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Passion, Persistence & learning Japanese

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Abstract
Motivation, attitudes and persistence were the focus in an Australian study that investigated what keeps learners going to reach an advanced level of Japanese while so many give up along the way. The study used Robert Gardner’s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (1985) to measure motivation/attitudes, with focus group interviews providing triangulation. The possible synthesis of L2 motivational models (by Dornyei, Gardner, Noels, and Ushioda) proposed in Dornyei’s L2 Motivation Self System (2005) provided the theoretical framework.

The presentation will demonstrate a link that exists between passion and motivation, associated with persistence in learning Japanese. It will be shown that L2 motivation can be defined in terms of passion. However, a passionate activity is inherently self-defining, in the sense that someone passionate about writing songs may eventually see themself as a songwriter. This implies a certain level of motivation and degree of persistence. A connection is made between the self-defining aspect of a passionate activity and persistence in the study of Japanese, highlighted by outcomes of the study. Some participants seemed to have developed a self-image as speakers of Japanese. The presentation concludes by drawing a connecting thread between passion and persistence, motivation and language identity.

Key Words: L2 motivation, persistence, language identity