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(Research Article) Socio-Cultural Differences in U.S. High School Students' Motivation to Learn the Japanese Language

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**Socio-Cultural Differences in U.S. High School Students' Motivation to Learn  
the Japanese Language**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated motivational differences among three ethnic groups in learning the Japanese language: Japanese heritage (JH) students ( $n = 135$ ), Asian students ( $n = 69$ ) excluding JH students, and Caucasian students ( $n = 73$ ). The investigation focused on understanding heritage- and non-heritage-related motivations (instrumental, integrative, intrinsic, travel-related motivations), self-efficacy, and goal salience. The data were collected through a questionnaire on 277 U.S. high school students learning the Japanese language. Multiple statistical methods addressed two research questions exploring motivational differences.

Results indicated that the three ethnic groups had statistical differences in heritage-related and intrinsic motivations. JH students showed the highest heritage-related motivation. Caucasian students showed the highest intrinsic motivation, whereas JH students showed the least intrinsic motivation. Both the JH and Asian groups showed that parental involvement correlated with Japanese language proficiency, whereas the Caucasian group showed no correlation. The Caucasian group showed no significant correlation between goal salience and self-efficacy, whereas JH and Asian groups showed positive and significant correlation indicating that the Caucasian students with high self-efficacy do not always have a clear goal or strategy. Teachers and administrators may use the motivational findings to develop Japanese language programs to help students of different ethnic backgrounds.

## **Introduction**

According to the 1998 Japan Foundation worldwide survey, young people, beginning in the 1990s, started to show a new interest in learning Japanese, since encountering Japanese

subculture through animation and games (The Japan Foundation, 2003). Its survey in the United States indicated that 64.8% of Japanese language learners were elementary- and secondary-level students, whereas 23.0% were university students. Of the Japanese language learners, 12.2% were from non-school-related institutions such as foreign language schools. This survey indicates that Japanese language educators and researchers need to pay more attention to pedagogy and theory for these young Japanese learners.

East Asian language researchers (Saito & Samimy, 1996; Sung & Padilla, 1998) emphasized the importance of motivation for their success and prominence due to the complication of less commonly taught languages. The socio-cultural researchers (e.g., Au, 1988) claimed ethnic and cultural differences mediate children's motivational beliefs since the diverse backgrounds of immigrants and their degree of acculturations impact their perspectives on motivational orientations of learning foreign language (FL) and second language (L2). Therefore, an understanding of the motivational factors in learning the Japanese language for learners from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds in a socio-cultural perspective contributes to the development of a more effective curriculum and detailed instruction that conform to the students' backgrounds.

## **Literature Review**

Valdés (2000) defined the “heritage speaker” as “a student who is raised in a home where a non-English language is spoken, who speaks or merely understands the heritage, and who is to some degree bilingual in English and the heritage” (The UCLA Steering Committee, p. 477). Besides professional careers that foreign language learners strive for, HL learners have unique motivations, such as parents' expectations for their children to preserve their mother tongue,

reaffirmation of ethnic identity, and speaking with their relatives (Sung & Padilla, 1998). Heritage-related motivation in this study relates to students' ethnic background and parental support or involvement (hereafter, H-P motivation).

Non-heritage-related motivations in this study consist of instrumental, integrative, travel-related, and intrinsic motivations. First, Gardner and Lambert (1972) proposed instrumental orientation and integrative orientation in language learning motivation. The former involves learning the target language for a practical purpose in order to gain a benefit from acquiring the target language. The latter reflects the "individual's willingness and interest in social interaction with members of other groups" (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993, p. 159). Travel-related motivation refers to a desire to not only travel or but also live in the places in which the target language is spoken. According to Deci and Ryan (1985), intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do. They (1985) claimed that self-made choice motivated people to challenge the situation, control their outcomes, and develop a sense of competence in their ability; therefore, intrinsic motivation is correlated with self-made choice, thus contributing to students' competence. However, many researchers (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985) pointed out that personal choice is mediated by culture (as cited in Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003). Self-efficacy is referred to as people's explicit judgments of their capabilities such as having specific skills instead of merely a self-recognition of being good in the subject (Bandura, 1986). The higher the students' self-efficacy, the more they sustain motivation and improve skills (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). The study by Seijts and Latham (2005) showed that the participant's high self-efficacy was positively and significantly related to better performance. However, conducting a survey of 150 college students enrolled in Chinese language classes in Southern California, Chen (2002) claimed that the theory of self-efficacy might not be applicable

