use it” and “I don’t know what to find.”

The objectives of the present study are two-fold: (1) to provide de-motivated Japanese college freshmen with the information on various sites on YouTube so that the sites relating to their hobbies and interests can be utilized to improving their English listening skills; and (2) to provide students with the ability to customize their interest-based English study reasons to suit their needs with the information from the aforementioned YouTube sites as well as the information on (a) English study reasons that motivated Japanese EFL learners’ possess, (b) on possible jobs they can hold with EFL skills, and (c) about what their classmates’ English study reasons, hobbies, and future dreams are in class. The last three sources of information described here were found to be very useful by students in our 2017b study; thus, we decided to provide our learners with the information to further assist in establishing their own intrinsic (or extrinsic) tailor-made English study reasons in face-to-face class activities. This is because motivation studies need a ‘person-in-context approach’ [55]. We also decided to allow learners to the ability to establish extrinsic English study reasons if those individual learners choose to study English based on extrinsic rewards during the initial learning stages.

The following activities were conducted in the present study to answer the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis:

If de-motivated Japanese college freshmen can be made to understand that their own individual concrete reasons for English study can be for used for their future benefit (something other than just passing their English classes), and that those concrete study reasons can even be simply associated with hobbies, such as wanting to understand English songs or movies, then by providing them with useful information on hobby-related YouTube sites, such as for example, English language songs and movies, or how to apply make-up, individual learners can come to realize they can still enjoy doing what they like with their cell phones because, at the same time, they will receive abundant authentic English input from the sites they visit. These conditions (i.e. modified blended learning), within which individual learners can self-customize their English study reasons, can help students sustain their motivation to improve their English listening skills.

The hypothesis was formulated based on the premise that all of the YouTube sites we introduced are English language sites. Learners, for instance, who are interested in learning how to put on make-up can learn to do so by watching a video clip spoken in English (English subtitles can be seen). Because an actual person is demonstrating how to put on the make-up, visual cues can help learners understand what the person is saying, and because the learners are interested in the topic, they will make use of the English subtitle to fully understand the instructions. Providing de-motivated Japanese college freshmen with various interesting YouTube sites can help them sustain their motivation to enjoy English even if their motives for L2 learning change from time to time. Our project did not use MALL technologies in class. As stated above, we provided students with ample information on various YouTube sites so that those students who would like to study English using cell phones out of class can do so, those students who prefer to use conventional devices such as CD players or DVD players to study English can still do so.

II. INTERVENTION STRATEGIES CONDUCTED IN THE PRESENT STUDY

A. Lesson 1

Students were asked to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix 1) asking about their English study reasons in high school and in college. Student discussed their English study reasons in groups of four focusing on what they liked or disliked about their English classes in high school. Group leaders shared their group's information to the whole class. This activity was done to help students realize that after leaving high school, they may need entirely new English study reasons as they move to study English in college (Activity 1).

Todaka [53] found the importance of Japanese college freshmen to establish new and concrete English study reasons to be motivated to study English, so students were asked to establish these new and concrete English study reasons. Two large samples of English study reasons, gathered from 1419 motivated Japanese EFL learners (<https://ceburyugaku.jp/42159/>; https://www.marshresearch.co.jp/mini_research/mr201402english.html), were distributed to students in groups of four. The students reviewed the summary of reasons why some of those 1419 adult Japanese EFL learners study English and discussed what their own English study reasons could be. The instructor had group leaders again report on the possible English study reasons that each group found relevant to themselves. Each of the students was then asked to think carefully about his/her own hobbies and interests until the next class and to write them down on a sheet of paper (Activity 2). Reminders to carefully consider their own English study reasons were then given throughout the spring semester.

B. Lesson 2

Dorynei and Kubanyiova (2014) indicate that students cannot create a new ideal self from scratch without any motivational intervention, so students were provided with two sample lists that describe the merits of English study skills for future advancement (<https://eigotextbook.com/mindet/English-master-advantage-tops3>; and <https://www.kaplaninternational.com/jp/blog/30-jobs-which-require-english-skills>) and the types of future jobs one can hold with advanced EFL skills. Student each read the samples then met in groups of four to talk about the possible jobs they can hold in the future with advanced English skills. Group activities can help students broaden their thinking, help them connect themselves with the information and provide support for thinking about their future selves [44]. The instructor had group leaders report on the jobs that each group found interesting. The instructor reminded students to consider their own English study reasons when they thought about possible future

jobs with English skills. Each group wrote down their new and concrete English study reasons and possible future careers with EFL skills, and presented them to their classmates. All of the information was collected, to be distributed in the next lesson (Activity 3).

