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The Usefulness of Original Teaching Materials for Motivation

Koji Uenishi

Abstract

This chapter investigates the potential usefulness of original teaching materials in order to enhance Japanese university students' awareness, especially intrinsic motivation when learning English, including cross-cultural understanding, usefulness, and pleasure. Specifically, the extent to which the teaching materials are favored by students and the difference of learner awareness among the four texts are explored. In reading classes non-English-major students were taught English for one semester using the author's textbook, based on his own experiences overseas including 'misadventures'. At the end of each unit, a questionnaire was administered. The collected data were analyzed using two-way ANOVAs and Pearson product-moment. Data analysis suggests that almost all students in the two classes examined enjoyed learning from the teaching materials, had a strong feeling of the importance of English learning, and had a strong awareness of developing English ability after studying each unit.

Keywords: original materials, student motivation, teaching content, two-way ANOVAs, Pearson product-moment

1. Introduction

With regard to English learning in tertiary education, we educators and researchers need to continually evaluate our approaches. University students who will use English as a tool in society after graduation need to improve their English proficiency, which might lead to their increased motivation to learn English at university.

In general, however, students lack motivation to learn English on a bachelor program, and most do not feel language learning to be meaningful. Most student motivation relates to credit gains for their general English classes. Especially, by the time they become sophomores, students' attitudes toward English study tend to become diverse; in fact, some students appear demotivated with regard to learning English and others are just losing interest in English. However, among sophomores some students have studied very seriously by setting TOEIC Test goals or developing their English proficiency in order to study abroad.

It appears vital for teachers to create a class to motivate English language students. In this chapter, one useful method to overcome this is considered, while teaching students who are less motivated or demotivated into English learning, in order to help them discover the significance of studying English in class. An attempt is made to implant feelings of English usefulness and pleasure in learning English into the students via the use of original materials which might motivate students to learn the language.

2. Earlier research

There have been numerous studies on English learning motivation. Particular attention has been paid to intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. These types of motivation are distinguished in self-determination theory (e.g., [1, 2]). Intrinsic motivation is responsible for learners taking an interest in English learning and wanting to communicate with English speakers in English. Alternatively, extrinsic motivation, coming from external sources, leads to learners towards qualifications or passing examinations [1]. It is often said that such motivations do not conflict with each other, but form a diverse continuity [3].

Some research on intrinsic motivation has been conducted by introducing presentations into group activities in class. As a result, enhancement of intrinsic motivation has been shown to be successful (e.g., [4]). Hayashi [5] explores the relations of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations to learner activities by classifying learners into three groups based on their autonomy, concluding that regardless of their autonomy, learners have a tendency towards 'enjoyable' activities in class. Iwanaka [6] confirms that it might be possible to enhance learner motivations toward class activities, English classes and English learning by satisfying three psychological needs of 'competence', 'relatedness' and 'autonomy'. The above was conducted in order to enhance intrinsic motivation through various learner activities.

Miura [7] conducted a 7-year longitudinal research on students' learning motivation from junior high to university, and suggested that university students tend to feel less motivated with regard to language learning after entering university even though their motivation tended to increase at the third year of junior high and senior high schools.

Hamada's [8] quantitative research on junior and senior high school students' awareness shows that *course books* were the strongest demotivator. Sakai and Kikuchi [9] collected high school student learning motivation data and found three important motivation factors: *learning contents and materials, lack of motivation, and test scores*, especially for less motivated learners.

Tanaka [10] conducted motivation research focusing on English learning materials, especially overseas dramas and movies, and likewise he found these to have the positive effect of enhancing intrinsic motivation. Use of DVDs has a great influence on motivation for learning English.

Furthermore, enhancement of student motivation of English learning using movies in class has been attempted (e.g., [11, 12]). For example, in Yoshimura's paper after understanding the outline of the story, students do the tasks (e.g., dictation and reading aloud) while watching part of the movies. As a result, it is reported that students were more motivated into English learning.