to Asian heritage students and their achievement. The result showed that Asian-American students, even with lower levels of self-efficacy beliefs than Caucasian counterparts, outperformed Caucasian students on the achievement tasks. Goal salience in this study refers to the goal setting theory of Locke and Latham (1990) claiming that individuals with specific and challenging goals outperform individuals with nonspecific (“do my best”). In acquisition of FL and L2, Tremblay and Gardner (1995) developed goal salience into two scales: Goal Specificity and Goal Strategy. Goal specificity means whether students have specific goals in their FL/L2 course. Goal Strategy refers to how well students set goals for themselves such as by making plans.

The purpose of this study was to provide a better understanding of the motivational factors influencing the three ethnic groups of Japanese language learners at the high school level: (a) Japanese heritage (JH) learners, (b) Asian learners excluding JH learners who learn Japanese as a foreign language (hereafter, Asians), and (c) Caucasian learners. Then, the present study posed two questions: (a) Do differences exist in aspects of motivation among JH, Asian, and Caucasian learners of Japanese? (b) Do differences exist in the relative contributions of H-P-related motivation, non-heritage-related motivation self-efficacy, and goal salience to Japanese language learning?

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants and Procedures***

Two hundred seventy-seven high school students enrolled in United States (Hawaii, New York, Texas, and Southern California) Japanese language classes participated in this study in fall semester 2004. Subjects were divided into three categories based upon their ethnic membership:

Japanese heritage students ( $n = 135$ ), Asian students ( $n = 69$ ), and Caucasians ( $n = 73$ ). In this study, “Asian students” refer to Asians who were not Japanese-American students such as Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Taiwanese. “Caucasians” refer to Caucasians, Hispanic, African American, and American Indian. In the JH group, five subcategories were identified as the students of 1<sup>st</sup> generation ( $n = 1$ ), 2<sup>nd</sup> generation ( $n = 48$ ), 3<sup>rd</sup> generation ( $n = 31$ ), 4<sup>th</sup> generation ( $n = 18$ ), and mixed parents ( $n = 37$ ). The sample consisted of 154 (55.6%) females and 123 (44%) males. It should be noted that the participants added the “4<sup>th</sup> generation” in the Japanese American section in the ethnic background on the survey even though there was not a section for this category.

Information was collected through student questionnaires. The teachers distributed the packets to students who took them home. Each packet included a parental consent form and survey. Later, teachers collected the packets and mailed them to the researcher.

### ***Instruments***

The self-reported survey consisted of two parts: (a) students’ background and Japanese language proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and (b) motivational information: H-P-related and non-heritage-related motivations, self-efficacy, and goal salience. The motivational information questionnaire consisted of 50 questions. Items were adapted from various instruments used. The questions of integrative (items 1 to 6), instrumental (items 7 to 9), H-P motivation (items 10 to 15), and travel-related (items 16 to 20) motivations were adapted by the University of Kansas faculty of East Asian languages based on motivational research. The alpha coefficients for integrative, instrumental, H-P-related, and travel motivations were .79, .70, .89, and .79, respectively. Intrinsic motivation (items 21 to 26) was adapted from the National Foreign Language Resource Center/Second Language Teaching and Curriculum

Center at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa (Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996) and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was .84. The questions of self-efficacy consisted of eight items, 27 through 34, and the alpha coefficient was .89. Items 27 to 31 were adapted from the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) developed by Pintrich and Schunk (1996). Items 32 through 34 were selected from Malpass' dissertation (1994). Items 35 through 50 were adapted from Tremblay and Gardner (1995). They developed two scales of motivational behavior in Goal Salience: Specificity (8 items from 35 to 41) and Strategy (8 items from 42 to 50). The median of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient reliabilities for all scales was above .70.