C. Lesson 3

Each student first read the list of new and concrete English study reasons and possible future jobs with EFL skills that was generated during the previous lesson as a reference for the establishment of their own concrete English study reasons. Each student then carefully modified his/her own new/concrete English study reasons that are associated with their hobbies and interests, keeping in mind the possible future jobs with EFL skills. We discussed as a class the importance of establishing new/concrete English study reasons that need to be fun and interesting in order to enjoy improving English listening skills (Activity 4).

D. Lesson 4

Students in groups of four shared their own tailor-made English study reasons. The instructor and the assistant joined each of the groups to find out what kind of fun English study reasons students came up with. Group leaders presented to the class what was shared within each group (Activity 5). The instructor reminded the class that English study doesn't have to be something students don't like. On the contrary, English study reasons can and should be fun and exciting. Thus, is important to re-emphasize that students consider what their hobbies and interests are before they self-customize their English study reasons. Group leaders wrote down the group members' hobbies and interests on the board, and the instructor summarized them for the class. Finally, the instructor told students that YouTube sites with content relating to students' interests and hobbies and information on English-speaking activities with native and non-native English speakers in Miyazaki city will be given from the next class on.

E. Lesson 5

The assistant introduced to students 12 international events that will take place in Miyazaki city. Some of our students' fun English study reason was to meet native English speakers so that they can make friends and improve their English communication skills. The assistant briefly described each of the events and gave information on access so that interested students could join the events. In addition, information was disseminated about the once-a-week *English Café* gatherings, where secondary school native English assistant language teachers in Miyazaki meet with Japanese people to speak English and make friends (Activity 6).

In addition, based on Todaka [51] and Todaka & Misono [52], prominent learning constructs/strategies for promoting English listening skills were taught. Specifically these constructs/strategies were (1) background knowledge of various topics, (2) phonetic knowledge of English, (3) working memory capacity: ability to recognize, perceive, and memorize short segments of incoming speech, (4) knowledge of various dialects of English, (5) use of written materials to assist learners in understanding spontaneous speech, and (6) use of various tasks to provide learners with ample opportunities to listen to authentic English (Activity 7).

F. Lesson 6

Some students indicated that they like to play games during their free time, so the assistant introduced how to improve students' English communication skills through games. The assistant told students how they can play

games with people from different parts of the world so that they can make friends with non-Japanese people in English and have fun at the same time (Activity 8). The instructor next taught the prominent differences in sentence stress between Japanese and English languages to help students improve their English pronunciation and listening skills (Activity 9).

G. Lessons 7

The assistant introduced some sites on YouTube where students can learn about various topics in English. Since many of our female students reported that they would like to learn about famous actresses, make-up and fashion brands, the assistant included several YouTube sites where actresses and people working for fashion brands show how to put on make-up and dress in the latest fashion. The assistant told the students that they can access these sites on their smart phones whenever they have free time. Students then studied the major differences in rhythm between Japanese and English.

H. Lesson 8

The assistant introduced some YouTube sites that students can learn about foods from different parts of the world. Also, because some students reported that they like cooking, the assistant also introduced some sites on YouTube where students can learn how prepare these international dishes. Students then studied linking, one of the sound adjustments in English connected speech, in order to improve their English pronunciation and listening skills.

I. Lesson 9

The assistant introduced some sites on YouTube where famous actors/actresses were interviewed for talk shows and premieres because some students are really interested in finding out how their favorite actors/actresses really talk. Students then studied assimilations, one more sound adjustments in connected speech, to improve their English pronunciation and listening skills.

J. Lesson 10

The assistant introduced some YouTube sites where famous sightseeing spots around the world are introduced by people in English. Because many of our students are interested in world travel, the assistant told them that they can in essence travel anywhere around the world simply by watching videos of famous sightseeing spots on their smart phones. Students then studied elision, another of the sound adjustments in connected speech, to improve their English pronunciation and listening skills.

K. Lesson 11

Because some students are interested in world festivals, the assistant introduced some sites on YouTube where famous festivals in different parts of the world are presented in English. Students then reviewed the three different types of sound adjustments in connected speech they studied in the previous three lessons.

L. Lesson 12

The assistant introduced some sites on YouTube where students can learn how to sing English songs. Many students are interested in English songs and often sing English songs in Karaoke booths. Students then studied the prominent differences in intonation between Japanese and English.

M. Lesson 13

The assistant introduced how to improve students' English speaking and listening skills utilizing English language movies. The instructor then demonstrated how to improve English communication skills with English language movies using shadowing techniques. A one-minute scene from the movie 'Matrix' was selected and the instructor presented step-by-step shadowing techniques (e.g. [47]) so that students can watch their favorite movies and improve their English communication skills at the same time. Students then studied more prominent differences in intonation between Japanese and English.