Based upon his data results, Hamada [13] lists the following effective methods in preventing demotivation:

1. Practice listening by shadowing
2. Communicative tasks
3. Group/pair work
4. Less use of grammar translation style
5. Presentation
6. Teachers' uniqueness

The last category, *Teachers' uniqueness*, includes teachers' creative ideas such as their experiences abroad and their use of quizzes in English on current world news [13]. This category can be said to be related to the materials the teacher uses. When it comes to English reading class especially, the teaching content has a crucially important effect on student learning motivation.

3. Objectives and methods

3.1 Research objectives

The current research investigates university students' intrinsic motivation to learn English and explores the extent to which the content of teaching materials is received favorably by non-English-major students, and the relationship between the original materials and student awareness of English learning. In particular, focusing on the four countries/areas introduced in class, learner affectivity about the content was compared and discussed. The specific research questions are:

1. To what extent are particular teaching materials favored by students?
2. Does learner awareness vary according to the content of the teaching materials (amongst four countries or regions)?
3. How do students feel about the teaching materials?

3.2 Research methods

The subjects were 67 students who were not majoring in English (non-English major students). Students were mainly sophomores in Communication IIIB (a receptive-skills class), and the classes were taught using the author's original textbook, *Ryu's Misadventures Abroad*.

In the reading class, the author's textbook, based upon overseas experiences, was introduced in order to enhance student motivation into English learning. At the end of each unit a questionnaire was administered to explore learner awareness on the teaching materials and language learning. To obtain answers from the subjects, the questionnaire used a 6-point Likert scale. The questionnaire items were classified into four categories based upon the content of each questionnaire.

Then, the collected data were analyzed using Two-way ANOVAs and Pearson product-moment correlation. In the last item of the questionnaire the students were asked to freely describe impressive or interesting parts relating to the teaching content.

3.3 Class content

The research was designed to encourage students to take a greater interest in English learning, become more motivated to learn it, and enhance their English proficiency through use of materials based on the teacher's travel experiences, including 'misadventures'. The textbook introduced is the teacher's original, *Ryu's Misadventures Abroad*, which constitutes 24 chapters, covering eight countries or regions. However, as students have 15 classes in one semester, they could only cover 12 chapters (four countries or regions). Below are the nations or regions they read about, and some of the problems Ryu encountered:

Vietnam: The main character visits a local village on the outskirts of Hanoi by bus. The roads in the rural areas were not developed and he is annoyed by the bumpy roads. He is warmly welcomed by the local people in the traditional or conventional way of treating guests. After that, he goes to Khanh Street in the city and has a Vietnamese boy polish his shoes. Then he visits another city, Hue, to participate in a teaching workshop as well as do some sightseeing. During his stay there, a restaurant called Hot Tuna catches his eye and he has pumpkin soup and steamed thin rice with meat and shrimp. On another day, he leaves the wharf for one of the sightseeing spots, Big Dong, in a small boat and sees two rowers wearing conical-shaped hats in the boat. On the way to Big Dong, the rowers suddenly quit rowing the boat on the quiet water and urge him to purchase the decorated fabrics taken out of a box. At last, he unwillingly agrees to purchase some silk goods.

Florida: The main character takes Japanese teenagers to Florida as a leader of the short-term overseas study program. He is curious about colloquial expressions in English, and he feels very happy to learn them there. One day, they visit Cocoa Beach and he goes to a restaurant and spends his time sitting back and relaxing there. Then, he is very impressed to see a sea lion, an otter and a walrus perform skillfully with a man and a woman in Sea World, and he also enjoys a 30-minute virtual trip to the Bermuda Triangle. Another day, while walking around the natural zoo, Busch Gardens, with other leaders, they first stop by the Budweiser Brewery and then go to see the Bird Show and Dwarf Village. He happens to see a ventriloquist talking to a stuffed animal puppet. The next day, in spite of the stormy weather outside in the morning, they go bowling in a bowling alley. Then, they see the 'Alligator Show' but he can see only half of it because he has to take care of one female student for the rest of the show. She feels sick when seeing the snakes and she develops a serious condition, hyperventilation.