A 7-point Likert scale was used for all motivational question items except for 6 items regarding intrinsic motivation (5-point Likert scale). Self-assessment of Japanese language proficiency was adopted from several researchers such as Clark (1981), Lambert (1990), and Lee (2002). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the total Japanese proficiency was .92.

Some items were modified to match Japanese language and culture context since questionnaire items regarding motivations were studies on students learning a second language or a foreign language.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Motivational Differences among Japanese Heritage, Asian, and Caucasian Groups***

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the three groups (JH, Asian, and Caucasian groups).



Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations of H-P and Non-Heritage-Related Motivations by JH, Asian, and Caucasian Students

Factors	JH ( <i>n</i> = 135)		Asian ( <i>n</i> = 69)		Caucasian ( <i>n</i> = 73)	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
H-P-related	27.11	6.48	12.81	6.23	13.25	5.32
Integrative	30.27	6.85	30.40	7.08	31.47	6.14
Travel-related	15.73	6.04	16.58	5.63	17.04	6.56
Instrumental	25.67	5.94	26.90	5.06	26.60	5.45
Intrinsic	20.80	4.71	22.93	4.01	24.85	3.97
Self-efficacy	39.71	10.54	38.93	10.08	43.91	8.70
Goal salience	30.58	7.69	32.06	7.65	32.57	8.41

Even though the Likert scale of intrinsic motivation (1 to 5) was different from others (1 to 7), correlations standardized the data. One-way ANOVAs were administered to determine the differences among the three groups in H-P-related, integrative, travel-related, instrumental, and intrinsic motivations. The results of the one-way ANOVA procedure indicate significant mean differences for at least a pair of group means for H-P-related and intrinsic motivations,  $F(2, 274) = 181.98, p < .001$ ;  $F(2, 274) = 21.12, p < .001$ ; however, there are no significant differences of means for integrative, travel-related, and instrumental motivations.

*Heritage-related motivation.* Table 2 shows that JH students have the highest H-P-related motivation ( $M = 27.11, SD = 6.48$ ) and are significantly different from Asians ( $M = 12.81, SD = 6.23$ ) and Caucasians ( $M = 13.25, SD = 5.32$ ). First, compared to Asian and Caucasian groups, as expected, JH students take a Japanese class for heritage-related reasons, such as “I would like to converse with my immediate family and relatives.” They want to communicate better with their grandparents who do not speak English. This finding confirms the report from several motivational studies about East Asian language learners such as Korean, Chinese, and Japanese learners (Sung & Padilla, 1998). Sung and Padilla found that the most significant

variable for East Asian language learners was heritage-related motivation and parental involvement.

Table 2. (One-Way ANOVA) H-P Motivation: Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank ( $N = 277$ )

Group	$n$	Mean	$SD$	Rank
JH students	135	27.11	6.48	1
Asian students	69	12.81	6.23	3
Caucasian students	73	13.25	5.32	2

*Intrinsic motivation.* The results of one-way ANOVA also show that the Caucasian group has the highest intrinsic motivation ( $M = 24.85$ ,  $SD = 3.97$ ) and are significantly different from the JH group ( $M = 20.80$ ,  $SD = 4.71$ ) and the Asian group ( $M = 22.93$ ,  $SD = 4.01$ ). Caucasian students are statistically higher in intrinsic motivation than JH students. JH students demonstrated the lowest intrinsic motivation (see Table 3).

