

Investigating Elements of Motivation in a Business-focused Project-based English Language Class

Matthew COOMBER*

Abstract

This study investigates the motivational orientations displayed by 109 Japanese learners of English enrolled in a project-based learning course during the third year of their undergraduate studies. Two theoretical perspectives are utilized: Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory (SDT), and the goal structure framework outlined by Jacobs (1998). After undertaking semester-long projects in small groups, students completed a questionnaire survey investigating the extent to which various elements of the course may have motivated them while working on their projects. From the perspective of SDT, three motivational orientations were identified, and analysis of survey responses revealed aspects of the course relying on intrinsic or integrated regulation to be the strongest motivating factors, and that externally regulated factors generated weaker motivation. From the perspective of goal structure, it was found that individualistic and cooperative goals tended to be of greater motivational importance than competitive goals, although a minority of students were most strongly motivated by the latter. Unlike individualistic motivation, which is likely to arise organically in language learners, cooperative goals need to be explicitly provided through the processes of syllabus design and classroom management. Thus, based on the results of this study, it is suggested that in order to cater for the needs of all students, it is advisable for teachers to incorporate cooperative, and to a lesser extent, competitive goals when planning project-based courses.

Keywords:

motivation, self-determination theory, goal structure, project-based learning

* Associate Professor, College of Business Administration, Ritsumeikan University

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1. Introduction

Any attempt to create an exhaustive list of the conditions conducive to successful learning would be fraught with difficulty. Clearly, the items in such a list would also vary according to the skill being learned and the person doing the learning. Regardless of this variation though, few would dispute the place of learner motivation as one of the critical elements likely to lead to learning taking place. However, while that much may be relatively straightforward, formulating a comprehensive theory of motivation has proven far more challenging (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Given that motivation could be succinctly (albeit not particularly informatively) described as the driving force behind all human behavior, then perhaps it is not surprising that, as Dörnyei (2001) notes, no single theory has fully succeeded in explaining why a person chooses to undertake a particular course of action and with what degree of effort they do so. The following section takes a brief look at some of the theories which have been influential within the field of second language acquisition (SLA), before considering in greater detail the theoretical frameworks most relevant to this study.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theories of motivation

Maslow (1970), in a theory which is still widely cited, proposed what he termed a 'hierarchy of needs' to explain human behaviour, conceptualizing this hierarchy as a pyramid with basic physiological needs such as food forming the broad base, and the more cerebral need for 'self-actualization' the apex. In this model, motivation is determined by the relative position of needs within the hierarchy: the closer to the base of the pyramid a need is positioned, the more highly motivated people are to attend to it. Thus, learning a new language in order to get a job to provide for your basic needs will engender greater motivation than learning the same language as an academic exercise. However, while Maslow's model remains hugely influential, it has faced criticism for neglecting the impact of social and cultural context on motivation (Gambrel & Cianci, 2003).

Within the field of second language learning specifically, Gardner (1985) proposed that motivation, as well as aptitude, was a major factor explaining individual differences among language learners. Gardner argued that learners displaying an 'integrative orientation', which he defined as "learning a second language in order to learn about, interact with, or become closer to, the second language community" (p.54), tended towards higher motivation than those who were primarily instrumentally oriented, although he was careful to note that this was not invariably the case. By foregrounding learners' attitudes towards the L2 culture, Gardner's model thus situated learning firmly within its social context. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), however, point out several issues with the supposed centrality of 'integrativeness' to motivation, most pertinently its minimal relevance in EFL contexts in which the learner may have limited, if any, interaction with speakers of the target language. In the real world, L2 motivation has multiple aspects (Chang, 2010), and motivation can best be investigated through the adoption of "multiple levels of analysis and multidimensional theoretical perspectives" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.32).

2.2 Self-determination theory (SDT)

Psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan formulated a comprehensive model of motivation they labelled 'self-determination theory' (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2017), which focuses on the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the

influence of the three psychological needs of autonomy, relatedness and competence on motivation. As noted by Noels (2009, p.307), SDT “organizes many, seemingly disparate, ideas about motivational orientations in a manner that can be applied across a large range of contexts” and, while not specific to the field, can thus provide a valuable framework for studies of motivation in second-language learning.

Self-determination theory makes the fundamental distinction between *intrinsic motivation*, in which satisfaction is gained by engaging in learning for its own sake, and *extrinsic motivation*, which relates to learning carried out as a means to an end. Extrinsic motivation is further subdivided into the following four types, according to the specific nature of that end:

- (i) *External regulation*. Learning carried out to meet a concrete external demand, for example to get a better job or pass a test.
- (ii) *Introjected regulation*. When a learner is motivated by social or group norms, for example to meet the expectations of parents or teachers.
- (iii) *Identified regulation*. When a learner appreciates the usefulness of the language to achieve goals that are important to them at a personal level.
- (iv) *Integrated regulation*. In this case, the learner feels that learning the language is central to their own identity.

In general, within the SDT framework, intrinsic motivation and the more self-regulated types of extrinsic motivation (integrated and identified regulation) are viewed as being more desirable and more likely to lead to successful learning. Completing the full spectrum of motivational orientations, SDT also recognizes *amotivation*, wherein learners see no value in learning the target language, and are doing so simply because they have no choice in the matter.