N. Lesson 14

The assistant introduced some YouTube sites where methods to improve English pronunciation are explained and demonstrated, as some students are interested in improving their English pronunciation. Students then reviewed the major differences in word stress, sentence stress, and rhythm between the Japanese and English languages.

O. Lesson 15

Students were asked to fill out a questionnaire asking about their English study reasons and motivation to improve their English listening skills (appendix 2). They were also asked if the information on the YouTube sites that the assistant introduced were useful and if they enjoyed them as a means to improve their English listening skills. The instructor then reviewed the lessons on English sound adjustments and intonation. Finally, students in groups of four discussed the importance of the concrete English study reasons that are associated with their hobbies and interests, and each of the group leaders presented to the whole class what his/her group discussed.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Participants

170 Miyazaki Municipal University freshmen students participated in this study. They were categorized into four groups according to their university English program placement test scores: (1) 41 students were grouped as introductory level students; (2) 86 students were placed in two intermediate classes; (42 students in intermediate I class and 43 students in intermediate II class), and (3) 43 students were assigned to an advanced class. Regardless of the terminology used for each group in this study, all of the participants should be considered as low introductory to low intermediate level English language learning students, as the entire cohort's mean TOEIC listening test scores ranged from 315.9 to 326.5 among nine TOEIC tests that were officially conducted in Japan in 2017.

The study participants attended both CALL and language acquisition classes throughout the entire academic year, in 15 weekly classes in both the spring and fall semesters. The students attended the CALL classes in the groupings described above and the language acquisition classes as one entire freshman group seated in a large lecture hall.

B. Additional Instruction aside from Intervention Strategy Activities

The CALL classes were taught by the author in the following way: (1) lectures on important English suprasegmental features (e.g. [48]-[58]); (2) various exercises specifically designed to teach phonetic features; (3)

advice on various listening strategies designed for the needs of individual students; and (4) evaluation of progress with self-assessment checklists.

In this study, we also focused on the following to provide students with a comfortable learning environment in the spring semester:

Positive Role Models:

One teaching assistant, a senior from the same university, participated in all classes and functioned as a role model for the study participants.

Relaxed Classroom Environment:

The instructor carefully provided a classroom environment in which students could feel free to ask questions and would not be afraid of making mistakes.

Verbal Support:

The instructor always reminded students that anyone can improve his/her English listening skills if he/she understands and employs appropriate learning strategies.

Appropriate and Interesting Class Materials:

Teaching materials were specifically designed and adjusted to students' proficiency levels so that students would retain confidence in their English listening skills throughout the term. In addition, the instructor made sure to utilize instructional procedures that ensure students would understand step-by-step strategies to improve their English listening skills.

Team Work:

Classroom activities were mainly carried out in pairs or in small groups so that students could assist one another in understanding effective ways to improve their English listening skills. Pairs and group members were changed weekly so that students had opportunities to work with many different classmates.

(8) Regular Assessment:

Weekly quizzes were given. All of the question items on each quiz were taught in advance. The objective of the weekly quizzes was to make sure students understood incrementally the important strategies used for improving English listening skills.

Reminders of the importance of students' concrete English study reasons that are associated with their hobbies and interests were given throughout the fall semester. The author did not however teach the CALL classes in the fall semester. Because of this, these constant reminders of the importance of the above points were presented throughout the fall semester at the beginning of each lecture in the author's language acquisition class.

A. Assessment Tools

Students' English listening skill progress was evaluated using the results of TOEIC. The listening portions of two different TOEICs were administered, once at the beginning and once at the end of the spring semester in 2017. In addition, a ten-item self-efficacy questionnaire was developed to further assess the progress of our

students' English listening skills. Because perceptions of self-efficacy are both context-specific and task-specific [30] and cultural context-specific (Oettingen, 1995), we specifically designed this self-efficacy questionnaire to assess our students' motivational level during the spring, summer, and fall semesters of the 2017 academic year (see Appendix 2).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table shows the percentage of students in each proficiency group who understood why they need to study English in college. The data were collected during the first class session in April, 2018.

Table 1. The number of students who understand why they need to study English in college.

Months/Groups	April 2018
Introductory	0%
Intermediate I	5%
Intermediate II	23%
Advanced	16%

As can be seen, across all proficiency groups, very few of our freshman understood why they need to study English in college. Also, as expected, the lower the English proficiency level, the lesser number of students understand why they need to study English in college. Nonetheless, there are a few students who do understand why they need to study English in college. The following table indicates the reasons why this minority of students believe they should study English in college.

Table 2. Reasons for English study in college (2 intermediate I students).

