

Understanding the Japanese University Students' Motivation and Demotivation in Attending EFL Classes

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the motivation and demotivation of Japanese university students in attending English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. The participants included 455 students who took English courses for the first semester of 2023 from two private universities in Japan. The data was collected using a five-point Likert scale motivation and demotivation survey comprised of 24 items and two open-ended questions through an online questionnaire. The results from the quantitative and qualitative strands indicated that the motivation of the respondents towards attending EFL classes is mainly extrinsic. The basis of extrinsic motivation comprised getting credit, getting good grades, and knowing the tips for the exam. In addition, Japanese university students showed low demotivation towards attending EFL classes based on teacher-related, class content-related, and personal factors. The thematic analysis revealed that the students have low expectations for success and lack of self-discipline. From a cultural perspective, these findings reveal that the Japanese tend to blame themselves rather than point fingers at others to maintain harmony even in their academic life. The findings of this study can be used by EFL instructors, school administrators, and curriculum developers to offer interventions intended to motivate the demotivated EFL students to improve class attendance and help Japanese university students achieve academic success.

Keywords: Student Attendance, EFL, Motivation, Demotivation, ELT.

Introduction

Class attendance has always been a highly debated subject at the college and university level (Kassarnig et al., 2017; Bijsmans & Schakel, 2018). In the area of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), student attendance is a vital element that determines the accomplishment or failure of language acquisition and academic success (Gump, 2005; Jansen & Suhre, 2010). Motivation or lack of it plays a noteworthy role in influencing students' attendance patterns (Steinmayr, Weidinger, Schwinger, & Spinath, 2019; Vu, Magis-Weinberg, & Jansen, 2022; Zajda, 2023). Then, Dörnyei (2001) categorized motivation into two: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes from a person's real interest in language learning, while extrinsic motivation is determined by external factors like rewards or punishments (Dörnyei Z., 2001). Conversely, demotivation happens when a student loses any interest in language learning (Dörnyei Z., 2001). Based on prior studies, Zhou et al. (2023) identified five demotivational factors which included negative teacher behavior, loss of task value, low expectancy for success, problems with the learning environment, and lack of self-discipline. The lack of profound engagement in academic studies has extreme importance in higher education, especially in the privately owned sector; nevertheless, the problem of absenteeism has not yet received sufficient attention in the field of teacher education globally, in particular in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) at college and university education level (Yan & He, 2019). This research is grounded on the issue that many teachers in Japan and possibly other countries are either confused or mystified by how to improve students' academic performance, increase passing rates, decrease failure rates, and increase attendance. In all that is pointed out above, the researcher observed that motivation to attend the class plays an important role. This research intends to describe what motivates and demotivates Japanese university students to attend EFL classes.

Motivated students are often expected to constantly attend class which can help them achieve overall success in their studies (Credé, Roch, & Kieszczynka, 2010). In the university where the researcher teaches, English courses are offered in the first and second semesters. Among these courses, two are communication and the other two are grammar oriented. Students are allowed to have five absences with official reasons to be excused from class. Some students take this condition as an opportunity to skip class. This trend in absenteeism gained the interest of the researcher in finding out the motivation and demotivation of Japanese university EFL students in attending English classes. Monitoring and reporting class attendance is only one of the many responsibilities of teachers at any level. Some students would wait until the end of the semester or even the end of the grading period before they would turn in their attendance excuse forms. This would result in a domino effect of tasks and paperwork for the teacher. Understanding the importance of motivation for attendance in English class is crucial for effective language teaching and learning.

Current studies have extensively scrutinized the issue of students' motivation in EFL class from extrinsic factors such as teacher factor (Fjortoft, 2005; Alazoumi, 2014; Meng, 2021; Peng, 2021) and learning environment (Radovan & Makovec, 2015; Cayubit, 2022; Rusticus, Pashootan, & Mah, 2023), to intrinsic factors (Chairat, 2015; Xu & Yang, 2016; Chen, Lake, & Padilla, 2021; Nguyen & Habok, 2021). Nevertheless, there is an increasing number of investigations in the field of demotivation in countries such as China (Yan & He, 2019; Wang & Littlewood, 2021), Iran (Alavinia & Seha, 2012; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Moiinivaziri & Razmjoo, 2014; Jahedizadeh, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2016; Nevisi & Farhani, 2022), Japan (Hamada, 2008; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Kikuchi, 2015; Nishida & Yashima, 2017), Korea (Kim & Kim, 2016; Jiwon & Tae-young, 2017; Choi & Kim, 2023), Pakistan (Talpur, Kakepoto, & Jalbani, 2021), Singapore (Knowledge Resource Bank, 2021; Tang & Hu, 2022), South Africa (Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011), and Vietnam (Trang & Baldauf, 2007; Tuan, 2011). The studies aforementioned investigated the motivation and demotivation of EFL learners in varied contexts and conditions.