Along with foregrounding these different types of motivations, the other key tenet of SDT is that the degree and type of a learner’s motivation is determined by the extent to which their psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence are met by the learning environment. Meeting these three needs will create learners who display greater intrinsic and self-regulated extrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Noels (2013, p.27) defines autonomy as being when students can “freely choose to engage in activities that they find personally meaningful”, and suggests that language teachers can promote a sense of autonomy among their students by focusing on their interests, offering choices, and providing activities which are inherently meaningful to them. Relatedness refers to the

sense of connection the learner feels with others involved in his or her learning, primarily teachers and classmates, and is thus particularly impacted by the teacher's communication style and classroom management techniques. To some extent, autonomy and relatedness can be seen as contrasting phenomena, with the former centred in the self, and the latter in the social context, and as Noels (2013) notes, the relative importance of each may vary between collectivist and individualistic cultures. The final psychological need, competence, relates to a learner's sense of their own accomplishment, which, according to Ryan and Deci (2017, p.95) is "experientially significant to the self". In terms of language learning, feelings of competence can be fostered by providing well-structured activities with clear expectations and by offering learners ongoing guidance and feedback (Noels, 2009).

In a useful summary of the ways in which striving to meet students' needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence impacts upon learning, Noels (2013, p.25) makes the point that "the teacher who wishes to foster student motivation must attend to the learner, the situation, the group dynamics and the stage in the learning process". Thus, rather than being simply an abstract academic model, SDT can also provide a lens through which teachers can evaluate and revise various aspects of their own practice, including lesson planning, materials development and classroom management.

2.3 Motivation and goal structure

One potentially significant influence on language learner motivation is the goal structure of the classroom. Jacobs (1988) identifies three types of goal structure that may be deployed in second language learning environments: *individualistic*, *competitive*, and *cooperative*. The three goal structures display the following characteristics:

Individualistic: whether any one student achieves a goal has no impact on whether other students do so.

Competitive: the success of any one student necessitates the failure of others.

Cooperative: a student can only achieve their goal if the students they are working with also achieve theirs.

A considerable amount of research has been carried out on the influence of goal structure upon learner motivation, with Dörnyei (2001, p.100) stating that

studies from all over the world are unanimous in claiming that students in cooperative environments have more positive attitudes towards learning and develop higher self-

esteem and self-confidence than in other classroom structures.

Aspects of the cooperative goal structure found to foster motivation include students working together towards a common goal (Sachs, Candlin & Rose, 2013), positive interdependence among learners (Ning, 2011; Ning & Hornby, 2014), the necessity of each individual's unique contribution for group success (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011) and feeling a sense of responsibility towards others (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Within the framework of SDT, a cooperative goal structure is clearly likely to contribute to learners' need for relatedness, but also that for autonomy, given that cooperative classrooms also tend to be more learner-centred, and competence, as commitment to the team, rather than ability *per se*, becomes the dominant metric by which an individual's contribution is judged. Sachs *et al.* (2013) note that a cooperative classroom is more likely to promote intrinsic motivation than either a competitive or individualistic goal structure, a conclusion supported by the research of Ning and Hornby (2014), who found that a cooperative structure led to significantly improved intrinsic motivation, even though the use of a team grade as an external motivator had little discernible impact on learners' extrinsic motivation.

In terms of implementing a cooperative goal structure in the second language classroom, Renandya and Jacobs (2017) outline four key principles, stating that cooperative learning should include:

- i) positive interdependence (i.e. success depends on all members participating)
- ii) maximum peer interaction
- iii) equal opportunity to participate
- iv) individual accountability

Jacobs (1988) points out that while cooperative *activities* are common in second language teaching (i.e. the use of groupwork), cooperative *goal structure* is not, as most grading tends to be on an individualistic and/or competitive basis. While cooperative learning necessarily takes place within groups, Renandya and Jacobs (2017) stress that group work in itself is not fundamentally cooperative unless it fulfils the above criteria. In order to effectively utilize cooperative learning to foster motivation, tasks should be structured to require a single group product, but in order to discourage freeloaders grading must include both a group and individual component (Dörnyei, 2001). When correctly implemented though, it seems clear that cooperative tasks can have a role to play in generating and maintaining learner motivation.

2.4 Project-based learning (PBL)

While a cooperative goal structure can be incorporated into language learning environments in various ways and to various degrees, lessons structured around the concept of project-based learning seem particularly conducive to promoting a cooperative element within the classroom. Thomas (2000, p.1) defines projects as “complex tasks, based on challenging questions or problems, that involve students in design, problem-solving, decision making, or investigative activities”, and while a project can, in theory, be undertaken by an individual working alone, it is a basic principle of PBL that projects are best carried out by students working cooperatively in groups to complete tasks that integrate the skills of all members (Lasagabaster & Beloqui, 2015). In a PBL classroom, the roles of both teacher and learner differ from those found in a more traditional set-up, with the teacher becoming a facilitator rather than a knowledge provider (Newell, 2003; Sheppard & Stoller, 1995) and students accordingly taking a more active role in shaping the direction of their own learning (Lam, Cheng & Ma, 2009).