Reasons
Although I haven't decided what I want to be in the future, I want to study abroad in college. (2 students)

Table 3. Reasons for English study in college (8 intermediate II students).

Reasons
I know what I want to be in the future. (3 students)
Though I haven't decided what I want to be in the future, I want to study abroad in college. (1 student)
I understand the importance of English skills in the future. (1 student)
I like English movies. (3 students)

Table 4. Reasons for English study in college (7 advanced students).

Reasons
I know what I want to be in the future. (3 students)
Though I haven't decided what I want to be in the future, I want to study abroad in college. (4 students)

As seen above, some students do indeed understand the importance of English skills in the future; however, as Todaka [54] reports, understanding of EFL skills for future benefit alone cannot help all of our students take the necessary actions needed to carry out English study in their daily lives. An understanding of the importance of EFL skills cannot be the only motive to study English because many students don't have any concrete English

study reasons to begin with. In other words, while some students report that they want to study abroad during college, this type of English study reason is not specific enough for them to carry out necessary English study tasks in their daily lives.

The following table shows what the majority of students (those who do not understand why they need to study English in college) thought about English study in secondary school.

Table 5. What students thought about English study in secondary school (40 introductory students).

Reasons
I studied English to pass college entrance exams. (20 students)
I liked English. (3 students)
My parents and teachers told me to study English. (2 students).
English was a required subject. (10 students)
I thought English skills would be important for my future. (5 students)

Table 6. What students thought about English study in secondary school (37 intermediate I students).

Reasons
I studied English to pass college entrance exams. (16 students)
I liked English. (7 students)
I wanted to develop my English communicative skills. (2 students)
English was a required subject. (6 students)
I thought English skills would be important for my future. (6 students)

Table 7. What students thought about English study in secondary school (32 intermediate II students).

Reasons
I studied English to pass college entrance exams. (16 students)
I liked English. (2 students)
I wanted to develop my English communicative skills. (2 students)
English was a required subject. (9 students)
I thought English skills would be important for my future. (3 students)

Table 8. What students thought about English study in secondary school (37 advanced students).

Reasons
I studied English to pass college entrance exams. (19 students)
I like English. (7 students)
My parents and English teachers told me to study English. (3 students)
English was a required subject. (3 students)
I thought English skills would be important for my future. (5 students)

Most of our study's students indicated that they studied English in secondary school because they *had to do so*. It is interesting to note however that, while some students indicated that that they 'liked English' or that they 'understood the importance of English skills in the future' while in secondary school, they failed to understand why they needed to study English in college. In fact, some students stated that they like to listen to English songs or watch English movies but they assumed that English classes in college would focus on vocabulary and grammatical structures. Thus, students might have felt that there was no reason for English study in college, possibly *because they sensed that they would be forced to study the linguistic aspects of English that they are not particularly interested in*.

The following table shows the percentage of students in each proficiency group who were able to sustain their motivation to improve their English listening skills during the last three years. The data was collected three different times: (1) July; (2) October; and (3) January. The following figures represent the results in the above table graphically.

Table 9. The number of students who sustained their motivation to improve English listening skills (2016, 2017, and 2018 studies)

Year	The 2016 academic year			The 2017 academic year			The 2018 academic year		
Months/ Groups	July	October	January	July	October	January	July	October	January
Introductory	71%	12%	26%	57%	24%	74%	100%	73%	90%
Intermediate I	67%	10%	50%	68%	29%	69%	100%	64%	82%
Intermediate II	75%	6%	42%	57%	33%	59%	93%	74%	89%
Advanced	77%	19%	67%	57%	30%	59%	100%	88%	90%

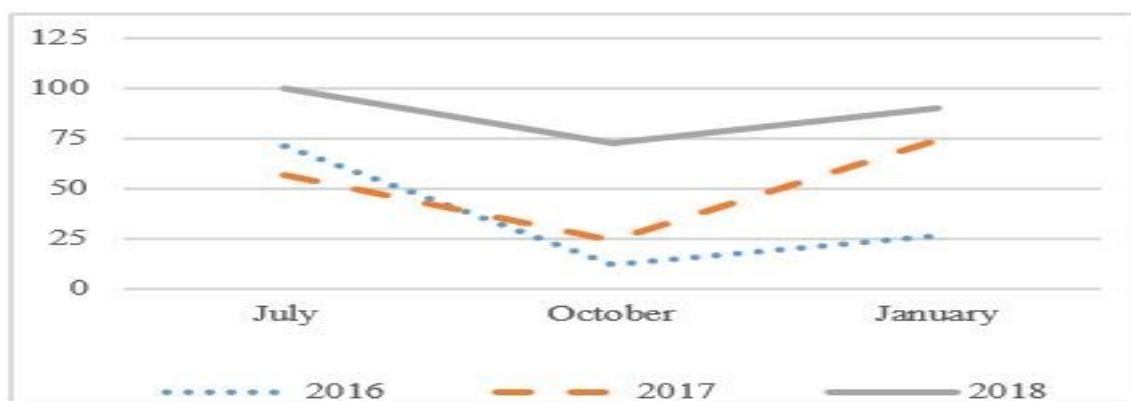


Fig. 1. Comparison of student motivation between 2016, 2017, and 2018 introductory group.