Despite some studies on student motivation and demotivation in Japan, the focus on EFL in the Japanese college and university context is not given much attention. To address this issue, this study will describe the motivation and demotivation of Japanese university students in attending EFL classes (Fig. 1). Therefore, the results of this study will give new information to teachers and school leaders on the appropriate steps to take to motivate students to attend EFL classes, sustain student retention, and encourage student promotion to the next year level.

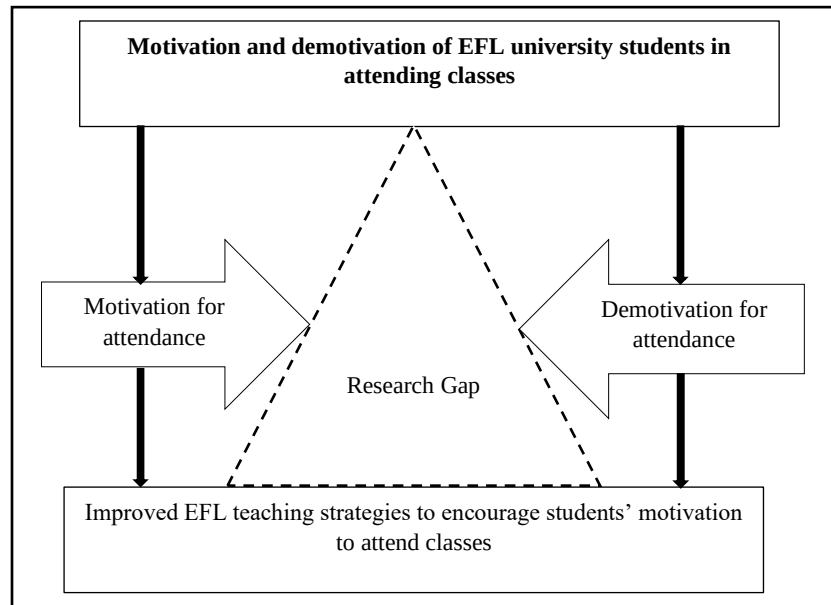


Figure 1: Schematic Diagram of the Study

Research Objectives

This study aimed to describe the motivation and demotivation of Japanese university students in attending EFL classes. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What motivates the students to attend EFL classes?
2. What demotivates university students to attend classes?
3. Which year group tend to be motivated / demotivated to attend EFL classes?

Review of Literature

Motivation as a concept is an important issue in relation to the study of class attendance (Fjortoft, 2005). As an example, there is a distinct difference between the motivation of those who desire to learn and those who have to learn. Race (1998), says that “wanting to learn is the most satisfactory state for students to be in.” This study adopts the definition of Dörnyei (2001) who posited that motivation is an intangible and hypothetical notion that people use to explain their thinking and behavior.

Studies on student motivation in EFL setting have been widely studied both in Japan and abroad (Da Silva, 2016; Vonkova et al., 2021). Apparently, learning among humans is motivated by a combination of two kinds of rewards: extrinsic and intrinsic (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Dörnyei Z., 2001). Extrinsic motivation is when the expected rewards come from outside the activity. In a university setting, extrinsic motivation can be set off by a determination to get good grades or the desire to win a prize for a given task (Kelly, 1993). A student learns for the sake of intrinsic rewards when the act itself is worth doing for the sake of learning, even when the external rewards do not exist. Most students in colleges and universities are extrinsically motivated (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Orvis et al., 2018).

Some claim that attendance is more a measure of students' motivations for learning, and therefore, it is a student's motivation that determines attendance (Newman-Ford et al, 2008; Field, 2012). A number of foreign studies showed that students tend to attend class in order to find out “what they need to learn and to better understand assessments,” signifying a more superficial learning approach (Friedman, Rodriguez, & McComb, 2001; Field, 2012). Another motivation for class attendance involved gaining new information from the lecture and application of lessons to real life (Fjortoft, 2005). Some studies emphasized that students have a “strong desire for English language learning” and a drive to utilize chances to improve their English language proficiency for personal development (Chairat, 2015; Xu & Yang, 2016; Nguyen & Habok, 2021; Nevisi & Farhani, 2022). Researchers also pointed out that English language teachers have a huge role in motivating students to attend classes because they are the ones who can identify the

students' needs and create an atmosphere that will promote learning (Fjortoft, 2005; Alazoumi, 2014; Meng, 2021; Peng, 2021). Also, a positive learning environment was identified as a motivating factor in EFL learning (Radovan & Makovec, 2015; Cayubit, 2022; Rusticus, Pashootan, & Mah, 2023). Consequently, students feel guilty when they skip class for financial reasons, not getting their money's worth, and feeling that they have let their parents down (Van Schalkwyk, Menkveld, & Ruiters, 2010).