Thailand: The main character visits the Snake Farm on the premises of a hospital called Thai Red Cross Hospital. The snake show is held twice a day, but the show is not a real performance by snakes since it just displays a wide range of snakes to visitors. After that, he visits several famous Buddhist temples and also sees a lying golden Buddha as well. He has an elderly monk predict his future. Then he visits the ancient temples in Ayutthaya by taxi. However, he has to negotiate with a cab driver about the taxi fare, and the driver's eager invitation urges him to show a flexible attitude toward the fare and finally he decides to use the taxi with no typical taxi sign on it. He is amazed to see almost all of the Buddha statues are without their heads because of repeated violent battles or irreparable damage.

Canada: The coordinator shows the main character around the town of Gibsons in his car, which has an odd odor, similar to rotten crabs. He enjoys the spectacular view along the coast and joins a big festival called Sea Cavalcade. While talking to his host father, he learns some idiomatic expressions. Also, he recognizes Japanese people's typical characteristic of being reserved and modest. He attends a magnificent ceremony at a Protestant church on Sunday with his host parents and listens to the preacher's sermon and then their lodger's long-suffering story. One day he walks on the long path, and on their way to a famous spot, Whirlpool, he stops by Brown Lake for a while to enjoy the fantastic scenery and to take photos of the beautiful lake surrounded by luxuriant cedars. The next day he enjoys fishing for trout at a fish farm, paying \$2.00.

The following teaching methods were used in class.

1. Vocabulary check (10 words)
2. Reading the passages and checking phrases

3. Listening section (4 questions)
4. Listening to the teacher's explanation
5. Reading comprehension (4 questions)
6. Speaking section: Filling in the blanks in two dialogues
7. Doing role play using the above dialogues

Regarding the vocabulary check, students check not only the vocabulary in the section, but also difficult and unknown words in passages. Next, they read a slightly longer passage (800–1000 words). The passage comes with one or two photos, which hopefully can lower students' resistance to reading the long text. If necessary, the teacher makes some comments on the photo(s) before reading and sometimes tells further interesting stories with additional colored photos.

With regard to the listening section in the passage, students use the headset in the CALL classroom, listen to the CD individually and answer the questions. This can be very useful especially for slow learners because they can listen and answer at their own pace. Also, this type of longer text might be difficult for slow learners to read. Then, moving on to reading comprehension, students answer Japanese questions on the content of the passage in order to deeply understand it. Additional explanation based upon the writer's actual experiences further motivates learners and results in a more positive attitude towards English learning.

In another activity, students fill in blanks in the dialogues created based on the text, and after checking answers, they play the roles of Ryu and another person from the text. One aim of this activity is to deepen their understanding of the content while reading the passage again in order to fill in the blanks. The other aim is to enable them to have a 'virtual reality' experience of an overseas trip by doing the pair work activity as if they actually were Ryu traveling abroad.

The final section is a speaking section in which students fill in the blanks in the story dialogue. Based on the story content, the conversation between Ryu and another person develops. In short, Regarding Ryu's overseas experience, the other person asks Ryu questions about it and Ryu answers the questions.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Research question (1)

In this section RQ (1) "To what extent are particular teaching materials favored by students?" is discussed (**Table 1**). As for the responses to questionnaire items among all students, first several remarkable items in the questionnaire are described. The mean scores of Item 5 (English will be useful in the future), Item 11 (The vocabulary section was effective) and Item 13 (The reading comprehension was effective) showed very high numerical values, 4.926, 4.881, and 4.956 on the 6-point Likert scale, respectively (**Table 2**). **Table 3** shows that among the items, Items 11 and 13 belong to Category 4 (Effectiveness of questions) and these high numerical values show how useful the questions to understand the texts, along with the other two ones (Items 12 and 14). Also, Item 5 shows a very high numerical value, which means students feel the usefulness of English in the future through their English classes.

Class	N	M	SD	SE
BS1	120	4.591	0.807	0.074
BS2	148	4.395	1.046	0.086

BS: combined faculties.

Table 1.
Descriptive analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
M	4.358	4.612	4.038	4.139	4.926	4.645	4.311
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
M	4.591	4.091	4.512	4.881	4.536	4.956	4.391

Table 2.
Total responses to questionnaire items (mean scores).