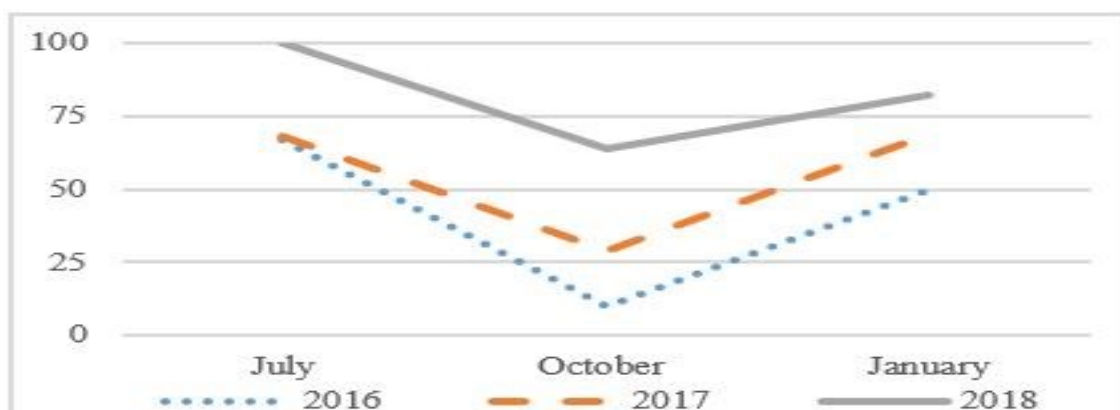


Fig. 2. Comparison of student motivation between 2016, 2017, and 2018 intermediate I group.

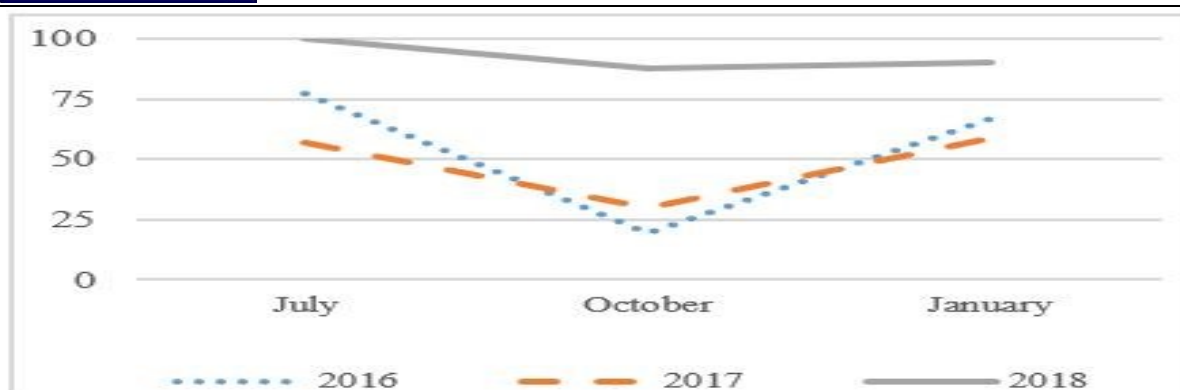


Fig. 3. Comparison of student motivation between 2016, 2017, and 2018 intermediate II group.



Fig. 4. Comparison of student motivation between 2016, 2017, and 2018 advanced group

As seen above, the number of students, who sustained their motivation to study English, increased to almost 100% from April to July in this study. In addition, when compared with last year's results, the number of students who were able to sustain their motivation to study English during the summer break increased from 24% to 73% (introductory students), from 29% to 64% (intermediate I students), from 33% to 74% (intermediate II students), and from 30% to 88% (advanced students). Furthermore, the number of students who were able to sustain motivation to study English also increased during the fall semester when compared with student performance during summer break.

The number of students in the 2017 academic year, who were able to sustain motivation during the summer break, increased almost threefold when compared to the previous year. Todaka [50] reports on the four crucial differences in pedagogy between the 2016 and 2017 academic year studies: (1) in the 2017 study, students were provided with samples of concrete English study reasons from motivated Japanese students of English, and those samples were utilized to help our students carefully consider the true reasoning behind their English study throughout the academic year; (2) students were provided with samples of possible jobs they could obtain with EFL skills in the future; (3) students shared information on their responses to various intervention activities so that they were able to understand what their classmates thought about their own concrete English study reasons, possible EFL selves, visualization techniques, and so forth; and (4) various intervention activities with an emphasis on imagery were incorporated in to the lessons.