In Japan, a study on Japanese university athletes revealed that male athletes are motivated to integrate themselves into the English-speaking community, while female athletes are more practically driven for better occupation prospects (Samifanni, 2023). Upon entering university, Nishida & Yashima (2017) found that Japanese students who had prior experience in English language learning, especially in childhood, showed higher motivation among other factors, and a high proficiency level. Although limited, these studies offer a glimpse of the factors that influence student motivation and attendance in EFL classes in Japanese universities.

Concerning demotivation in the EFL context, researchers acknowledge this issue as a significant concern (Gao & Liu, 2022; Wu & Ding, 2022). Various factors contribute to this prevalent problem such as negative teacher behavior, loss of task value, low expectancy for success, problems with the learning environment, and lack of self-discipline (Zhou, Zhan, & Jawing, 2023). When we think of the demotivating factor towards EFL classes, the teacher factor comes to mind first. Entwistle (1998) pointed out that teachers did not always see it as their obligation to motivate students. Looking at students' motivational levels (be it extrinsic or intrinsic), Entwistle (1998) found that, based on students' remarks, part of the reason for downward movements in motivation and non-attendance was the teachers themselves. Indeed, Bennett (2001) argued that teachers with low-level views of their contemporary students' motivation, competence, and conduct might not feel as committed to their teaching obligations as others.

There are studies that identified that negative teacher behavior pushed EFL students to become demotivated in class (Dörnyei Z., 2001; Tang & Hu, 2022; Alavinia & Seha, 2012; Krishnan & Pathan, 2013; Xie, et al., 2018; Takase, Niitani, Imai, & Okada, 2019; Tang & Hu, 2022; Huwari, et al., 2023). Others reported that loss of task value and low expectancy for success are the main demotivators in EFL class (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Wadesango & Machingambi, 2011; Moiiinvaziri & Razmjoo, 2014; Jahedizadeh, Ghanizadeh, & Ghonsooly, 2016; Kim & Kim, 2016; Jiwon & Tae-young, 2017; Nishida & Yashima, 2017; Boonchuayrod & Getkham, 2019; Yan & He, 2019; Talpur, Kakepoto, & Jalbani, 2021; Choi & Kim, 2023). Some studies found that students had problems with their learning environment which made them demotivated in their EFL class (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Meshkat & Hassani, 2012; Krishnan & Pathan, 2013; Xie et al., 2018; Adara et al., 2021; Talpur, Kakepoto, & Jalbani, 2021; Wang & Littlewood, 2021; Huwari et al., 2023; Zhou, Zhan, & Jawing, 2023). Another demotivating factor for EFL attendance is attributed to the students' lack of self-discipline (Zhou, Zhan, & Jawing, 2023).

In the Japanese EFL context, the demotivating factors comprise teacher-related factors such as negative attitude, competence, and teaching style; inadequate school facilities, negative attitude towards the English language and community, prior failure experience, low self-confidence, high emphasis on test scores, textbook contents and design, compulsory English classes, and peer influence (Tsuchiya, 2006; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Fallout, Murphey, Fukuda, & Trovela, 2013; Someya & Honda, 2020). The literature revealed that Japanese students' EFL demotivation varies from external to personal factors.

Aside from school-related and personal factors for attendance demotivation, there are also unforeseen and uncontrolled factors such as calamities and pandemics (de Vries & Rambabu, 2021; The White House, 2023). When the COVID-19 pandemic spread throughout the globe, college and university students' lives have been more challenging due to the increased conflicts with study and life demands (Aucejo, French, Araya, & Zafar, 2020; Badri, Yunus, Ramos, & Mahmud, 2022). Henceforth, there are cases where being absent from class cannot be evaded such as sicknesses, injuries, and personal and family-related issues (Friedman, Rodriguez, & McComb, 2001; Paisey & Paisey, 2004; Aucejo, French, Araya, & Zafar, 2020). Therefore, tackling student motivation and demotivation in EFL class attendance needs a comprehensive understanding of its causal factors and the application of effective educational policies that encourage student autonomy and empowerment to actively involve the EFL learners in the language learning process (Pritchard & Williams, 2001).

The objective of this study is to describe the motivation and demotivation of Japanese EFL college and university students in attending classes. Since college and university students are considered adults, they can freely determine their motivation and demotivation in attending EFL classes. However, before looking into the connection between class attendance and other aspects, the root cause must be found. What motivates and demotivates students to attend EFL classes must also be defined. It is only after these findings that suggestions and practices necessary for reducing absenteeism behaviors of college and university students who are expected to behave more responsibly will be made.

Methodology

This section includes the research design, respondents, data collection and instrument, ethical considerations, data analysis, and data scoring.