	Classification	Item
C1	Cross-cultural understanding	1, 2
C2	Motivation into English learning	3, 4, 6
C3	Pleasure of textbook content	7, 8, 10
C4	Effectiveness of questions	11, 12, 13, 14

Table 3.
Classification of items.

Further, the mean value of Item 6 (I became keen to develop comprehensive English ability better) was high, 4.645. This means that many students had a strong awareness of their developing English ability after finishing each unit. These results imply that the teaching materials, focusing on the writer’s troubles while traveling abroad, motivated the students to learn English and encouraged them to understand the textbook using the questions.

To reiterate, the questionnaire items were classified into four categories based upon the content of each questionnaire (**Table 3**), and the relationship among the categories was analyzed using Pearson product-moment and discussed (see **Table 4**).

Reliabilities amongst the whole data were relatively high, since the range of Cronbach’s Alpha was from 0.907 to 0.731. Therefore, for all the scales, reliability is considered acceptable. **Table 5** shows that the mean scores of four categories are higher than 4.229 on the 6-point scale. This means that the teaching contents including questions on the texts are meaningful and useful for learner motivation and understanding the passages.

	C1	C2	C3	C4
C1	1	0.713**	0.827**	0.613**
C2		1	0.745**	0.533**
C3			1	0.672**
C4				1

** $p < 0.01$.

Table 4.
Correlative relationship (total).

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
C1	268	4.465	0.895	0.055
C2	268	4.229	0.981	0.060
C3	268	4.351	1.011	0.062
C4	268	4.651	0.716	0.044

Table 5.
Descriptive analysis (categories).

Table 4 demonstrates the strong correlation between Category 3 (Pleasure of textbook content) and two other categories: Category 1 (Cross-cultural understanding) and Category 2 (Motivation into English learning). These results suggest that learner awareness of the enjoyment of reading the passages in the textbook relates to their positive attitudes toward learning English and understanding of foreign cultures. In short, there is a possibility that when the teacher provides students with an interesting textbook or enjoyable content, including adding short stories with colored photos shown on the large screen in the CALL classroom, and they enjoy learning English, they might deepen their understanding of the content and be motivated into English learning. Also, it is considered that in order to have a better understanding of the content, students can use each PC in the CALL classroom to enhance their motivation of English learning. In addition, there is a strong correlation between C1 and C2, indicating that understanding foreign cultures might relate to English learning motivation and that any incorporation of foreign cultures, including overseas experiences, into class might influence student motivation.

4.2 Research question (2)

In this section RQ (2) “Does learner awareness vary according to the content of the teaching materials (amongst four countries or regions)?” is discussed (**Table 6**). Two-way ANOVAs were conducted regarding learner awareness and classes, and the interactions between them were identified ($F(3) = 6.445, p < 0.000$). In order to identify the differences among the groups, the data were analyzed using multiple comparison tests (Bonferroni). As shown in **Table 7**, the results indicate significant differences between the two groups regarding C1 (Cross-cultural understanding), C2 (Motivation into English learning), and C3 (Pleasure of English learning), but there were no significant differences when it came to C4 (Effectiveness of questions). On the whole the high mean scores of all categories show that learners

Class	C	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>
1	C1	120	4.554	0.830	0.076
1	C2	120	4.319	0.826	0.075
1	C3	120	4.531	0.903	0.082
1	C4	120	4.604	0.713	0.065
2	C1	148	4.392	0.941	0.077
2	C2	148	4.155	1.088	0.089
2	C3	148	4.205	1.072	0.088
2	C4	148	4.689	0.718	0.059

Class 1: BS in 1st semester; Class 2: BS in 2nd semester.

Table 6.
Descriptive analysis (total).

	L1	L2	M1	M2	SE	F	P
C1	1	2	4.554	4.392	0.056	2.923	0.004
C2	1	2	4.319	4.155	0.056	2.955	0.004
C3	1	2	4.531	4.205	0.056	5.865	0.000
C4	1	2	4.604	4.689	0.056	1.531	n.s.