Stoller (2002) outlines in detail the key characteristics of project work, noting that it is student-centred and teacher-guided, it focuses on content and real-world topics, it requires integration of skills and processing of information, and that while a project necessarily culminates in some kind of product, the process required to reach that end point is of equal importance. Thus, PBL enables learners to acquire not only language ability, but also skills and content knowledge (Beckett & Slater, 2005; Foss, Carney, McDonald & Rooks, 2008). In terms of how best to implement project work, Alan and Stoller (2005) recommend that teachers attend to several key requirements, including that when setting up a project they should consider both language needs and content interests, clearly specify learning objectives, design tasks that require both independent and collaborative work, encourage students to allocate individual group member responsibilities, and be sure to engage students in decision-making at all stages of the project, thus building their sense of ownership. While details of individual projects will vary, following these broad principles will likely engender successful learning outcomes.

Research in both L1 and L2 education has found project-based learning to offer various advantages. The versatility of PBL as a methodology means that it is applicable in many different teaching contexts (Stoller, 2012), and furthermore can be beneficial to students with a wide range of learning styles (Thomas, 2001). PBL also allows the teaching of language skills in a more integrated manner (Foss *et al.*, 2008), encourages authentic

communication within the classroom (Stoller, 2002), and makes lessons more relevant and personalized (Wang, 2020). As far as benefits to students are concerned, it has been suggested that learners value the autonomy and collaborative atmosphere that comes with project work (Fujioka, 2012), and that projects may enhance confidence and creativity (Astawa, Artini & Nitiasih, 2017; Fujioka, 2012). Stoller (2002, p.110), an early and enthusiastic proponent of PBL, makes the wide-ranging claim that it is “potentially motivating, stimulating, empowering and challenging. It usually results in building student confidence, self-esteem, and autonomy as well as improving students’ language skills, content learning, and cognitive abilities”. While all these claimed effects are valuable, it is the impact of project-based learning on motivation which is most pertinent to the current study.

2.5 Project-based learning & motivation

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p.26) note that “motivation in the short-term may be influenced by specific features of the instructional context such as task and materials design, or evaluation practices and grouping structures”. Clearly then, as a methodology which relies on classroom management and lesson planning quite distinct from that found in more traditional teaching environments, it seems likely that the use of project-based learning in language classes will have some influence upon the motivation of students. In general terms, it seems that PBL can generate and sustain motivation, as well as student engagement and self-confidence (Blumenfeld *et al.*, 1991; Lee, 2002). Claims have also been made for the efficacy of PBL in promoting intrinsic motivation, viewed within self-determination theory as being the most highly valued type. Pedersen (2003) found that the opportunities for control, challenge and collaboration afforded by PBL generated high intrinsic motivation in learners, and Zhang (2012) reported that PBL raised learners’ intrinsic motivation in terms of reaching their goals and achieving emotional satisfaction. Lasagabaster and Beloqui (2015) note that students showing greater intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, motivation are more likely to be motivated by and engaged in project work; conversely, Koh, Wang, Tan, Liu and Ee (2009) found that learners tended more towards extrinsic motivation in a project-based classroom, while also observing, through an SDT framework, that learners’ needs for relatedness and competence, but not that for autonomy, were satisfied through project work. Nishida (2013), on the other hand, reports that PBL helped to enhance students’ competence and autonomy, but had no significant impact on their sense of relatedness. Perhaps these

conflicting findings serve to illustrate the point made by Lasagabaster and Beloqui (2015) that the number of studies investigating the influence of PBL on learner motivation is insufficient for firm conclusions to be drawn, something which seems to be even more the case within the field of second language learning specifically.

3. Background to the present study

3.1 The teaching context

The curriculum in the College of International Business at Ritsumeikan University requires that students achieve 30 English language credits to graduate. Of these credits, 20 are taken as compulsory courses in the first and second year, with the composition of the remaining ten depending on students' performance in TOEIC[®] and TOEFL[®] tests. Those who achieve the required test scores take a course titled Project English in the first semester of their third year. The students who qualify to take Project English are divided into six classes, each of which is taught by a different teacher during the same class period. The course follows a common syllabus, and one of the six teachers acts as the overall coordinator.

Stoller (2012) outlines a seven-step process for the implementation of project-based learning. Steps 1-3 are preparatory, and comprise agreeing on a project theme, deciding on the final outcome, and structuring the process of the project. In step 4 students gather information, in step 5 this information is organized and analyzed, and in step 6 students deliver the final product of their project, be that a written report, oral presentation, or other outcome. Finally, step 7 is reflective, with learners evaluating various aspects of the project process and product. Project English follows this seven-step process, but divides the project into two halves: although steps 1-3 prepare a project for the whole semester, this has both an intermediate and a final goal, and steps 4-7 are thus carried out twice.

In each class, students work in groups of three or four for the full semester. Group members are determined by the course coordinator, following the principles that project groups should be heterogeneous (Sachs *et al.* 2003) and academically balanced (Ning, 2011). The project each group undertakes could be defined as semi-structured (Stoller, 2002), in that its theme is decided by the learners, but within parameters set by the teacher. All projects must have a business-related theme and be broadly divisible into two stages – Stage One, in which a problem or opportunity is identified and analyzed, and Stage Two, in which a plan is proposed to either deal with the problem or exploit the opportunity.