Table 3. (One-Way ANOVA) Intrinsic Motivation: Means, Standard Deviations, and Rank ( $N = 277$ )

Group	$n$	Mean	$SD$	Rank
JH students	135	20.80	4.71	3
Asian students	69	22.93	4.01	2
Caucasian students	73	24.85	3.97	1

Among the three ethnic groups, Caucasian students enjoy learning the Japanese language the most. Intrinsic motivation plays an important role among Caucasian students to learn Japanese language. On the other hand, JH students report that they do not enjoy the challenge of studying Japanese language. There are a couple of possible reasons for this. First, as in Chen's study (2002) with the sample of Chinese heritage students, the Japanese language demands less time, challenge, and effort compared with other foreign languages for JH students; therefore, it

can be assumed that a Japanese language class offered as a foreign language course at regular high school is easy and boring for them. Second, JH students take a Japanese language class due to parental coercion or choice; therefore, it can be inferred that JH students are passively taking a Japanese class, whereas Caucasian students enjoy learning the language, not just taking it out of parental encouragement or choice. Oketani (1996) gathered the information about the JH high school students' attitude towards Saturday Japanese school. Her report showed that only 25% of them go to supplementary school because they want to continue to study Japanese and 55% of them reported (a) because my parents encouraged me to go and (b) because I would like to talk with my friends. Asian American students are more influenced by their parents' desire for success than their non-Asian counterparts (Reglin & Adams, 1990).

The results of this study also showed that they do not enjoy using Japanese language outside of class as much as Caucasian students. It might be assumed that JH students take it for granted to use Japanese language due to their social environment in Japanese language contact outside of class, such as using Japanese language with family members and relatives; therefore, Japanese language use outside of class is not a matter of whether they enjoy speaking Japanese language or not. Rather, using Japanese language might be simply a tool for JH students to communicate with non-English speaking family members (Chen, 2002; Nakajima, 1998; Sung & Padilla, 1998).

This study reports that the percentages of Japanese language spoken among family members in JH, Asian, and Caucasian groups were 69%, 2%, and 4%, respectively. This result accords with heritage language educators' and researchers' perspectives claiming that HL learners generally, though not always, have some functional proficiency in their ancestral language through interactions with family members and friends (Campbell & Rosenthal, 2000).

Table 4 in the next section clearly indicates the significant differences in Japanese language proficiency among the JH, Asian, and Caucasian groups.

Among the students of the JH subgroups (the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> generations and mixed parents), intrinsic motivation showed no significant difference (Nunn, 2005). In addition, this study shows no significant relationship between Japanese language proficiency and intrinsic motivation in the above JH subgroups. This study also shows that all subgroups of the JH students (the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> generations and mixed parents) had negative correlations with the question item, “Is Japanese a spoken language among your family?” The JH students of the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and mixed parents showed a nonsignificant negative predictor ( $r = -.13, p = .14$ ;  $r = -.24, p = .35$ ;  $r = -.09, p = .59$ , respectively). However, the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation indicates the statistically negative significance in the correlation ( $r = -.42, p < .05$ ). The more the JH students speak Japanese language with family members, the less they enjoy learning Japanese, especially the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation.

Overall, JH students do not enjoy learning Japanese as much as Asian and Caucasian students. This study indicates that Asian and Caucasian students, especially Caucasian students, enjoy learning a Japanese language because they want to study it. Taking a Japanese language is their choice rather than a parental coercion. It can be inferred from this result that JH students passively take Japanese classes.

This study also indicates that Caucasians take a Japanese class based upon self-made choices that correlate with intrinsic motivation among Euro-American students (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The result of this study accords with the previous research by Iyengar and Lepper (1999) who claimed that European-American students demonstrated more intrinsic motivation when they made their own choices than when others made choices for them. Iyengar and Lepper examined Asian- and European-American children (7- to 9-year-olds) who were asked to either

choose an activity for themselves or be told that someone else would choose for them. Asian Americans were mainly motivated and performed best when their mothers made the selection for them, whereas European-Americans did not do as well when others made the choice for them. The social and cultural factors influence personal choice; therefore they mediate intrinsic motivation.

Differences exist in H-P-related motivation and intrinsic motivations among JH, Asian, and Caucasian learners of the Japanese language.

### ***Motivations and Japanese Language Learning***

In order to discover differences among the three ethnic groups of how selected variables (H-P-related, non-heritage-related motivations, self-efficacy, and goal salience) relate to Japanese language learning, correlations were administered in each ethnic group.