Table 7.
Multiple comparison tests among categories (total).

tended to be highly motivated and enjoyed the teaching content. Nevertheless, this shows that students in the first semester class understood foreign cultures more deeply and learned English in a more enjoyable manner than those in the second semester class.

The obtained data were analyzed using two-way ANOVAs in order to identify any differences between countries in each category. As mentioned in the Research Methods, Communication III classes in Liberal Arts Education were selected by sophomores, plus some juniors. Groups 1 and 2 were combined classes including the Faculties of Letters, Integrated Arts & Sciences, Economics and Law.

Table 8 shows that the mean scores of all categories tend to be high. As for each category, the total data obtained from the BS 1 and 2 classes were analyzed using the

	L1	L2	M1	M2	SD	F	P
C1	Vietnam	Florida	4.4403	4.4030	0.0373	0.4748	n.s.
	Vietnam	Thailand	4.4403	4.4478	0.0075	0.0950	n.s.
	Vietnam	Canada	4.4403	4.5672	0.1269	1.6144	n.s.
	Florida	Thailand	4.4030	4.4478	0.0448	0.5698	n.s.
	Florida	Canada	4.4030	4.5672	0.1642	2.0892	n.s.
	Thailand	Canada	4.4478	4.5672	0.1194	1.5194	n.s.
C2	Vietnam	Florida	4.0697	4.3234	0.2537	3.2288	0.008
	Vietnam	Thailand	4.0697	4.1990	0.1294	1.6461	n.s.
	Vietnam	Canada	4.0697	4.3234	0.2537	3.2288	0.008
	Florida	Thailand	4.3234	4.1990	0.1244	1.5827	n.s.
	Florida	Canada	4.3234	4.3234	0.0000	2.0152	n.s.
	Thailand	Canada	4.1990	4.3234	0.1244	1.5827	n.s.
C3	Vietnam	Florida	4.4179	4.3781	0.0398	0.5065	n.s.
	Vietnam	Thailand	4.4179	4.2488	0.1692	2.1525	n.s.
	Vietnam	Canada	4.4179	4.3582	0.0597	0.7597	n.s.
	Florida	Thailand	4.3781	4.2488	0.1294	1.6461	n.s.
	Florida	Canada	4.3781	4.3582	0.0199	0.2532	n.s.
	Thailand	Canada	4.2488	4.3582	0.1095	1.3928	n.s.
C4	Vietnam	Florida	4.6306	4.7463	0.1157	1.4719	n.s.
	Vietnam	Thailand	4.6306	4.5448	0.0858	1.0921	n.s.
	Vietnam	Canada	4.6306	4.6828	0.0522	0.6648	n.s.
	Florida	Thailand	4.7463	4.5448	0.2015	2.5641	n.s.
	Florida	Canada	4.7463	4.6828	0.0634	0.8072	n.s.
	Thailand	Canada	4.5448	4.6828	0.1381	1.7569	n.s.

Table 8.
Multiple comparison tests.

multiple comparison test, Bonferroni. Significant differences were found between *Vietnam* and *Florida/Canada* regarding C2 (**Table 8**). This implies that, regarding motivation into English learning, students were much more motivated into English learning by the texts of *Florida* and *Canada* than the text, *Vietnam*.

4.3 Research question (3): free description

After learning about each country/region, students were asked to freely describe the parts they found particularly interesting or impressive about the country/area. The main free comments collected after reading the story of each country were categorized and are shown in **Table 9**.

When it comes to the total average number of each category, the comment described most was ‘Understanding foreign culture’. **Table 9** shows that on the average 18.75 out of 67 students commented on it. It is considered that, through the units (four countries/regions) they studied, they recognized they could learn about different aspects of those nations and broaden their minds in many respects.

The second most frequent comment in the free description concerned the fact that they were impressed with the story of the writer’s actual experiences and failures. As for ‘Story of real experience/failure’, the average number of students writing the comment was 12.75 out of 67. In case of *Vietnam* and *Thailand* the total numbers of students were 24 and 19, respectively, and they were much larger than those for the other two nations. Especially in *Vietnam*, the writer had a terrible and embarrassing experience of being unwillingly forced to purchase the decorated fabrics by rowers on the boat. While reading the passages, students might have felt as if it were their own affair and they probably thought it could happen to anybody as well. It is considered that the content of the story enthralled the students in class.