The crucial differences between the 2017 and 2018 academic year studies, on the other hand, were as follows: (1) students were provided with various YouTube sites that focused on their hobbies and interests in order to help them self-customize their concrete/fun English study reasons, and (2) we excluded various intervention activities with an emphasis on imagery.

The following table shows how students in this 2018 study improved their motivation during the entire 2018 academic year.

Table 10. The number of students who sustained their motivation to improve English listening skills (2018 academic year).

Months/Groups	April 2018	July 2018	October 2018	January 2019
Introductory	0%	100%	73%	90%
Intermediate I	5%	100%	64%	82%
Intermediate II	23%	93%	74%	89%
Advanced	16%	100%	88%	90%

Out of 45 students, 16 students mentioned that they were either too busy to do anything or gave in to temptations. 11 students stated that they did not study English because they went back to their parents' home and/or played with friends from high school.

As seen above, the use of YouTube really helped our students sustain their motivation to study English. Let us examine the reasons why some students could not sustain their motivation to study English during the summer break even though almost all the students had found concrete/fun study reasons during the spring semester.

Table 11. Reasons for the inability to sustain motivation to study English during the summer break (11 introductory students).

Reasons
I simply played with my friends from high school for two months. (8 students)
I watched DVD movies with English subtitles, but I didn't check the Japanese subtitle first. So, I gave up watching movies. (1 student)
I was too busy. (2 students)

Table 12. Reasons for the inability to sustain motivation to study English during the summer break (15 intermediate I students).

Reasons
I simply hate English. (2 students)
I was going to participate in international activities, but I didn't have courage to attend them alone. (1 student)
I was too busy. (5 students)
I went back to my parents' home, so I didn't do anything. (3 students)
I found more interesting things to do than English study. (1 student)
I spent most of my time working part-time. So, I was too tired to do anything else. (3 students)

Table 13. Reasons for the inability to sustain motivation to study English during the summer break (11 intermediate II students).

Reasons
I haven't found my concrete/fun reasons yet. (3 students)
I was busy getting my driver's license. (3 students)
I gave in to temptations. (3 students)
I found more interesting things to do than English study. (2 students)

Table 14. Reasons for the inability to sustain motivation to study English during the summer break (8 advanced students)

Reasons
I was able to enjoy watching English movies for the first three weeks, but I couldn't continue it for two months. (2 student)
I gave in to temptations. (1 student)
I was too busy. (2 students)
I did enjoy watching movies, but I think that is not English study. (2 students)
Because of a big earthquake. (1 student)

During the summer break students usually do go back to their parents' houses, and as seen above, many of do indeed play with friends from high school. This change of study environment can have negative impacts on students' study habits. This negative impact can be seen when comparing the number of students who were able to sustain motivation to enjoy learning English during the spring semester (July), with the number of students able to sustain motivation over summer (October). Almost all of the students were able to sustain their motivation during the spring semester. Furthermore, the fact that from 64% (Intermediate I) to 88% (Advanced) of students were still able to enjoy their English study during the summer break indicates that they did so because they may have been able to self-customize concrete and enjoyable English study reasons, based on the various YouTube video-clip information and English songs and movies we provided during the spring semester. In addition, our information must have truly helped students find enjoyable English study reasons since more students across all proficiency groups were able to sustain motivation to improve their English listening skills during the fall semester as well.

Next, we examined the participating students' TOEIC scores from April to July during the 2018 academic year. The following table (Table 15) indicates the mean score for each proficiency group. The maximum score for the listening test was 495. The numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviations.

Table 15. TOEIC scores in April and July 2018 (spring semester).

Times/Proficiency level	April	July	P value F value
Introductory	222 (56.9)	256 (43.5)	$P < .039$ $F = 4.5$
Intermediate I	230 (39.6)	275 (56)	$P < .005$ $F = 13.3$
Intermediate II	255 (50)	288 (40.2)	$P < .005$ $F = 8.4$
Advanced	294 (56)	318 (61)	$P < .96$ $F = 0.003$

The following table indicates the participating students' TOEIC scores from April to July during the 2017 academic year.

Table 16. TOEIC scores in April and July 2017 (spring semester).

