

# A Study of Motivation and Attitude in Japanese Language Learning of Undergraduate Students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology

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## Abstract

The purposes of this research were 1) to study motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology 2) to compare students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning according to students' gender, academic year and faculty, and 3) to gather supplemental suggestions.

Research samples were 350 undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology in second semester of 2016 academic year, derived through simple random sampling technique. The instruments used for gathering the data were the rating-scale and open-ended questionnaire. The statistics used for analyzing the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, F-test, and content analysis.

The research findings were as follows:

1. Motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology as a whole were at high level. When considered in each aspect, it was found that both motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of the students was at high level.

2. The students with different genders showed that there were no significant differences in overall and each aspect.

3. The students with different academic years had no differences in the total. When considered in each aspect, it was found that there were statistically significant differences at .05 level on motivation.

4. The students with different faculty showed statistically significant differences in overall at .05 level. When considered in each aspect, it was found that there were statistically significant differences at .05 level on motivation and attitude.

5. TNI students had supplemental suggestions as following: speaking contents should have a variety of activities and communicative technique in Japanese speaking should be taught more in Japanese classes.

**Keywords:** *Motivation in Japanese Learning, Attitude in Japanese Learning*

## Introduction

The significance of motivation has been a prominent area for research in psychology and education for many years. This may reflect the widespread perception of classroom teachers who tend to regard student motivation as the most important factor in educational success in general (Dörnyei, 2001). According to Ellis (2005), the aim of learning foreign language is to equip learners to communicate in the target language. Therefore, the learners

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will learn a language best if they have opportunities to use language in ways that resemble how it is used naturally outside the classroom. As stated by Oxford (1997, p.449), it is important to give the increased emphasis on the importance of participation in authentic communication in language teaching as well as the chance to do so.

In addition to Gardner (2006), motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets. However, the cognitivists view the term motivation as being more related to the learner's decisions as Keller (1983, p.389). Quoted by Brown (ibid, p.160), stated, "the choices people make as to what experiences or goals they will approach or avoid, and the degree of effort exert in that respect." However, in the constructivists' definition of motivation, they place "Further emphasis on social contexts as well as the individual's decisions". Although the importance of motivation in enhancing second/foreign language learning is undeniable, Lifrieri (2005) points out that "when asked about the factors which individual levels of success in any activity-such as language learning-, most people would certainly mention motivation among them". Brown (2000) indicates that "it is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the proper motivation", with similar views, Gardner (2006) posits that "students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels". He further adds that "if one is motivated, he/she has reason (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows desire to achieve the goal, enjoys the activities, etc" (Gardner, 2006, p.243).

Another approach is advocated by Starks & Paltridge (1996) who assert that learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the languages. Karahan (2007, p.84), further, highlights that "positive language attitudes let learner have positive orientation towards learning". As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students' success or failure in their learning. This is supported by Gardner (1985) who considers attitudes as components of motivation in language learning. However, Wenden (1991) proposes a broader definition of the concept "attitudes". He states that the term attitudes includes three components namely, cognitive, affective and behavioral. A *cognitive* component is made up of the beliefs and ideas or opinions about the object of the attitude. The *affective* one refers to the feeling and emotions that one has towards an object, 'likes' or 'dislikes', 'with' or 'against'. Finally, the *behavioral* component refers to one's consisting actions or behavioral intentions towards the object.

Some studies have been carried out to investigate second/foreign language learners' motivation. These studies help the researchers to understand how to identify learners' motivation. According to Kato et al. (2007) who study the case of teaching Japanese language in Australia, it was postulated that the varying Japanese presence within the diverse environments would significantly affect student motivation. This relevant to Gardner (2001, p. 6) who states in Japanese that "*Suki koso mono no joozu nare*" (what you like you will do well in). This Japanese saying clearly points out that motivation is the "driving force in any situation". Motivation is, then, a prominent element in pursuing anything in our lives as the truly motivated individual display effort, desire, and affect.

Consequently, investigation of motivation and attitude in Japanese Language Learning of TNI students will be useful to generate more effective learning activities, teaching materials and teaching-learning process

### **Research Purposes:**

1) To study motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology.

- 2) To compare students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning according to students' gender, academic year and faculty.
- 3) To gather supplemental suggestions.

## **Methodology**

### **Population and Samples**

This research was to study motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology in two aspects: motivation and attitude which consisted of population and samples as follows:

Research samples were 350 TNI students in second semester of 2016 academic year, derived through simple random sampling technique. The instruments used for gathering the data were the rating-scale and open-ended questionnaire. The statistics used for analyzing the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, F-test, and content analysis.

### **Instrumentation**

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was conducted by the researcher, based on the motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology. This research questionnaire was used to identify motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students.