By the midway point of the semester, each group must create an A0 sized poster introducing Stage One of their project. These posters are displayed publicly on campus (as well as on a dedicated website) for two weeks, during which time two poster sessions are held. The poster sessions are a communal activity for all six Project English classes, and are also open to other members of the university who wish to attend. At any one point during these sessions, a quarter of the students are at their posters ready to answer questions and elaborate on their projects, and the remainder are circulating freely, reading posters, and engaging with their creators, with the intention being to create an atmosphere comparable to a poster session at an academic conference. In Stage Two of the project, groups work on producing a 15-20 minute PowerPoint[®] presentation outlining the solutions they propose to the issues raised in Stage One, and in the final three weeks of the semester, each group makes a formal oral presentation, without the use of scripts or notes. These presentations are also a communal activity, and are organized to resemble an academic conference, taking place in three rooms simultaneously, and with students given a free choice of which presentation they wish to attend.

3.2 Project English, goal structure, and motivation

Stoller (2002), among others, suggests that cooperation is a central element of project-based learning. Nevertheless, as noted by Jacobs (1988), one of the most vociferous proponents of cooperative learning, activities with other goal structures (i.e. individualistic and competitive) also have an important place in the classroom. Furthermore, Ning (2011) makes the valid point that implementation of cooperative learning needs to consider cultural preferences, stating that “when cooperative learning is first used with Asian students, full attention should be given to a proper balance between cooperative learning and traditional teaching” (p.63). Taking these points into account, the syllabus for Project English, while relying strongly on cooperative learning, also incorporates individualistic and competitive elements.

According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011, p.27), in cooperative classrooms “students work in small groups in which each member shares responsibility for the outcome and is equally rewarded”. However, while some form of group grade is clearly key to encouraging cooperation, a course in which grades were allocated purely on the basis of group achievement would risk demotivating high achieving students and encouraging social loafing, defined by Forsyth (2019, p.314) as “the reduction of individual effort exerted when people work in

groups compared to when they work alone”. Grading in Project English is therefore based on the advice of Dörnyei (2001) that cooperative learning should incorporate both group and individual scores, and over the course of the semester each accounts for 50% of a student’s final grade.

While Dörnyei (2001) suggests that competition among students should be limited, it is clear that for some people competition can also be a powerful motivating factor. Even though grading is not in any way competitive, in Project English the fact that all posters are displayed publicly nevertheless generates an implicit sense of competition between groups. In order to enhance this, in 2018 a poster competition was introduced to the course, in which all posters are evaluated by four groups of judges (Project English students, Project English teachers, Faculty of Business Administration professors, and first-year students). The scores of all judges are combined, and the top-scoring three groups win small prizes, which are announced and awarded in a ceremony attended by all Project English students. However, in order to avoid “face-threatening competition” (Dörnyei, 1997) which may be demotivating to less successful groups, only the top three scores are made public, although all groups receive judges’ feedback comments privately. This has the further advantage of exposing the product of the project to an external audience, something which Thomas (2001) identifies as a potentially motivating factor in project-based learning.

From the theoretical perspective of self-determination theory, Project English also offers learners the opportunity to satisfy the psychological needs of autonomy (groups are responsible for choosing the theme and determining the progress of their projects), relatedness (students work in cooperative groups for the entire semester) and competence (tasks have clear structure and regular feedback from both peers and teachers). Noels (2013, p.24) claims that SDT “might be useful for understanding and encouraging students’ motivation in Japan”, but also that little research has been done in this area; likewise, Liu *et al.* (2009) point out that little research has been carried out on project-based learning through the framework of SDT.

This study thus seeks to investigate the motivation of students taking the Project English course from the dual perspectives of self-determination theory and goal structure, and addresses the following two questions:

- 1) Within the framework of SDT, what motivational orientations did Project English students display?
- 2) To what degree were students motivated by the cooperative, individualistic, and competitive elements of the course?

4. Methods

4.1 Participants

In 2019, a total of 117 students took the Project English course, divided into six classes of either 19 or 20. In total there were 30 project groups, with 27 of these comprising four members, and the remainder three. In order to take the course, all students had achieved either a TOEIC[®] score of at least 550 points or a TOEFL[®] score of at least 480 points. A large majority of participants were third-year students, although a small number of fourth-years also took the course after missing it in their third year due to study abroad.

4.2 Data collection and analysis

Data on students' motivation was collected via an anonymous questionnaire survey administered in the final class of the semester. Of the 117 registered students, 109 attended class that day and completed the survey, which was translated into Japanese and provided in bilingual format. The survey consisted of two parts. Part One consisted of four background questions asking students to evaluate their own contribution to the project and the success of their group in working as a team, plus an open comment question inviting them to elaborate on their answers. Part Two investigated students' motivation during Stage One of the projects (creating posters), and comprised the following randomly ordered items asking students to evaluate the importance of different potential motivational factors:

- 1) I wanted to get a good grade.
- 2) I wanted to improve my English.
- 3) I wanted to support my groupmates.
- 4) I wanted to impress my teacher.
- 5) I knew many people would see our poster in the corridor.
- 6) I enjoy researching business topics.
- 7) I felt obliged to support my groupmates.
- 8) I wanted to learn more about our topic.
- 9) I enjoy working in a group.
- 10) I enjoy using English.
- 11) I wanted people to enjoy reading our poster.