Table 4 shows statistical differences in all four skills and total proficiency between JH and Asian groups (listening,  $t = 5.57, p < .001$ ; speaking,  $t = 3.62, p < .001$ ; reading,  $t = 4.07, p < .001$ ; writing,  $t = 3.64, p < .001$ ; total proficiency,  $t = 4.80, p < .001$ ).

Table 4. Means and Standard Deviations of Japanese Language Proficiency of JH and Asian Groups

	JH ( $n = 135$ )		Asian ( $n = 69$ )	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Listening	3.42**	1.02	2.64**	.82
Speaking	2.98**	1.06	2.47**	1.04
Reading	2.65**	1.13	2.09**	.95
Writing	2.81**	1.06	2.23**	1.00
Total proficiency	2.99**	1.05	2.38**	.95

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

On the other hand, as seen in Table 5, only two skills (listening and reading) show statistical differences between the JH and Caucasian groups (listening,  $t = 2.71, p < .05$ ; reading,  $t = 2.02, p < .05$ ).

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations of Japanese Language Proficiency of JH and Caucasian Groups

	JH ( $n = 135$ )		Caucasian ( $n = 73$ )	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Listening	3.42*	1.02	3.05*	.81
Speaking	2.98	1.06	2.80	1.11
Reading	2.65*	1.13	2.38*	1.02
Writing	2.81	1.06	2.75	1.64
Total proficiency	2.99	1.05	2.75	1.15

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

The results of this study indicate that Japanese language use among family members reflects upon JH students' listening skill (Nakajima, 1998). As for a reading skill, years of studying a Japanese language might affect a JH student's reading skill since development of literacy skills in non-alphabetical languages such as Japanese and Arabic requires many hours of instruction, especially Chinese characters (Nakajima, 1998). This study reports that the averages of years of studying a Japanese language in JH, Asian, and Caucasian groups are 6 years, 1.5 years, and 1.5 years, respectively. It can be also assumed that JH students have more opportunities to read Japanese comic books and newspapers due to the availability of Japanese language literacy at home. In this study, JH students rated their reading ability in comic books and newspapers statistically different from Caucasian students ( $t = 2.12, p < .05$ ;  $t = 2.33, p < .05$ , respectively).

In light of the socio-cultural perspective, comparing JH and Asian groups and considering that Asian students in this study might have Japanese descendants, it might be

inferred that Asian students lack self-confidence. Furthermore, it can be assumed that JH students also might lack self-confidence in Japanese language skills showing no significant difference in output skills compared to Caucasian group in spite of their longer years of Japanese language study and more frequent use of Japanese language among family members than Caucasian students (see the report on the average years of studying a Japanese language in the above). On the other hand, Caucasian students might have higher self-efficacy in learning the Japanese language than Asian students (Nunn, 2005). University of California, Los Angeles conducted the HL survey on campus in the fall quarter of 1999 regarding a study of heritage languages. They reported that many HL students suffer from lack of confidence and pride in their HL linguistic skills in spite of their longer years of HL study and more frequent use of HL among family members than non-HL students.

The results of this study accord with the Kondo-Brown's study (2005) indicating the significant difference in listening and reading skills between Japanese heritage language (JHL) learners and Japanese foreign language (JFL) learners using both proficiency tests and self-assessment measures in Japanese language skills. She investigated the differences of 185 learners between JHL and JFL. The age of the participants was 17–22 years old. Kondo-Brown's finding showed that the group of JH students with at least one Japanese-speaking parent proved to be substantially different from JF learners group in listening and reading skills whereas JH learners with at least one Japanese-speaking grandparent but without a Japanese-speaking parent showed striking similarities with the JF learners. Among the JH students in this study, 64% of them are 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> generations of Japanese and students of mixed parents; therefore, it can be assumed that at least one parent of these Japanese-American students speaks Japanese

whereas the parents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> generations of Japanese (36%) more likely might not speak Japanese.