Research Design

The present study will use a descriptive design (Siedlecki, 2020) to describe the motivation and demotivation of EFL university students in attending classes. It will use survey method to answer the problem from the relevant information that will be collected. The survey method using questionnaires is an appropriate method for a descriptive study, specifically when the researcher is concerned with students' motivation and demotivation (Siedlecki, 2020).

Respondents

This study utilized total enumeration to survey all students who are taking English courses in the academic year 2023-2024 in universities A and B. The researcher finds it appropriate to include all the students enrolled in English courses to represent the entire population. The respondents are comprised of first-year to fourth-year students aged between 18 and 40 years old undergraduate students. The respondents are enrolled in English I, English II, English Communication I, and English Communication II during the first and second semesters. From the online survey, 455 students voluntarily responded to the questionnaire (Table 1).

Data Collection and instrument

The data for this study was collected through an anonymous online survey via Google Forms. Once the research protocol was approved for implementation, clearance from the university ethics committee was secured to administer the online survey with the help of the university academic office and the assistance of the English class instructors/professors. The online survey questionnaire is anonymous. The instrument for this study was adapted from the study of (Field, 2012). The motivation and demotivation in attending EFL class questionnaire comprised 28 questions in both English and Japanese for easy understating of the respondents. A total of 26 questions are on a 5-point Likert scale, while the other two items are open-ended. In the 26 questions, the respondents chose from a 5-point Likert scale whether they "strongly agree," "agree," "cannot decide," "disagree," or "strongly disagree" with the statement given. The other two items are open-ended where the respondents can write their motivation or demotivation in attending EFL classes (Appendix A). Once all the respondents had submitted their answers online, the analysis of the collected data followed.

Ethical Considerations

Based on the declaration of Helsinki (1964) the respondents of this study were informed of the aims of this study and that by completing the questionnaire they were voluntarily agreeing to take part in the study. The study protocol was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of Kyushu Kyoritsu University (Approval number: 2023-21).

Data Analysis

The data that was collected from the online survey were analyzed using Microsoft Excel 2010. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to analyze quantitative the data. Meanwhile, the data collected from the open-ended questions were analyzed using thematic analysis (Barun & Clarke, 2006). The diagram of the research process is shown in figure 2.

Data Scoring

After the data collection, tallying, analysis, interpretation, and tabulation, the same were categorized using the following descriptions. To interpret the responses on Teaching of English as a Second Language (ESL) and as a Foreign Language (EFL) the following data scoring was adopted:

Mean	Description	Interpretation
4.3 – 5.0	Strongly Agree	Very high motivation/ Very high demotivation
3.5 – 4.2	Agree	High motivation/ High demotivation
2.7 – 3.4	Cannot Decide	Medium motivation/ Medium demotivation
1.9 – 2.6	Disagree	Low motivation/ Low demotivation
1.0 – 1.8	Strongly disagree	Very Low motivation/ Very Low demotivation