- 12) I wanted our poster to be better than other groups’.
- 13) I wanted to impress my classmates.
- 14) I wanted to do well in the poster competition.
- 15) I knew many people would see our poster on the website.

Students were asked the question “How important were the following things in motivating you to work on your poster?”, and rated each of the fifteen items on a five-point Likert-style scale, ranging from “Not at all important” to “Very important”. Finally, an open comment box was provided in which students were invited to add comments explaining their answers.

Although self-determination theory divides extrinsic motivation into four types, Noels (2009) points out that intrinsic motivation and integrated extrinsic motivation are in fact quite similar, and further notes that the four types of extrinsic motivation represent points on a continuum, rather than clearly distinct entities. While these sub-categories are certainly useful, in practice defining an individual’s extrinsic motivation in such precise terms may not always be realistic. Taking this into account, for the purposes of this study SDT’s motivational orientations have been collapsed into three broader categories. Thus, the survey items were created in order to represent the following motivational orientations: intrinsic or integrated extrinsic motivation (items 2, 6, 8, 9 and 10), identified or introjected extrinsic motivation (items 3, 4, 7, 11 and 13), and externally regulated extrinsic motivation (items 1, 5, 12, 14 and 15). For convenience of reference, these three orientations will be labelled Type A, Type B and Type C respectively.

With respect to goal structure, four items (3, 7, 9 and 11) relate to cooperative elements of the course, four to competitive elements (4, 12, 13 and 14), and five to individualistic elements (1, 2, 6, 8 and 10). However, it is important to note here that the boundaries between the three types of goal structure may not always be entirely clear. For instance, while item 4 (I wanted to impress my teacher) has been classified as an example of competitive goal structure, it is possible that it also contains an element of individualistic motivation, in that impressing a teacher is likely to lead to a higher grade. Similarly, item 3 (I wanted to support my groupmates) is primarily cooperative, yet also may involve an element of individualistic motivation: by supporting their groupmates, a student may be hoping to enhance their own sense of self-worth. Nevertheless, these 13 items seem to clearly display one primary type of goal structure, and have thus been classified on this basis. Two

remaining items (5 and 15), however, could be considered as either cooperative, competitive or individualistic depending on the precise motivation of the individual, and thus do not neatly fit this framework. These items have therefore been classified as 'Indeterminate' within the goal structure paradigm.

For each category within the two theoretical frameworks, a mean score was calculated for each participant based on their responses to all the items within that category. Using this mean score, participants' motivation with respect to that category was classified as high (mean of 3.75 or above), low (mean of 2.75 or below), or medium (mean of between 2.75 and 3.75).

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Motivational orientation with respect to self-determination theory

Table 1 summarizes students' survey responses from the perspective of self-determination theory, with items grouped according to motivational orientation. The first point to note is that, in general, Project English students showed high levels of motivation. With regard to 11 of the 15 motivating factors, a majority of students responded that they had been either 'very important' or 'important' in motivating them to work on their posters, with the four exceptions being items 5, 13, 14 and 15.

Considering the three different types of motivational regulation, it can be seen that, overall, Type A factors (intrinsic or integrated regulation) proved to be the strongest motivators (overall mean 3.82), followed by Type B (overall mean 3.71) and then Type C (overall mean 3.46). However, when looking at individual items within these categories in more detail, no clear or consistent pattern emerges: of the five survey items with the highest mean response, two are Type A (items 2 and 10), two Type B (items 7 and 3), and one Type C (item 12), indicating that a range of motivational orientations exist within the student body. However, with the three least motivating factors all being Type C items, it seems that externally regulated motivators were of less importance overall to the respondents. Somewhat surprisingly, the desire to get a good grade did not rank as one of the top five motivating factors in Project English, contrasting with the finding of McCarthy (2010) that this was learners' primary concern.

For each of the three motivational orientations, students were judged to have either high, medium, or low motivation, based on their responses to each of the five survey items

representing that orientation. Table 2 shows the patterns emerging from this analysis.

With regard to high motivation, three distinct clusters are apparent in Table 2. Firstly, almost one third of the participants were found to show high motivation across all three types of orientation. Further analysis revealed that within this group of highly motivated individuals, 11 out of 35 answered either 'Very important' or 'Important' to all 15 items, and six of these 11 students came from a single class, more than from the other five classes combined. This is somewhat surprising, given that all six classes followed a common syllabus and schedule, and the poster sessions were conducted as a common activity which all six classes participated in together. A further 16 participants displayed high motivation with respect to two of the three orientations, with 12 of these reporting high Type A and B motivation. Similarly, of the 28 students who were highly motivated in one orientation only, 18 of those reported as Type A. To summarize, 79 out of 109 students reported high motivation in at least one of the three orientations, even though nine of these displayed low motivation in another orientation. Of these 79 students, 66 displayed high intrinsic or integrated regulation (Type A), which is thus clearly the dominant motivational orientation among this body of students. Given that, according to Noels (2009, 2011), intrinsic motivation and integrated regulation are the orientations most likely to lead to success in language learning, this would seem to be a welcome finding.