Times/Proficiency level	April	July	P value F value
Introductory	191 (51.9)	248 (41.3)	$P < .0001$ $F = 34.1$
Intermediate I	224 (45.1)	276 (46)	$P < .0001$ $F = 31.5$

Times/Proficiency level	April	July	P value F value
Intermediate II	239 (46.9)	277 (45.4)	P<.0001 F=17.2
Advanced	277 (60.2)	324 (52.4)	P<.0001 F=16.7

As seen in the above two tables, students in all proficiency groups made significant improvements in their TOEIC listening scores in the spring semester of the 2017 academic year. Students in all proficiency groups except for advanced made significant improvements in their TOEIC listening scores during the spring semester of the 2018 academic year. With respect to the advanced students' performance, the difference in the starting mean TOEIC scores (April) between the 2018 study, and the 2017 study, may have had some effect on the amount of improvement seen in the spring semester. For all proficiency groups except for advanced, the mean TOEIC scores in July in the 2018 academic year study are indeed higher than those in July in the 2017 academic year, but since the advanced students' mean TOEIC scores were already relatively high in April to begin with, their July scores might have had a ceiling-effect. The 4-month spring semester may not have been long enough for them to make statistically significant improvements in TOEIC.

The following table compares TOEIC scores in July with those in October (after the summer break) in the 2018 study.

Table 17. TOEIC scores in July and October (summer break in 2018).

Times/Proficiency level	July	October	P value F value
Introductory	256 (49.5)	246 (35)	P<.42 F = 0.42
Intermediate I	275 (56)	260 (39.5)	P<.21 F = 1.5
Intermediate II	288 (40.3)	281 (39.9)	P<.49 F = .47
Advanced	318 (61)	318 (50)	P<.96 F = .003

The following table compares TOEIC scores in July with those in October (after the summer break) in the 2017 study.

Table 18. TOEIC scores in July and October 2017 (summer break in 2017).

Times/Proficiency level	July	October	P value F value
Introductory	247 (40.3)	223 (46.7)	P<.008 F=7.26
Intermediate I	278 (45.3)	251 (43.3)	P<.005 F=8.31
Intermediate II	275 (43.6)	258 (46.9)	P<.08 F=3.08
Advanced	321 (53.4)	295 (58.7)	P<.02 F=5.24

As seen above, TOEIC listening scores for students in all proficiency groups significantly worsened after the summer break in the 2017 study. In the 2018 study however, TOEIC listening scores for students in all proficiency groups did not significantly change. In other words, the students in the 2018 study were able to maintain their English listening skills even during the summer break.

The following two tables show the results obtained during the entire 2017 academic year and entire 2018 academic year.

Table 19. TOEIC scores in April 2017 and January 2018 (entire academic year).

Times/Proficiency level	April	January	P value F value
Introductory	191 (51.9)	252 (44.8)	$P<.0001$ $F=30.47$
Intermediate I	224 (45.1)	282 (53.0)	$P<.0001$ $F=29.1$
Intermediate II	233 (46.5)	293 (55.4)	$P<.0001$ $F=24.2$
Advanced	277 (60.2)	334 (55.7)	$P<.0001$ $F=18.1$

Table 20. TOEIC scores in April 2018 and January 2019 (entire academic year)ⁱ

Times/Proficiency level	April	January	P value F value
Introductory	210 (42.9)	270 (42.9)	$P<.0033$ $F=10.4$
Intermediate I	226 (41.5)	278 (56.8)	$P<.0006$ $F=13.6$
Intermediate II	251 (38.2)	305 (38.3)	$P<.0001$ $F=18.4$
Advanced	293 (59)	342 (54)	$P<.0028$ $F=9.9$

Students in all proficiency groups made significant improvements in their TOEIC listening scores during the 2017 academic year; however, we know that their scores dropped significantly after the summer break. In the 2018 academic year study on the other hand, all students, except for the advanced group, made significant improvement in their mean TOEIC scores, and even sustained their English listening skills during the summer break. This is because most of the students were able to sustain motivation to improve their English skills. This was the first time since we began our motivation study five years ago, that students' mean TOEIC scores did not significantly worsen during the summer break. Thus, our current pedagogic techniques were effective even during the summer break.

Let us now compare the changes in means from April to July, October, and January during the two academic years.



Fig. 5. Changes in mean TOEIC scores during the 2017 and 2018 academic years: Introductory group.