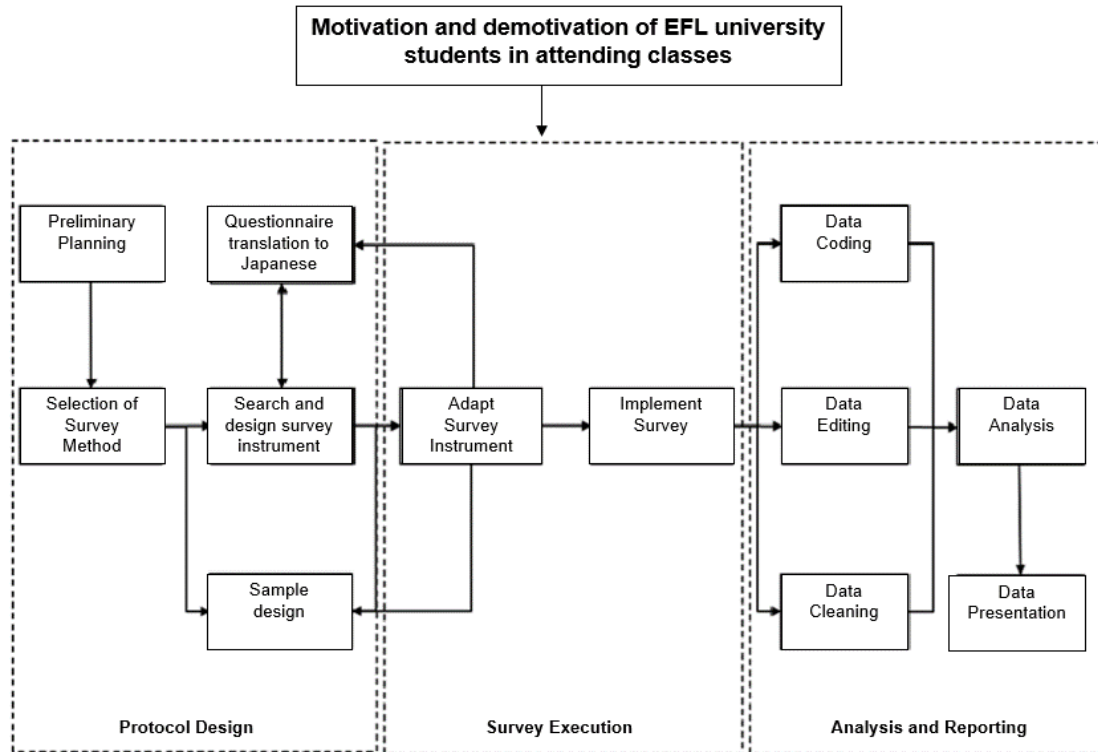


Figure 2: Diagram of the Research Process

Results

Demographics

The data from 455 Japanese university students taking English classes from universities A and B were collected and analyzed. A total of 180 (40%) male students and 275 (60%) female students voluntarily responded to the online survey. This indicates that more female students cared to respond. Moreover, second-year students comprised the highest number of respondents (41%). Table 1 presents the frequencies and percentages of students by gender and year level.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents of the Study (N = 455)

Year Level: / 年レベル	n	%	Gender			
			Male / 男性		Female / 女性	
			f	%	f	%
1st Year / 1 年生	181	39	113	62	68	38
2nd Year / 2 年生	183*	41*	43	23	140	77
3rd Year / 3 年生	58	13	16	28	42	72
4th Year / 4 年生	33	7	8	24	25	76
	N = 455	100	180	40	275*	60

Note: * denotes significant values in the table.

Based on the population according to the faculty of affiliation, university A has more population; n= 229 (50.3%) compared to University B; n=226 (49.7%). It can be seen that the faculty of human sciences has the greatest number of respondents n=140 (31%). The respondents from the faculty of economics came second n=137 (30%). The faculty of sports came in third n=92 (20%). Lastly is the faculty of home economics n=86 (19%). It seems that the students in the faculty of human sciences are more cooperative than the students from the other departments on a voluntary basis (Fig. 3).

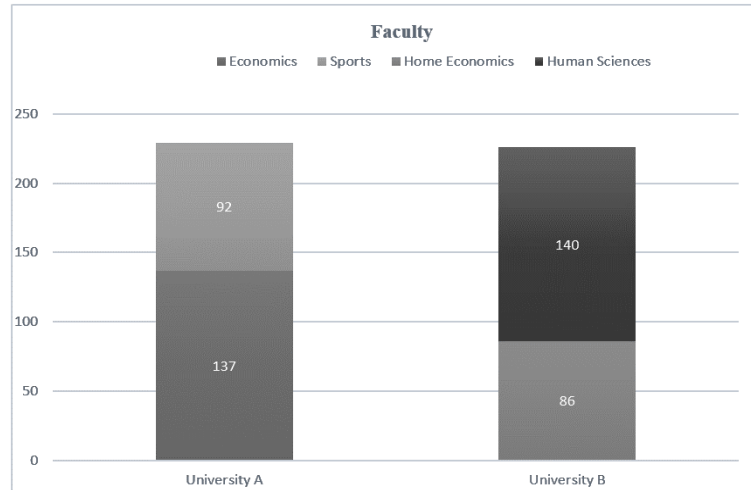


Figure 3: Respondents' Population by in each University by Faculty

Japanese University Students' Motivation to Attend EFL Classes

A total of 455 university students taking English classes responded to 26 statements on a five-point Likert scale survey, representing their level of motivation and demotivation. Table 2 and Table 3 show the weighted mean on the responses to this 26-item EFL motivation and demotivation questionnaire. The first 13 items examined the student's motivation for attending English classes. The Japanese university students' level of motivation was gauged on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree (minimum value) to 5 = strongly agree (maximum value). Higher scores pointed to a higher level of motivation, while lower scores pointed to a lower level of motivation. In general, the Japanese university students' overall motivation level was high, with an overall response mean of 3.6 and a standard deviation of 0.3 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Students Motivation for Attending English Classes