While a large majority of students could hence be classified as highly motivated in at least one orientation, 16 were judged to show only medium-level motivation. Although these students' overall motivation levels may be similar, this hides a significant amount of individual variation. Several respondents answered either 'Somewhat important' or 'Important' to all 15 items; conversely, others covered the full range from 'Very important' to 'Not at all important'. To take two examples of the latter, one student stated that getting a good grade (item 1) was not at all important in motivating them, but that wanting to support their groupmates (item 3) and the enjoyment of researching business topics (item 6) were very motivating factors. In contrast, another considered getting a good grade and doing well in the poster competition (item 14) to be very motivating, but five other factors, including wanting their poster to be better than those of other groups (item 12), not at all important. This variability perhaps reinforces the point that motivation can be something of a nebulous concept, and that the motivations of individuals are complex and unlikely to always fit neatly into pre-determined categories. Certainly, among this group of students whose overall motivation has been classified as 'medium', there may be people who were in fact highly

Table 1. Summary statistics from the perspective of self-determination theory

Motivating factor	Mean	Mode	Number choosing 'Very important' or 'Important'	Number choosing 'Not very important' or 'Not at all important'
Type A: Intrinsic or integrated regulation				
2) I wanted to improve my English.	4.06	5	80	15
10) I enjoy using English.	3.91	5	75	7
8) I wanted to learn more about our topic.	3.84	4	68	12
9) I enjoy working in a group.	3.71	4	70	18
6) I enjoy researching business topics.	3.56	4	60	28
Type B: Extrinsic (identified or introjected regulation)				
7) I felt obliged to support my groupmates.	3.97	5	78	16
3) I wanted to support my groupmates.	3.88	4	76	11
11) I wanted people to enjoy reading our poster.	3.74	3 / 4	64	7
4) I wanted to impress my teacher.	3.57	3	55	15
13) I wanted to impress my classmates.	3.38	3	51	15
Type C: Extrinsic (external regulation)				
12) I wanted our poster to be better than other groups'.	3.90	5	76	10
1) I wanted to get a good grade.	3.80	4	71	14
14) I wanted to do well in the poster competition.	3.31	4	50	26
5) I knew many people would see our poster in the corridor.	3.27	3	46	29
15) I knew many people would see our poster on the website.	3.03	3	34	36

N=109

5=Very important, 4=Important, 3=Somewhat important, 2=Not important, 1=Not at all important

Table 2. Motivational patterns according to self-determination theory

Motivational pattern	Number of students
High motivation in all three types of orientation	35
High motivation in two types of orientation	16
High motivation in type A and B	12 ^{*1}
High motivation in type A and C	1
High motivation in type B and C	3
High motivation in one type of orientation	28
High motivation in type A	18 ^{*2}
High motivation in type B	5 ^{*3}
High motivation in type C	5
Medium motivation (neither high nor low in any type)	16
Low motivation in one type of orientation and high in none	3
Low motivation in type A	0
Low motivation in type B	3
Low motivation in type C	0
Low motivation in two types of orientation and high in none	7
Low motivation in type A and B	4
Low motivation in type A and C	1
Low motivation in type B and C	2
Low motivation in all three types of orientation	4

*1: Includes one student with low motivation in type C

*2: includes one student with low motivation in type B and four with low motivation in type C

*3: includes one student with low motivation in type A and two with low motivation in type C

motivated, but only in one very specific way. Motivation is not something that can be easily quantified, and while surveys are useful to paint a broad general picture, to investigate the motivations of individuals at a deeper level, then different research tools would be valuable.

Finally, Table 2 shows that only 23 students reported low motivation in any of the three orientations. Even among these learners, 20 answered either 'Very important' or 'Important' to at least one of the 15 items, so displayed at least some degree of motivation, even if of very limited scope. Thus, in terms of self-determination theory, only three of 109 participants can be considered to have displayed an entirely amotivational orientation, another positive finding.

5.2 Motivational orientation with respect to goal structure

Similar patterns emerge when the survey items are reclassified according to the goal structure they represent. Interestingly, Table 3 shows that, overall, students were equally highly motivated by elements of the course which involved individualistic (overall mean 3.83) or cooperative goals (overall mean 3.83). Competitive goals were, on average, less motivating (overall mean 3.54). When looking at the top five motivators from a goal structure perspective, it can be seen that two are individualistic (items 2 and 10), two are cooperative (items 7 and 3), and one is competitive (item 12). While individualistic and cooperative motivators appear of similar importance, it is worth noting that the former are likely to occur naturally in many language learning environments, but for students to get the motivational benefits of cooperation teachers need to explicitly introduce this goal structure into their classrooms. Moreover, when individualistic motivation may be low or absent (for example, among students learning a language as a course requirement despite lacking the need or opportunity to use it), then implementing cooperative tasks could have the potential to motivate learners with little intrinsic interest in the language.

As previously noted, survey items 5 and 15, which relate to the public performance element of Project English as a potential motivator, do not fit neatly into this framework as they contain elements of both cooperative (showing your group in a good light) and competitive (showing your group to be better than others) goal structures. These factors were clearly the least motivating to students (overall mean 3.15). Even so, less than a third of students rated each item as being either 'not very important' or 'not at all important' in motivating them, indicating that while these aspects of the course may have been less central to motivation than others, they were still of some value to the majority of learners.

