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Although I am not entirely new to JALT, I am a recent member of the Learner Development SIG and am very pleased to introduce myself through *Learning Learning*. One of the main reasons I joined is because I attended the *Creating Community: Learning Together* conference. I was struck by the friendliness, openness, and relaxed atmosphere among both teachers and students, and I felt this was a learning community I wanted to be part of.

I currently work for the British Council, but my day-to-day teaching takes place at a small private university in Nagoya. I began my teaching career at a language school in my hometown of Cambridge, where I also completed my CELTA, before moving to Japan more than fifteen years ago. Like many teachers, my early focus was on developing my own professional skills through CELTA, DELTA, and later an MA in TESOL. It was during my MA studies that my attention began to shift more towards how students could develop greater independence. My thesis explored how learners could use YouTube to support their academic work, particularly in building arguments for debates and essays.

Over time, the importance of giving learners more choice in their studies has become central to my practice. To support this, several initiatives have gradually taken shape. About five years ago, I launched a weekly departmental podcast to provide optional extensive listening. At first it featured topics such as popular culture, language support, and interviews with students returning from study abroad. More recently, learners themselves have begun producing podcasts and videocasts, sharing their perspectives with their peers. Students often tell me they listen on their commute or while walking to class, and it has been encouraging to see the project evolve into something more collaborative.

Building on this focus on listening, I have also developed an extensive listening program around YouTube. Students are encouraged to watch material of personal interest and report back on what they have learned. Some of the more advanced students choose TED talks and then present summaries of popular science topics such as “how can we learn more effectively?” or “why do we get hiccups?” Others notice the slang and casual expressions in the videos they watch, which they enjoy sharing with classmates. Since I mainly teach academic English, where formal writing is expected, it has been interesting to see how learners use their autonomy to explore the contrast between formal and informal language.

In a similar effort to widen student choice, I have worked with colleagues to establish an extensive reading program. After much discussion, the program was adopted, and it is now encouraging students to read widely on topics of genuine personal interest. It has been rewarding to see the surprising range of materials students pick up, from books on cooking to works of travel writing.

Most recently, I have introduced a SMART goal-setting project for first-year students. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. Because my current institution has no self-access centre, opportunities for developing independent learning skills are limited. In this project, students set their own language goals, record their progress on an activity log, and reflect twice a semester with only light teacher feedback. At first, many students found it difficult to set realistic targets, but with practice they have become more confident in creating achievable goals, such as watching an English video each day or speaking in English with foreign students on campus. The project encourages learners to take ownership of their study habits and see goal-setting as

an ongoing process of reflection and adjustment. Early results are promising, and I look forward to refining the scheme in the future.

Although I came to teaching later in life, I hope to continue creating opportunities for students to take greater control of their learning. Just as importantly, I look forward to learning from the creative and inspiring practices of other members of the Learner Development SIG. I was first drawn to this community because of its openness and warmth, and I am excited to continue sharing and learning together.

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From Forgotten to Frontline: Reviving Theory to Support Language Learners

Hello, everyone! My name is Yuka Kono. I'm currently a PhD student in education at Waseda University in Tokyo, under the supervision of Prof. W. L. Quint Oga-Baldwin. I am very excited to be part of the Learner Development SIG community.

I graduated with a BA in humanities (English literature) in 2018, and then I started teaching English at a high school in Oji, Tokyo. Following that, I worked at an *Eikaiwa* school for three years, teaching different age groups from elementary to adults. It is during this time that I first became interested in learner development, specifically young learners' motivation—Why are these two students' motivations so different, even though they share similar backgrounds?

The Eikaiwa school is located in Nagareyama, Chiba. There are two large public elementary schools nearby with over 1,500 students each. Most of my students thus came from either of the schools, often a few being in the same homeroom class and taught by the same English teacher. However, their motivations and classroom engagement were so different that some moved up to more advanced classes in a relatively short period, whereas others had to stay in the same class for a few years. This experience made me very curious about learner motivation, autonomy, and self-regulated learning.

So I decided to go to graduate school to explore this topic. While attending graduate school, I worked as a tutor at the Centre for Japanese Language for two years, advising international students in making a study plan, setting goals, and sharing useful learning materials and strategies.

To apply these skills to English education, I worked as a learning advisor at the Language Commons at Kanagawa University. While I enjoyed working there, I also wanted to apply theory to real classrooms to see how it would actually function and how students would change.

This year, I started teaching general English at Tokyo University of Science and Japan Women's University, and elementary school English teaching methods at Tokyo Future University.

Because my primary goal is always to create a safe space where every single student can feel respected and valued as well as freely express themselves, I practiced motivation-theory-based teaching strategies over the last spring semester. To increase relatedness, for example, they worked in different pairs every time and wrote positive messages on their name cards at the end of each class. We also did a collaborative survey project and gave presentations about it.

Although some classes happened in the first period, the overall attendance rate was 97%. Indeed, some students told me that, even though the class was a little challenging, they liked the positive classroom atmosphere, which motivated them to participate more in the class.

Along with my teaching, I am also doing PhD research wherein I am trying to investigate students' subject-general motivational patterns and explore how they are linked to their perception of teachers, classroom engagement, and academic (language) performance. The following is a brief overview of my study.

MY RESEARCH MOTIVATION AND PROJECT

My long-term goal is to contribute to building learning environments where all Japanese children—whatever their background—can grow through better English education and overall well-being. I'm particularly interested in research that connects language education with general education and psychology.