Many researchers (Au, 1988; Rueda & Dembo, 1995) claim the differences of self-efficacy between Asian students and non-Asian students mediate children's beliefs; therefore, the accuracy of a self-report may vary due to socio-cultural differences. However, it can be said that the self-assessments in this study are fairly reliable and valid due to the high alpha coefficient on the total Japanese proficiency ( $\alpha = .92$ ), in addition to the accordance of the result of Kondo-Brown's study (2005).

The results of this study show that Japanese language proficiency positively and significantly correlates with H-P-related motivation in JH ( $r = .30, p < .001$ ) and Asian ( $r = .44, p < .001$ ) groups indicating that parents of JH and Asian students have a significant impact on their children's Japanese language proficiency (see Tables 6 and 7). On the other hand, the Caucasian group does not show significant correlation between H-P-related motivation and Japanese language proficiency ( $r = .07$ ) (see Table 8).

In relationship with Japanese language proficiency, both JH and Asian groups show positive and significant correlations with all other variables (H-P-related, non-heritage-related motivations, self-efficacy, and goal salience) (see Tables 6 and 7). On the other hand, the Caucasian group shows no significant correlation between H-P-related motivation and Japanese language proficiency ( $r = .07$ ) (see Table 8). The JH and Asian groups show positive and significant correlations between H-P-related motivation and self-efficacy with the same correlational coefficient ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ) whereas the Caucasian group shows no statistically significant correlation ( $r = -.01$ ). Furthermore, goal salience does not correlate with Japanese language proficiency among Caucasian students ( $r = .18$ ).



Table 6. Correlations of Japanese Language Proficiency, H-P, Non-Heritage-Related, Self-Efficacy, and Goal Salience for the JH Group ( $n = 135$ )

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. H-P motivation	--	.56**	.45**	.34**	.30**
2. Non-heritage-related		--	.52**	.51**	.39**
3. Self-efficacy			--	.29**	.34**
4. Goal salience				--	.16*
5. Japanese language proficiency					--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 7. Correlations of Japanese Language Proficiency, H-P, Non-Heritage-Related, Self-Efficacy, and Goal Salience for the Asian Group ( $n = 63$ )

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. H-P motivation	--	.43**	.45**	.46**	.44**
2. Non-heritage-related		--	.55**	.50**	.31*
3. Self-efficacy			--	.35**	.31*
4. Goal salience				--	.28*
5. Japanese language proficiency					--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

Table 8. Correlations of Japanese Language Proficiency, H-P, Non-Heritage-Related, Self-Efficacy, and Goal Salience for the Caucasian Group ( $n = 73$ )

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. H-P motivation	--	.31*	-.01	.05	.07
2. Non-heritage-related		--	.54**	.49**	.38**
3. Self-efficacy			--	.17	.27*
4. Goal salience				--	.18
5. Japanese language proficiency					--

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .001$ .

The Caucasian group does not show significant correlation between goal salience and self-efficacy ( $r = .17$ ) in this study, even though many researchers in the study of predominantly Euro-American students claimed that goal setting is closely related to self-efficacy (Locke & Latham, 1990). The reason for this discrepancy cannot be inferred from the data of this study.

On the contrary, the JH and Asian groups show positive and significant correlation between these variables (JH,  $r = .29, p < .001$ ; Asian,  $r = .35, p < .001$ ). This indicates that Caucasian students who have high self-efficacy do not always have a clear goal or strategy in Japanese language learning. Many researchers noted the importance of self-efficacy in academic performance (e.g., Bandura, 1986). This study also shows that self-efficacy positively and significantly correlates with Japanese language proficiency across ethnic differences.

The correlational matrices of the three ethnic groups reconfirm that socio-cultural differences exist in motivations. First, as expected, Asian students show more similarities to JH students than Caucasians in motivational variables associated with H-P-related motivation. JH and Asian students are encouraged by their parents and gain more confidence, so that parental supports have a positive influence on self-efficacy for JH and Asian students. JH and Asian groups tend to be influenced by their parents and gain parental benefit in intrinsic motivation whereas parents of the Caucasian group do not have an effect on whether their children enjoy learning the Japanese language or not. Caucasian students are rather more motivated intrinsically with self-made choice without parental advice. Thus, self-made choice contributes to Caucasian students' competence which accords with the previous findings by several researchers (e.g., Deci & Ryan, 1985).