Similarly, examining the data through a finer lens reveals that competitive goal structure, although less motivating at an overall level, is nonetheless an important element of the motivational mix. Of 109 students, the survey responses of 16 identified competitive goal structure as the most motivating of the three types, with a further 16 for whom it was jointly most motivating. Furthermore, even the least motivating competitive item, the desire to do well in the poster competition, was only rated as 'not very important' or 'not at all important' by fewer than one in four respondents. Thus, while individualistic and cooperative factors are clearly more effective motivators overall, there was a large proportion of students for whom the competitive elements of the course were also useful in motivating them to work on their projects.

Table 3. Summary statistics from the perspective of goal structure

Type of goal structure	Mean	Mode	Number choosing 'Very important' or 'Important'	Number choosing 'Not very important' or 'Not at all important'
Individualistic				
2) I wanted to improve my English.	4.06	5	80	15
10) I enjoy using English.	3.91	5	75	7
8) I wanted to learn more about our topic.	3.84	4	68	12
1) I wanted to get a good grade.	3.80	4	71	14
6) I enjoy researching business topics.	3.56	4	60	28
Cooperative				
7) I felt obliged to support my groupmates.	3.97	5	78	16
3) I wanted to support my groupmates.	3.88	4	76	11
11) I wanted people to enjoy reading our poster.	3.74	3&4	64	7
9) I enjoy working in a group.	3.71	4	70	18
Competitive				
12) I wanted our poster to be better than other groups'.	3.90	5	76	10
4) I wanted to impress my teacher.	3.57	3	55	15
13) I wanted to impress my classmates.	3.38	3	51	15
14) I wanted to do well in the poster competition.	3.31	4	50	26
Indeterminate				
5) I knew many people would see our poster in the corridor.	3.27	3	46	29
15) I knew many people would see our poster on the website.	3.03	3	34	36

N=109; 5=Very important, 4=Important, 3=Somewhat important, 2=Not important, 1=Not at all important

Table 4 shows motivational pattern according to goal structure orientation, and reinforces the point that individualistic and cooperative motivators were of roughly equal importance to students: on top of the 40 participants who displayed high motivation in respect of all three goal structures, a further ten did so with regard to both individualistic and competitive factors, 11 towards individualistic factors only, and ten towards cooperative factors only. In total, 64 students were identified as having high individualistic motivation, and 67 as having high cooperative motivation. At the higher levels of motivation, there is also considerable crossover between these two factors, which often appear to work in tandem: only two students displayed the combination of high individualistic/low cooperative motivation, and two the reverse pattern. However, at the opposite end of the motivational scale, Table 4 indicates that for students with low motivation, individualistic factors appear

Table 4. Motivational patterns according to goal structure

Motivational pattern	Number of students
High motivation in all three types of goal structure	40
High motivation in two types of goal structure	20
Individualistic and cooperative	10 ^{*1}
Individualistic and competitive	3
Cooperative and competitive	7
High motivation in one type of goal structure	23
Individualistic	11 ^{*2}
Cooperative	10 ^{*3}
Competitive	2
Medium motivation (neither high nor low in any type)	10
Low motivation in one type of goal structure and high in none	5
Individualistic	1
Cooperative	1
Competitive	3
Low motivation in two types of goal structure and high in none	7
Individualistic and cooperative	0
Individualistic and competitive	0
Cooperative and competitive	7
Low motivation in all three types of goal structure	4

*1: includes four students with low motivation in respect to competitive goal structure

*2: includes two students with low motivation in respect to cooperative goal structure

*3: includes one student with low motivation in respect to individualistic goal structure, five with respect to competitive goal structure, and one with respect to both

to have greater prominence: of the 29 students displaying low motivation in at least one category, 24 did so with regard to competitive factors, 14 with regard to cooperative factors, but only seven with regard to individualistic factors, of whom four had low motivation in all three categories.

5.3 Further discussion

From the data presented in tables 1-4, it is apparent that there is a considerable overlap between the theoretical frameworks of self-determination theory and goal structure, and the categories used in this study have the approximate equivalence shown in Table 5.

Table 5. The broad relationship between the two paradigms.

SDT orientation	Goal structure
Intrinsic motivation or integrated regulation	Individualistic
Identified or introjected regulation	Cooperative
External regulation	Competitive

Clearly, however, there are some major exceptions to this relationship: for example, wanting to get a good grade demonstrates motivation which is externally regulated but individualistic. Furthermore, it is important to note that the various motivating factors investigated in the survey do not operate entirely independently, but may impact upon each other in either positive or negative ways. For example, a student who is initially motivated to work hard only through a sense of obligation to their groupmates may find themselves enjoying the work involved and thus becoming more highly motivated to delve deeper into the topic. Conversely, a student who began the course motivated by the enjoyment of using English may lose motivation if they find themselves working alongside apathetic groupmates or struggling to understand complex terms and concepts in English. So although it is true that motivational factors deriving from cooperative goal structure tend to relate directly to identified or introjected regulation, it is also possible that they may serve to increase a learner's intrinsic motivation. For example, while motivation derived from enjoyment of groupwork shows identified regulation, it may also lead to the learner enjoying using English more, and thus also stimulate their intrinsic motivation. In reality, language learning motivation should be seen as a dynamic complex system, which develops through "interaction with a multiplicity of internal, social and contextual factors" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.72) and it is therefore necessary to bear in mind that although it may be convenient

for research purposes to consider different factors in isolation there may be a large degree of interplay between them.