The first part (Part 1) of this questionnaire is about for the demographic information on their genders, academic years and faculties. Part 2 asks for motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students.

The five levels of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning used in the questionnaire are "The highest level", "High level", "Moderate level", "Low level", and "the lowest level". Responses from the student questionnaires were subsequently coded. The data of the students' coded responses were statistically calculated and analyzed. The computation of Cronbach's Alpha as a measure of reliability was employed to indicate how reliable the research questionnaire results are. Reliability is defined as the proportion of the students' responses to each item in the questionnaire and the reliability coefficient or calculated alpha is a lower bound of the true reliability of the research instrument, or the questionnaire. The descriptive statistics is also used to determine the individual summary statistics for each of the 50 items in the questionnaire.

The third part (Part 3) is to gather for more additional suggestions of higher education students about the motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning which based on open-ended questions.

### **Data Collection**

The motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning perceived by Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology students were accessed through the questionnaire in second semester of 2016 academic year.

The administration of the research questionnaire was conducted at TNI. Part 1 concerns the demographic variables about their genders, academic years, and faculties. The 50 items of Part 2 cover motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning. Therefore, the participants were asked to consider each item carefully and indicate how important each item was for their study. The analyses of the research data were conducted by means of descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistical analyses of the frequencies and percentages of the students' responses were employed to report their demographic variables and to indicate the rank order of the items in each area of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning

listed in the questionnaire. The frequency distributions were analyzed to determine the proportions of the students' responses to the five levels of importance on the 50 items in 2 - major area: 25 items of motivation and 25 items of attitude in Japanese language learning.

### Data Analysis from Questionnaire

Data analysis from questionnaire both single item and whole questionnaire which presented a form of rating scale. These rating scales were calculated to find out mean and standard deviation and then translated based on criteria developed by Best (1981) as follows:

1.00  $\leq \bar{x} < 1.50$  refers to students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning at the lowest level

1.51  $\leq \bar{x} < 2.50$  refers to students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning at low level

2.51  $\leq \bar{x} < 3.50$  refers to students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning at moderate level

3.51  $\leq \bar{x} < 4.50$  refers to students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning at high level

4.51  $\leq \bar{x} < 5.00$  refers to students' motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning at the highest level

### The statistics used for analyzing the data

The collected data was analyzed by using computer program. The statistics used for analyzing the data were frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-test, F-test, and content analysis.

## Results

### Results of Data Analysis

#### Phase 1: The results of demographic variable of higher education students

The analysis of the data from the students' questionnaire reported by higher education students in the 2016 academic year is presented in the first section deals with the demographic variables from the students' responses to Part 1 of the questionnaire: genders, academic years and faculties as following table.

**Table 1: Table of the results of demographic data of respondents**

Demographic data of respondents	n = 350	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	187	53.40%
Female	163	46.60%
<b>Academic Year</b>		
First Year	111	31.70%
Second Year	75	21.40%

Third Year	151	43.10%
Forth Year	13	3.70%
<b>Faculty</b>		
Business Administration	142	40.60%
Engineering	138	39.40%
Information Technology	70	20.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Table showed that percentages of higher education students in genders ranged from 53.40% for male and 46.60% for female; in academic years ranged from 31.70% for 1<sup>st</sup> year, 21.40% for 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 43.10% for 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 3.70% for 4<sup>th</sup> year; in faculties ranged from 40.60% for Business Administration, 39.40% for Engineering, 20.00% for Information Technology.

## Phase 2: Motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology

**Table 2: Table of mean and standard deviation of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology in total**

Components	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	Level
Motivation	4.01	0.93	high
Attitude	4.03	0.88	high
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.02</b>	<b>0.90</b>	<b>high</b>

The table above indicated that undergraduate students had a high level of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning in total in overall ( $\bar{x}$ =4.02). When considered in each aspect, it was found that both motivation and attitude of the undergraduate student were at high level.

## Phase 3 The results of the comparison of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology

**Table 3: Table of mean and standard deviation of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology in the total and each aspect**

Components	Male		Female		t	p
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.		
Motivation	3.91	0.52	4.11	0.50	-3.67	0.43
Attitude	3.92	0.59	4.14	0.56	-3.54	0.77
<b>Total</b>	3.915	0.555	4.125	0.53	-3.60	0.60

\* Statistical significance at 0.05 level

The table showed that students with different genders had no differences in motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning in total and each aspect.

**Table 4: Table of comparison of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology according to academic years**

Components		DF	F	P
<b>Motivation</b>	Between Groups	3	3.612	.014*
	Within Groups	346		
	<b>Total</b>	349		
<b>Attitude</b>	Between Groups	3	1.436	.232
	Within Groups	346		
	<b>Total</b>	349		
<b>Total</b>	Between Groups	3	2.508	.059
	Within Groups	346		
	<b>Total</b>	349		

\*Statistical significance at 0.05 level

The table showed that students with different academic years had no differences in the total. When considered in each aspect, it was found that there were statistically significant differences at .05 level on motivation.