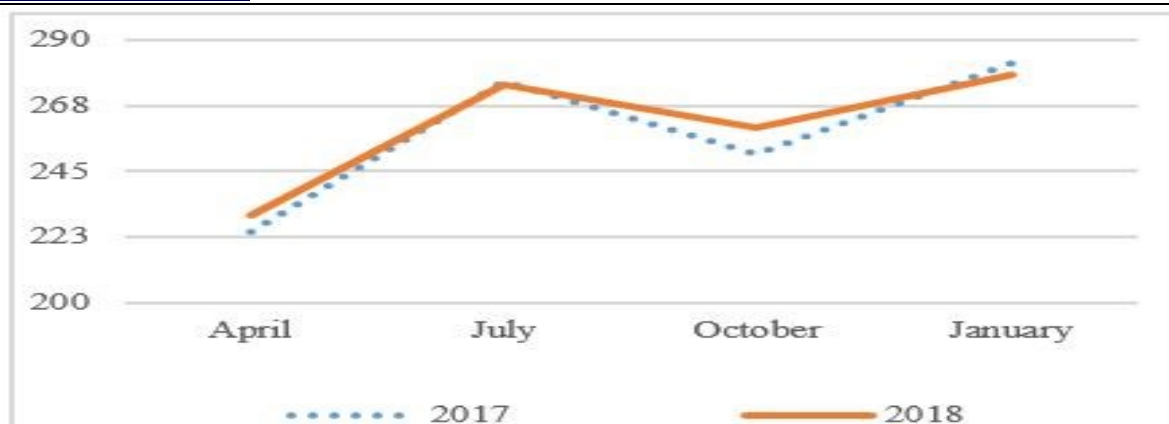


Fig. 6. Changes in mean TOEIC scores during the 2017 and 2018 academic years: Intermediate I group.



Fig. 7. Changes in mean TOEIC scores during the 2017 and 2018 academic years: Intermediate II group.



Fig. 8. Changes in mean TOEIC scores during the 2017 and 2018 academic years: Advanced group.

As seen above, students in all proficiency groups, except those in the intermediate I group, showed remarkable progress in TOEIC when compared with students from the previous year. Students in the intermediate I class this year showed no appreciable difference from those of the previous year, likely because this year's Intermediate I group showed the lowest level of sustained motivation of all students during the summer and the fall semester, as indicated earlier in table 10.

The disposition of the intermediate I group's TOEIC scores was likely affected by the fact that they had the lowest levels of EFL motivation during the summer and the fall semesters among the four proficiency groups [33].

V. CONCLUSION

During the last five years, we have been conducting studies on motivation of de-motivated Japanese college EFL learners. During the first three years, we focused our attention on students' perceived self-efficacy of EFL learning.

In this study, we utilized modified blended learning techniques to help students establish concrete and fun English study reasons. While we did not utilize mobile phones in class, we provided students with various YouTube sites on which information relevant to students' hobbies and interests could be found with mobile phones as learning support. Students, who are more interested in using conventional devices, can still enjoy improving English listening skills by listening to English songs on a CD player and/or watching favorites movies on a DVD player.

Based on our findings in this study, we were able to help students sustain motivation even during the summer break. This means that our modified blended learning techniques focusing on the establishment of concrete and fun English study reasons can really help most de-motivated Japanese college freshmen sustain motivation to improve their English listening skills, even during the summer break. It is however important to note that our current method did not help all of our freshmen sustain their motivation to improve their English listening skills, and not all could significantly improve their TOEIC listening scores during the fall semester. Further, no plausible interpretations can be made about why students in intermediate I group had the lowest sustainability of motivation. Subsequent studies will be conducted to search for better ways to help students realize that their English study can enhance their future lives.

APPENDIX

Appendix I.

A Questionnaire on EFL Study Reasons in Secondary and in College.

1. Do you understand why you need to study English in college?
2. If so, select your reasons from below.
 - (1) I know what I want to be in the future.
 - (2) I like English songs so that I want to be able to understand them.
 - (3) I like English movies so that I want to be able to understand them.
 - (4) I have foreign friends so that I want to improve my English speaking skills.
 - (5) I want make friends with people from different parts of the world.
 - (6) I want to study abroad in the future.
 - (7) Other reasons.
3. For those students who don't understand the reasons why you need to study English in college, why did you study English in secondary school?
 - (1) I had to study English because English was a compulsory subject.

- (2) My parents or teachers told me to do so.
- (3) I studies English for college entrance exams.
- (4) Other reasons.
4. Have you decided what you want to be in the future, yet?
5. If so, what do you want to be in the future?

Appendix 2.

English study motivation questionnaire items

- Q1. Have you been able to sustain your motivation to study English (in the spring semester, the summer, the fall) since you entered university?
- Q2. If so, let us understand why you were able to do so. If not, let us understand why you weren't able to do so.

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- [63] Mean TOEIC scores in April are different from the ones shown in table 15 because some students were absent from class due to the flu.

AUTHOR'S PROFILE

Yuichi Todaka has been conducting studies of learning motivation for de-motivated Japanese college learners. Other research interests are in the realms of listening comprehension, and the acquisition of English phonetic features by Japanese learners of English.