From this study, it can be inferred that parental support and encouragement of JH and Asian students must be more significant in intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, goal salience, and Japanese language proficiency than those of Caucasian students. Asian American students are more influenced by their parents' desire for success than are their non-Asian counterparts (Reglin & Adams, 1990). Further, the report from Catsambis and Garland (1997) showed that parental educational aspiration of Asian parents for their child is higher than that of non-Asian

parents. Asian-American parents hold higher expectations for their children (Peng & Wright, 1994). In addition, teenagers of Caucasians are more independent than those of JH and Asians. On the other hand, a child who is inferior in a traditional Japanese family relationship becomes dependent to a supporting partner (his/her parent) (Lebra, 1976); therefore, a Japanese child tends to rely on parental support and encouragement.

The findings of this study show that differences exist in the relative contributions of motivation, self-efficacy, and goal salience in Japanese language learning among the three ethnic groups (Japanese heritage, Asian, and Caucasian). This study reveals that motivational theories of foreign language learning, particularly Japanese language learning, are not always universally applicable; therefore, ethnic differences need to be considered in motivational studies (e.g., Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).

### **Conclusions and Future Research**

The diverse backgrounds of immigrants and their degree of acculturations impact their perspectives on motivational orientations of learning FL/L2 (Au, 1988). This study investigated how JH, Asian, and Caucasian students of Japanese language classes differ in motivational beliefs from the socio-cultural aspect.

This research focused on understanding H-P-related and non-heritage-related motivations, self-efficacy, and goal salience. The results of this study indicated that the three ethnic groups significantly differ in H-P-related and intrinsic motivations. Furthermore, JH and Asian students showed the importance of H-P-related motivation indicating positive and significant correlations with non-heritage-related motivation, self-efficacy, goal salience, and Japanese language proficiency. On the other hand, the Caucasian group does not show significant correlation

between self-efficacy and H-P-related motivation indicating that parental support of Caucasian students does not have a significant influence on their self-confidence in Japanese language learning. Non-heritage-related motivation and self-efficacy play an important role in Japanese language proficiency among Caucasian students.

The findings of this study present the following implications. First, the results demonstrated that diverse ethnic groups differed in the types of motivational beliefs and explained the behavior of Japanese language acquisition. The differences of motivational beliefs in the groups could have resulted from their ethnic and family cultural backgrounds, i.e., socio-cultural adaptations (Rueda & Dembo, 1995).

This study provided useful information about motivational beliefs for teachers and administrators to better understand how students from diverse ethnic backgrounds differed in Japanese language learning, thus helping them continue in a Japanese language program. However, some recommendations in future research can be made. First, even though some researchers (e.g., Douglas, 2002; Kondo, 1999) have developed some curricula which consider the differences of ethnic background, curriculum, and instructions that adapt to socio-cultural differences, these curricula need to be developed further based on research and theory. Considerations should address the diversity of Japanese language learners based not only on differences in ethnicity but also on differences within groups: for example, (a) different generations within the JH group; (b) Anglo, Hispanic, and African American students within the Caucasian group; and (c) Chinese, Korean, Taiwanese, and Vietnamese within the Asian group. Second, objective assessments such as tests and quizzes would add more reliability and validity in analyzing the data. Furthermore, to observe and analyze students' motivations in greater detail, a case study can be conducted. Using a "triangulation" method (testing data sets obtained

from multiple sources such as interviews, observations, and surveys) is one way of gaining reliability and validity of the data.

In summary, this study reaffirmed the value of taking into consideration motivational beliefs in the language acquisition process and also suggested that students from the three ethnic groups perceive the Japanese language and the purposes of its acquisition differently. Instructors need to be aware of these differences when applying motivational constructs to enhance students' motivation of Japanese language acquisition.

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