Looking in more detail at the role of cooperative learning in motivation, survey items 3 (I wanted to support my groupmates) and 7 (I felt obliged to support my groupmates) are clearly fairly similar, and have been grouped together in both of the theoretical frameworks employed in this study. Unsurprisingly, when evaluating these two points, the majority of participants (65 out of 109) considered them to be of equal importance as motivating factors. Of the remaining respondents, 18 viewed wanting to support their groupmates as a more powerful motivator than feeling obliged to do so, with 26 expressing the opposite opinion: that the feeling of obligation was more motivating. Viewed from an SDT perspective, these items represent two different types of extrinsic motivation: item 3 shows identified regulation, which is when someone “highly values and identifies with the behavior” and item 7 introjected regulation, involving “norms to be followed in order not to feel guilty” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p.24). Noels (2013) suggests that collectivist traditions may mean that introjected regulation is of greater importance in Japan; among this group of learners, however, it seems that feelings of obligation are only marginally more salient than the identified regulation involved in wanting to support your groupmates.

As mentioned previously, the 15 survey items were followed by an open comment box in which students were invited to explain their responses in further detail. While many left this box blank, others added insightful comments regarding aspects of their motivation when working on their posters. Particularly interesting were comments demonstrating the range of attitudes which existed within the student body. For example, with respect to the public performance aspect of the course, one student commented that “I wanted to show other groups and teachers that ‘we can do this!’. That motivated me”, highlighting the positive motivation that can be generated by exposure to the scrutiny of peers. On the other hand, another student explained their motivation with the point that “I didn’t want everyone who saw our poster to think our poster is worse than other group”. Although the motivating factor here is similar, the impact is less positive: while being motivated to avoid doing something badly may help to achieve an immediate goal, it is less likely to have a beneficial long-term effect on language learning.

A substantial proportion of the open box comments related to the impact of groupwork on motivation. Again, contrasting the comments of a pair of students is instructive:

Student A: Supporting members is most important for me in this presentation because doing with group member is very important to make good presentation. Without cooperating with group members, it's impossible to make a good poster and do good presentation. Fortunately, I was blessed with members and I could do presentation with fun... If there is opportunity, I want to do presentation with these members again.

Student B: If my members were more cooperative it would be productive and good time, but they were not. I think the motivation is highly affected by the environment. One of the biggest factor of the environment is group members. Unfortunately, one of our members didn't do anything about making poster. I thought I should learn how to cooperate with unmotivated people in this time, but it was very difficult for me.

These two students were in the same Project English class, and appear to have similar views on the importance of groupwork, yet had vastly different experiences of it. While Student A was fortunate to work in a productive and cohesive group, the negative experience of Student B highlights one of the potential pitfalls of cooperative learning. It may be true that, in general, this type of goal structure serves to increase motivation via the need for peer approval (Dörnyei, 1997), but there will nevertheless also be cases in which unsuccessful group dynamics impact negatively on motivation, which, as Student B perceptively notes, is "highly affected by the environment". Given that Project English involved 30 groups of three or four students working together for an entire semester, it would be somewhat surprising if all were able to do so smoothly and without problems. As Student B implies, although cooperating with unmotivated people is certainly a skill worth developing, the danger of learners being dragged down by their peers is nevertheless an aspect of the cooperative learning model that requires careful attention.

6. Conclusion

Noels (2013, p.25) suggests that "language teachers should become aware of a variety of instructional strategies that might influence students' motivation in different ways". From the results obtained in this study, it appears that the different strategies built into the

Project English syllabus have effectively complemented each other to provide motivational stimulus for the vast majority of students taking the course. Inevitably, individual students will differ in terms of what is most important to them, with some being primarily motivated by getting a good grade, others by being valued by their classmates as a good team player, and yet others by the desire to do better than their peers. However, of the 15 factors investigated, all were rated as being at least somewhat important by more than two thirds of the student body, suggesting that all had some value in terms of their motivational impact. Furthermore, from the point of view of a language teacher, is certainly welcome that students rated the desire to improve their English ability as the single most motivating factor in this course.

Although the results were encouraging, it is important to note that the study was limited in scope and that further research investigating the motivational orientations of students in project-based learning contexts would be valuable. As noted previously, motivation is a complex and continually evolving phenomenon, and answers given in a single survey necessarily provide only a snapshot of a point in time: the fact that something has motivated a learner during one particular language class is certainly no guarantee that that motivation will be carried forward into future learning situations. Moreover, given that motivation is internal to the individual, it is extremely difficult to measure objectively, and while relying on self-reporting as a yardstick is unavoidable, it is less than ideal. Finally, it is also true that aspects of syllabus design and classroom management may operate as demotivators for certain learners (Kikuchi, 2013), something which was not investigated in this study, but which would be of both theoretical and practical interest.

Finally, as Pedersen (2003) notes, allowing students the opportunity to collaborate on challenging tasks within a project-based framework can generate high levels of intrinsic motivation, viewed within self-determination theory as the most valuable type for long term learning. Yet while a large proportion of the learners who took part in this study did display either intrinsic or highly self-regulated extrinsic motivation, others seemed primarily motivated by more external factors, underlining the need to account for a variety of motivational orientations when planning and implementing courses of study.

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