My PhD project focuses on a lesser-known part of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) called Causality Orientations Theory (COT). I rediscovered this theory after completing my Master's thesis, while I was wondering how, and to what extent students' motivation influences both how their environment (e.g., teachers) responds to them and how they perceive it (see Kono et al., 2024). If you are a teacher, you know you can influence and "be influenced" by students' motivation. I admit the way I approach engaged and less engaged students is probably different. I am trying to advance the theory by exploring a new approach to measuring students' motivational patterns (orientations) and also introducing the theory to our field. Practically, I believe the theory helps teachers tailor learning support and feedback to students' needs, which in turn fosters their motivation and classroom engagement.

COT looks at how people typically respond to new experiences: some tend to take the initiative (autonomous), some rely on inside and outside pressures (controlled), and some feel stuck or helpless (impersonal). These patterns, along with the social environment, affect how students stay motivated and engage under more specific contexts (see Figure 1).

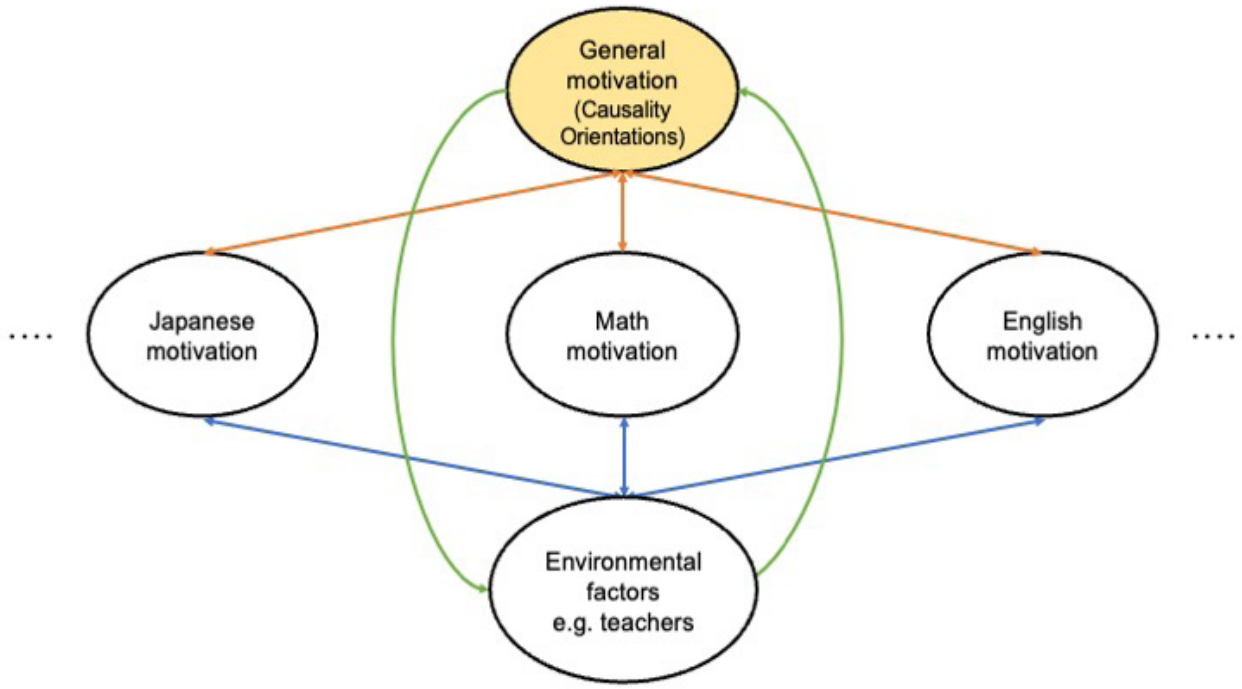

Figure 1: Context-specific motivation influenced by general motivation and social environment

Although COT has great potential, it hasn't been widely studied (Koestner & Levine, 2023) —mainly because it's hard to measure. The standard tool (General Causality Orientations Scale; Deci & Ryan, 1985) has limitations, so researchers like my team have tried adapting it for school settings. We created the School-based Causality Orientations Scale (SCOS), which I'll present at the 2025 JALT conference. Still, many tools including the SCOS give inconsistent results, partly because COT is about stable motivational traits that are hard to capture with simple surveys.

To address this, I'm proposing a new approach. Instead of directly measuring students' causality orientations, I look at their motivation patterns across different subjects like English, math, and Japanese. I then use statistical methods to identify motivational profiles based on these patterns and examine how stable they are over time. This approach is based on ideas from both motivation theory (Vallerand, 1997) and personality theory (McAdams, 2015).

STUDY OVERVIEW

Participants & settings: 500+ junior high (or hopefully elementary) students in Japan

Data collection: over one semester or academic year (longitudinal study)

Instruments: Students complete questionnaires on how they stay motivated in different subjects at Time1 and Time2, as well as on their English teachers's motivational practices and their English learning goals at Time3.

Data analysis: I use Latent Profile Analysis (LPA) and Latent Transition Analysis (LTA) to identify motivational profiles like:

Good quality (high autonomous motivation)

Poor quality (high controlled motivation)

High quantity (high in both types)

Low quantity (low in both types)

Moderate (average levels in both types)

I expect most students to stay in the same profile over time.

WHY THIS MATTERS

This study brings a fresh way to understand students' motivation by looking at the bigger picture—not just how they feel in one subject or moment. For teachers, this can mean tailoring support and feedback to match students' motivational styles, helping them stay more engaged and confident in class.

LOOKING AHEAD

I'll be presenting early findings at the JALT and SELF conferences this fall, with the main study planned for 2026–2027. I'm also hoping to expand this work to different school levels and countries.

If you're a researcher with feedback, or a teacher who might help with data collection, I'd love to hear from you!