Statements on motivation / demotivation for attending English classes / 英語の授業を受ける動機に関する声明	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	WM
I am motivated to attend EFL class because.../ 私は EFL クラスに参加する意欲があります...					
1.The lessons show applications to real world setting / レッスンでは、実際の設定への応用を示しています	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.5
2.I can practice my English skills / 英語力を練習できる	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.7
3.I want to find out the latest research / lesson / 最新の研究・レッスンを知りたい	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.2	3.2
4.I want to work with peers / friends / 仲間/友達と一緒に働きたい	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.6	3.7
5.The lecturer is knowledgeable (smart) and enthusiastic / 講師は知識が豊富(スマート)で熱心です	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.6
6. I understand the lesson better by being present / 私は立ち会うことでレッスンをよりよく理解します	3.6	3.7	3.7	3.9	3.7
7.I enjoy English classes / 私は英語の授業を楽しんでいます	3.3	3.5	3.2	3.5	3.4
8.I want to know tips on the exam / 試験のヒントを知りたい	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.9	3.9
9.I am expected to be in class / 私はクラスにいたことが期待されています	3.7	4.1	4.2	4.1	4.0
10. I don't want to let my parents down / 両親をがっかりさせたくない	3.5	3.8	3.6	3.7	3.7
11. The lecturer cares about the students/ 講師は学生を気にします	3.7	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.7
12. I want to get good grades / 良い成績を取りたい	3.8	4.0	4.0	4.2	4.0
13. I want to see my crush in the class / クラスで片思いを見たい	2.9	3.0	2.7	2.8	2.9
AWM					3.6
SD					0.3

From what is shown in Table 2, Japanese university students are motivated to attend their English classes because they agree that they are expected to be in class / 私はクラスにすることが期待されています with a mean score of 4.0. The respondents are also motivated to attend their English class to get good grades / 良い成績を取りたい with a mean score of 4.0. The third reason why Japanese students are motivated to attend their English classes is because they want to know tips on the exam / 試験のヒントを知りたい with a mean score of 3.9. The data suggest that Japanese university students' motivation for attending English classes is mainly extrinsic.

Meanwhile, the open-ended questions solicited the comments of the respondents on their motivation and demotivation in attending English classes. Students who responded with なし / None or 特になし / Nothing in particular were not included in the analysis and considered invalid responses. From all the valid responses, the thematic analysis revealed that the Japanese university students' motivation(s) for attending EFL classes are both intrinsic and extrinsic. The students revealed that they are motivated to attend English classes because they need credit for the course, they want to improve their English competence, and they want to learn.

Japanese University Students' Demotivation to Attend EFL Classes

Regarding the demotivation of university students to attend classes, the overall mean of Japanese university students' responses was 2.3 (SD = 0.3), showing a low demotivation (see Table 3). Most of the Japanese university student respondents disagreed about being demotivated because the information is on the blackboard / 情報は黒板にあります (M=2.7), being too busy with other things / 私は他のことで忙しすぎる (M=2.7), and they don't like the lessons / 私はレッスンが好きではありません (M=2.6).

Table 3: Demotivation of University Students to Attend English Classes

Statements on motivation / demotivation for attending English classes / 英語の授業を受ける動機に関する声明	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year	WM
I am demotivated to attend EFL class because.../私は EFL クラスに参加する意欲が低下しています...					
14. I can pass without attending classes / 授業に出席せずに合格できます	2.3	2.2	2.2	2.3	2.2
15. The information is on the blackboard / 情報は黒板にあります	2.8	2.5	2.8	2.8	2.7*
16. Traffic / transportation / parking issues / 交通/輸送/駐車場の問題	2.3	2.0	1.9	1.8	2.0
17. I couldn't be bothered / 私は気にできませんでした	2.7	2.4	2.7	2.3	2.5
18. I don't like the lessons / 私はレッスンが好きではありません	2.8	2.5	2.9	2.3	2.6*
19. The teacher does all the talking / 先生はすべての話をします	2.7	2.4	2.5	2.6	2.5
20. I did not like the lecturer / 私は講師が好きではなかった	2.5	2.1	2.2	1.8	2.2
21. The lecturer does not care about the students / 講師は学生を気にしない	2.4	2.2	2.3	1.8	2.2
22. The lesson contents are boring / レッスン内容がつまらない	2.6	2.5	2.4	2.5	2.5
23. Personal family issues / 個人的な家族の問題	2.2	1.9	1.9	1.5	1.9
24. I have to work / 私は働かなければならない	2.3	1.9	2.0	1.7	2.0
25. I am too busy with other things / 私は他のことで忙しすぎる	2.8	2.6	2.8	2.7	2.7*
26. I am genuinely sick, injured / 私は本当に病気で、怪我をしている	2.4	2.0	2.0	1.5	2.0
AWM					2.3
SD					0.3

Based on the thematic analysis of the open-ended question on the Japanese university students' demotivation to attend their English classes, it was revealed that low expectancy for success and lack of self-discipline were the demotivating factors of the respondents.

Year Level which Tends to be Motivated / Demotivated to Attend EFL Classes

To assess which year level tends to be motivated and which year group tends to be demotivated, the average weighted mean from items 1 to 13 (motivation) and items 14 to 26 (demotivation) were calculated for each year level. The table shows that second-year students (M = 3.7) and fourth-year students (M = 3.7) are the most motivated year levels to attend EFL classes. Meanwhile, first-year students have low demotivation with a mean score of 2.5.