**Table 5: Table of comparison of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology according to faculty**

Components		SS	DF	MS	F	P
<b>Motivation</b>	Between groups	2.451	2	1.226	4.518	.012*
	Within groups	94.137	347	.271		
	<b>Total</b>	96.588	349			
<b>Attitude</b>	Between groups	7.421	2	3.710	11.390	.000*
	Within groups	113.036	347	.326		
	<b>Total</b>	120.457	349			
<b>Total</b>	Between groups	4.466	2	2.233	8.351	.000*
	Within groups	92.796	347	.267		
	<b>Total</b>	97.263	349			

\* Statistical significance at 0.05 level

The table showed that students with different faculty had statistically significant differences in overall at .05 level. When considered in each aspect, it was found that there were statistically significant differences at .05 level on motivation and attitude.

#### Phase 4 The results of supplemental suggestions about motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning of undergraduate students at Thai-Nichi Institute of Technology

Suggestions	N	Fre	%
	90		100
1. Speaking contents should have a variety of activities.		26	28.88
2. Communicative technique in Japanese speaking should be taught more in Japanese classes.		22	24.44
3. Students should speak with native speakers every day.		15	16.66
4. Kanji writing should be taught more in Japanese classroom.		10	11.11
5. Multimedia technology should be applied in Japanese classroom.		8	8.88
6. Japanese culture should be employed in Japanese classes.		6	6.66
7. The teacher should have various activities in Japanese classroom.		3	3.33

The table showed that TNI students had suggestions about motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning as following:

Suggestions from 90 students were: speaking contents should have a variety of activities. (28.88%); communicative technique in Japanese speaking should be taught more in Japanese classes. (24.44%); students should speak with native speakers every day. (16.66%); Kanji writing should be taught more in Japanese classroom. (11.11%); multimedia technology should be applied in Japanese classroom. (8.88%); Japanese culture should be employed in Japanese classes. (6.66%); and the teacher should have various activities in Japanese classroom (3.33%) respectively.

#### Conclusions

According to the study and data analysis, the results of this study were concluded as follows:

1. The percentage of students in genders ranged from from 53.4% for male and 46.6% for female; in academic years ranged from 31.7% for 1<sup>st</sup> year, 21.4% for 2<sup>nd</sup> year, 43.1% for 3<sup>rd</sup> year and 3.7% for 4<sup>th</sup> year; in faculties ranged from 40.6% for Business Administration, 39.4% for Engineering, 20.0% for Information Technology.
2. The undergraduate students had a high level of motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning in total in overall ( $\bar{x}$ =4.02). When considered in each aspect, it was found that both motivation and attitude of the undergraduate student were at high level.
3. The students with different genders had no differences in motivation and attitude in Japanese language learning in total and each aspect.
4. The students with different academic years had no differences in the total. When considered in each aspect, it was found that there were statistically significant differences at .05 level on motivation.
5. The students with different faculty had statistically significant differences in overall at .05 level. When considered in each aspect, it was found that there were statistically significant differences at .05 level on motivation and attitude.

6. Suggestions from 90 students were: speaking contents should have a variety of activities. (28.88%); communicative technique in Japanese speaking should be taught more in Japanese classes. (24.44%); students should speak with native speakers every day. (16.66%); Kanji writing should be taught more in Japanese classroom. (11.11%); multimedia technology should be applied in Japanese classroom. (8.88%); Japanese culture should be employed in Japanese classes. (6.66%); and the teacher should have various activities in Japanese classroom (3.33%) respectively.

## Discussion

According to the study and data analysis, the results of this study can be discussed as follows:

1. A Study of Motivation and Attitude in Japanese Language Learning of TNI Students in Motivation was at high level ( $\bar{x}$ =4.01). This might be because the students had high desire to improve their Japanese to be more effective in order to visit Japan. This is similar to Gardner (2001, p.6) who describes that “what you like you will do well” or “Suki koso mono no joozu nare” in Japanese language. This Japanese saying clearly points out that motivation is the driving force in any situation. Motivation is, therefore, a prominent element in pursuing anything in our lives. The truly motivated individual displays effort, desire, and affect.

2. A Study of Motivation and Attitude in Japanese Language Learning of TNI Students in Attitude was at high level ( $\bar{x}$ =4.03). This might be because the students believe that a good command of Japanese will be linked to high achievement in career opportunity. This is related to Karahan (2007, p.84) who illustrates that positive language attitudes let learner have positive orientation towards learning. As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students’ success or failure in their learning.

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