Also, regarding the third most frequent comment, ‘the content was interesting/a lot of fun’, the total average number of their comments was 10.5 out of 67, and the numbers of comments for the four countries/regions were almost the same (**Table 9**). As mentioned above, it seems that it is related to the writer’s terrible experience and the students have been attracted by the writer’s urgent situation in the story of *Vietnam* and *Thailand*. On the other hand, in *Canada* the writer visits the places where they have local events like a parade, and in *Florida* he visits an amusement park and sightseeing spots with beautiful nature to enjoy some activities.

Further, in the story of *Canada* there were far more students who wrote the different types of comments as follows:

Comments	Vietnam	Florida	Thailand	Canada	AVG
Understanding different culture	13	16	21	22	18.75
Story of real experience/failure	24	6	19	2	12.75
(The content) interesting	13	10	12	7	10.5
Want to go	6	8	11	3	7
Enjoy reading	3	2	2	6	3.25
Vocabulary/communication	0	5	3	6	2.75

Table 9.
Free description (total).

It felt like hell getting into a car which smelled like rotten crab.

It was impressive for me to read the story in which trout thought a fake bait would be real, and they bit it.

I was impressed with the story in which local people reclaim a person from alcoholism. (Translated into English by the author)

The variety of feelings and thoughts in the above arise from the rich cultural content itself of the country. With regard to the first of the above comments, eleven students made a similar comment and seemed to have had more impact from the story or enjoy reading it.

Regarding the story of *Florida*, one student commented like this: In English study real overseas experiences are easy to understand and learn. This comment gives the teacher more courage and motivation to teach English using this kind of content based on a true story containing an actual experience.

5. Conclusions

The teaching materials, the contents of which include traveling abroad and encountering various kinds of trouble, were utilized in class, and the extent to which the teaching contents (the four countries/regions) favored by students and the relevancy between the teaching content and student awareness were explored. The current chapter has evaluated the use of travel abroad materials, including whether experiences might relate to enhancing learning motivation.

The mean scores of all categories were high, and they imply that specific areas (i.e., Vietnam, Florida, Thailand, and Canada) were preferred. The scores for Category 4 were especially high, which means that the teaching contents, including questions on the texts are meaningful and useful for learner motivation and understanding of the passages. Also, It is considered that explanation of the original colored photos shown on the screen and the listening activity for further understanding of the content using the PC in the CALL classroom at their own pace can also enhance students' learning motivation.

Also, learner awareness of the enjoyment of reading the passages in the textbook relates to their positive attitudes toward learning English and understanding of foreign cultures. There is a possibility that when the teacher provides students with an interesting textbook or enjoyable content and they enjoy learning English, they might deepen their understanding of the content and be more motivated into English learning.

Survey for English Classes

How did you feel about the English class? What do you think about the class in which *Ryu's Misadventures Abroad* is used? For further improvement of the class, please feel free to answer the following questionnaires. Below is the evaluation standard: 6 (strongly agree), 5 (agree), 4 (somewhat agree), 3 (somewhat disagree), 2 (disagree) and 1 (strongly disagree).

1. I could gain an understanding of foreign cultures.
2. I could gain an understanding of foreign countries (sightseeing spots, local people, etc.)

3. I became keen to study English more.
4. I want to read English sentences more.
5. English will be useful for me in the future.
6. I became keen to develop comprehensive English ability better.
7. It was fun to read this textbook.
8. I find reading about overseas experiences interesting.
9. I felt learning vocabulary is difficult.
10. The textbook content is interesting.

Do you think English Questions were effective to understand the passages?

11. The vocabulary section was helpful.
12. The listening section was helpful.
13. The reading comprehension was helpful.
14. The speaking section (fill-in-the-blanks type) was helpful.
15. Please freely describe your feelings and thoughts about any particularly impressive or interesting content in this unit.

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