Table 4: Level of Motivation in Each Year Level

	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	4th Year
Motivation	3.5	3.7*	3.6	3.7*
Demotivation	2.5*	2.3	2.4	2.1

Discussion

This study aimed to describe the motivation and demotivation of Japanese university students to attend EFL classes. The first research question inquired about what motivates students to attend EFL classes. The results from the data analysis of the online survey disclosed that the respondents had generally a high level of motivation. The overall mean of Japanese university students' level of motivation was 3.6 (SD = 0.3), representing a high overall motivation level. The students were motivated to attend English classes because they were expected to be in class (M = 4.0), they wanted to get good grades (M = 4.0), and they wanted to know the tips for the exam (M = 3.9). Particularly, first-year (M = 3.8) and fourth-year (4.2) university students were highly motivated to get good grades. Second-year (M = 4.1) and third-year students (M = 4.2) were highly motivated to attend EFL classes because they were expected to be in class. On one hand, it can be observed that the respondents have extrinsic motivation towards attending English classes based on the quantitative data. On the other hand, the thematic analysis revealed that earning a credit for the English course, improving one's English competence, and learning English in general were the motivations of Japanese university students. It seems that the motivation of Japanese university students to attend English classes is mainly extrinsic then intrinsic. This supports the findings of previous studies which pointed out that most learning in colleges and universities are extrinsically motivated (Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984; Orvis, Sturges, Tysinger, Riggins, & Landge, 2018).

The first theme which is to earn a credit for the English course triangulates to the quantitative data regarding being expected to be in class and getting good grades. This finding is in congruence with previous studies where students tend to attend class to find out what they need to learn and to better understand assessments, signifying a more artificial method of learning (Friedman, Rodriguez, & McComb, 2001; Field, 2012). In an ideal scenario, it makes sense that when university students attend class because they are supposed to be attending class will have the chance to know the tips for the exam, get a good grade, and eventually earn a course credit. Previous studies claim that students who are motivated to attend classes and do attend satisfactorily have better achievement levels, making it a strong predictor of university success (Moore, 2006; Chen & Lin, 2008; Kwak, Sherwood, & Tang, 2018). This implies that EFL instructors have to do something to encourage intrinsic motivation among EFL learners. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) emphasized the value of promoting intrinsic motivation using a "student-centered approach" with active and meaningful activities.

Another finding on Japanese university students' motivation to attend EFL classes pertains to improving one's English competence and learning English in general is categorized as intrinsic motivation. This finding substantiates studies that stress the importance of motivation, autonomy, and language learning benefits in encouraging students to attend English classes and improve their English competence (Kojima & Yashima, 2017; Teeter, 2017; Zhang & Pladevall-Ballester, 2022).

Concerning what demotivates university students to attend EFL classes, the results showed that the overall mean of Japanese university students' responses was 2.3 (SD = 0.3), showing a low demotivation. Most of the Japanese university student respondents have low demotivation to attend English classes even if the information is on the blackboard (M=2.7) if are too busy with other things (M=2.7), if they don't like the lessons (M=2.6). It seems that even if the teacher keeps writing on the blackboard (the information is on the board), even if the students do not like the lessons, and even if they are too busy with other things, the respondents are still motivated to attend English classes. This finding echoed some previous studies (Steinmayr, Weidinger, Schwinger, & Spinath, 2019; Li & Li, 2021) which highlighted the students' persistence in attending English classes despite challenges. We can observe that the factors aforementioned are mainly external factors which are teacher-related and class content-related, then personal factors.

However, the results of the thematic analysis revealed some demotivating factors for Japanese university students to attend English classes. The students revealed that they have low expectations for success and lack of self-discipline. These findings may look contradicting to the quantitative data, but the information reveals another side of the factors that demotivates the respondents: personal related factors. In terms of low expectancy for success, the students are demotivated to attend English class because of low self-confidence, and difficulty with understanding the lessons. Some of the students expressed: "人と話すことが苦手 / (I'm) Not good at talking to people (S4)." "喋れないと恥ずかしい / Embarrassed if I can't speak (S11)." "例え話がよくわからない / I don't quite understand the analogy

(lesson) (S7).” “単位を取るために懸命に働いているが、私には難しすぎる / I work hard for my credits, but it's just too difficult for me (S10).” “幼い頃からちゃんと勉強してればよかったと思うことがある / Sometimes I wish I had studied properly from an early age (S55).” “理解が出来ないと難しいから / Because if you don't understand it, it's hard to do (S28).” “内容が難しすぎて、僕にはできないと思う / The content is just too difficult for me, I don't think I can do this (42).” This finding is in line with previous studies which pointed out that students with low self-confidence and difficulty in understanding the lessons have less interest in attending English classes (Kim & Kim, 2016; Akbari & Sahibzada, 2020; American Psychological Association, 2020; DeWitt, 2022).

Another demotivating factor for Japanese university students to attend English classes is a lack of self-discipline. The sub-themes under this theme are sleepiness and school refusal behavior (SRB). Under the sleepiness sub-theme, some students articulated: “朝起きられないんだ / I can't get up in the morning. (S19).” “朝が早くて起きられない / I can't get up early in the morning (S17).” “寝坊 / (I'm a) late riser (S3).” “眠たい / (I'm) sleepy (S49).” The concept of students having a hard time getting up in the morning could be related to what Hershner and Chervin (2014) claimed; university students go to bed late because they often use cellular phones or computers before they sleep. The other sub-theme under lack of self-discipline is classified under school refusal behavior (SRB) (King & Bernstein, 2001; Havik, Bru, & Ertesvåg, 2015). Some students expressed: “学校に行きたくない / Don't want to go to school (S12).” “私は違うクラスに出席するのを止める / I stop attending different classes (S24).” When a student fails to wake up early to prepare for school, he/she might tend to skip the morning class and eventually, attend the classes for the day. A day of absence from school will become two days, and eventually a week then a semester in the worst case. The researcher infers that SRB could be caused by intensified procrastination among university students. Prior studies found that students with high procrastination levels tend to have SRB (Havik, Bru, & Ertesvåg, 2015; Ingul, Havik, & Heyne, 2019). Both sleepiness and school refusal behavior can indicate a lack of self-discipline which are demotivating factors for EFL students to attend classes. This echoes the study of Zhou, Zhan, & Jawing (2023) where lack of self-discipline was pointed as a demotivating factor for Chinese EFL college students. However, these findings do not completely coincide with Tsuchiya (2006) who stated that demotivation in the Japanese EFL context is caused by some external and internal forces despite having the desire to progress because the thematic analysis showed that some students do not have the desire to progress.

The third research question aimed to find out which year group tends to be motivated/demotivated to attend EFL classes. It was revealed that third-year and fourth-year students showed high motivation levels. Demotivation level is generally low across all year levels with first-year students with the highest score. In this study, both the levels of motivation and demotivation follow a fluctuating trend. This finding does not support prior claims stating that as students advance to higher grades or years, their level of motivation may decrease (Bargmann, Thiele, & Kauffeld, 2022; Foong & Liew, 2022). In the Japanese university context, it is common for a four-year degree program to require two years of foreign language credits with English as a compulsory first-year offering and other foreign languages (including English) in the second year (Larson-Hall & Stewart, 2020). For third-year and fourth-year students to be taking an English course, it means that these students failed their English courses in their prior years and are taking another chance to receive a credit to advance to the next year's level (in the case of third-year students) and graduate or receive a degree (in the case of fourth-year students). The fluctuating levels of motivation and demotivation could be a result of various factors not only in the EFL classes but also in the student's university life as a whole (Gao & Liu, 2022). A sensible explanation would be of Wu and Deng's (Wu & Ding, 2022) “four stages of emotion, from motivated to demotivated, to remotivated, and lastly to relinquish.” The findings reveal that Japanese university students tend to blame themselves for not being motivated to attend English classes. This is typical of Japanese culture, where blaming oneself is practiced to avoid causing inconvenience to others and maintain harmony, humility, and respect (Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Conclusion

This study aimed to describe the motivation and demotivation of Japanese university students in attending EFL classes. The results of this study showed that the motivation of Japanese university students is mainly extrinsic; to get (course) credits and get a good grade. Their demotivating factors are personal-related; low expectancy for success and lack of self-discipline. Moreover, third-year and fourth-year students were highly motivated, while first-year students had low demotivation. The findings of this study are consistent with previous works. However, unlike some studies, the researcher did not find strong proof that motivation nor demotivation in attending EFL classes decreases as students advance to higher levels. The findings demonstrated a deeper picture of the nature of Japanese learners which suggests their value for harmony on the notion of blaming themselves instead of pointing their finger for their demotivation in attending EFL classes. The implications of this study are two-fold. First, it is critical to provide interventions designed

to sustain and enhance the motivation or motivation the demotivated students. Educators can focus on providing enthusiastic learning environments, giving positive criticism and support, and promoting opportunities for independence and language competence. English language instructors have an important role in promoting students' self-confidence and motivation in EFL classes. Nevertheless, the limitations of this study are as follows: first, the collected data is not a total enumeration of all students due to the nature of data collection and some professors did not give time for the students to do the survey. Second, the data collection tool used a 5-point Likert scale which gave more reason for the respondent to play safe and choose a "not decided" option. Third, the statistical treatment of the data is descriptive. Therefore, these limitations should be addressed in future studies with a bigger sample size and extensive statistical data analysis.

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