Attitudes toward English and English learning at three rural Japanese middle schools: A preliminary survey

by

Joel P. Rian

B.A., University of Minnesota, 1998

Dissertation submitted to

the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Linguistics

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Applied Linguistics in TESOL

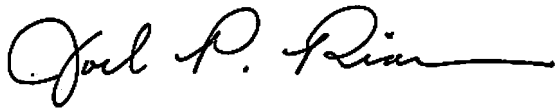
Macquarie University

Sydney, Australia

May 2007

Declaration of research originality

I, the undersigned, certify that the research described in this dissertation has not already been submitted for any other degree, and that to the best of my knowledge all sources used and any help received in the preparation thereof have been duly acknowledged.



Joel P. Rian

Acknowledgements

Heartfelt thanks go to: Dr. Peter Roger, without whose assistance and insight this thesis would have forever remained a draft; my wife Junko and daughter Megan, without whose patience I would not have had the time to put this report together; and to my middle school students and fellow teachers, without whose cooperation and input this report would not exist at all.

誠に、ありがとうございました。

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Abstract

This study explores attitudes toward English and English learning at three rural Japanese middle schools. Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research has, over the past few decades, devoted increasing attention to the influence on language learning of learner motivation and attitudes. Theories backed by extensive empirical surveys among language learners have posited that learners' attitudes toward second language culture influence their second language achievement. However, many of these surveys have involved learners who are immersed in the "target language" culture or have direct contact with it. In socio-educational contexts where learners' exposure to the target language is limited almost exclusively to their classroom experience, attitudes remain comparatively unexamined.

Japanese middle school students are required to study English in a social environment where there is little immediate need or opportunity to use the language for communicative purposes. Further, as the bulk of middle school English study is oriented toward preparing students for examinations, the middle school English learning environment is not set up to foster communicative ability—a problem which, notwithstanding the efforts of dedicated teachers, Japanese society does not appear to commonly acknowledge. Considering these circumstances, it is easy to speculate that motivation to study English among these students is "low," or that attitudes toward learning English tend to become negative as students progress through their studies.

Few investigations of Japanese middle school students' attitudes have been conducted; however, none has found substantive support for these claims. The present study employed a questionnaire based on two past studies by Yoneyama (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo (1993), incorporating some new concepts in SLA research that have come to light since the time of those studies. The results of the present survey mirrored past findings: responses were homogenous and generally neutral, again challenging the assumptions that middle school students generally have negative attitudes toward English. Further, the data suggest an interesting contrast between a positive image of having English ability and a slight disinterest in undertaking efforts to actualize this ability. Finally, the results of the present survey point to avenues for further research into the L2 attitudinal portrait of this considerably understudied group of learners.

英語及び英語学習に対する日本人中学生の受けとめ方（試論）
－都市郊外３校での事例研究－

概　要
(Japanese translation of Abstract)

本研究は、日本人中学生の英語及び英語学習に対する生徒の意欲・興味について都市郊外三校を事例に調査・研究するものである。近年の、第二言語獲得（“Second Language Acquisition” 又は “SLA”）をめぐる研究は、第二言語を学習する人々の motivation（動機、理由）と attitudes（意欲・興味)が、第二言語の獲得にどのような影響を与えるかということに焦点を据えてきた。第二言語学習者を対象とする広範囲の調査に支えられた理論では、予備知識の有無とか、ネイティブ・スピーカーが与える印象や先入観などを含めた当該言語にかかわる文化が、その第二言語の獲得過程に影響を及ぼすとされている。しかし、その際の調査対象には、「対象言語」の文化に浸っていたり、ネイティブ・スピーカーに直に接する機会が多かったりする学習者が多く含まれる。社会教育的な文脈からみると、そういった機会があまりない、教室内だけでしか「対象言語」を学ぶ機会のない学習者の意欲・興味は、未だに調査されていないままである。

日本の中学生は、英語でのコミュニケーションがあまり無い社会の中で、英語の勉強をしなければいけない。更に、中学校での英語学習の大部分はいわゆる「受験対策」に向かい、コミュニケーション能力がそもそも育ちにくい学習環境になっており、かつ、この問題の重要性は、情熱を傾けている現場の教師を除くと、社会的にみて、あまり共有されているとはいえないように見える。ゆえに、日本の中学生は英語学習に対する積極的な動機はあまり見られず、又、内容が高度になるにつれて興味・意欲がなくなっていくとも考えられる。

日本の中学生の英語及び英語学習に対する興味・意欲を調べた調査は少ない。だが、実施された調査での「動機がない」、「興味や意欲がなくなる」といった何らかの根拠によって、裏付けされたものではない。本研究は、以前行われた二つの調査（KOIZUMI Reizo & MATSUO Kaoru, 1993; YONEYAMA Asaji, 1979）を土台にしながら、最近の SLA 研究による新たな視点を加えたアンケートを作成して利用した。結果は、先行研究における調査結果と同じく、回答者は均質に答え、又、全体的に中立な回答が多かったため、英語及び英語学習に対して「動機がない、意欲がない」との想定が支持されなかった。ちなみに、生徒の回答は、英語が使えたらいいなと思いながらも、英語能力をこつこつ養う努力はあまりしたくない、という対照性を示唆しており興味深い。従って、今回の調査結果は、日本の中学生がどのように第二言語を獲得していくのかという研究を今後、さらに進めていく上で、いくつかの方向性を指し示すものであると考える。

Attitudes toward English and English learning at three rural Japanese middle schools: A preliminary survey

Introduction

Asking Japanese middle school students what they think of English and English learning may seem trivial. After all, they *have* to be in the classrooms. Whether or not they *enjoy* being there is irrelevant to their obligation. Further, the result of asking a small number of them (even, as this study has attempted, three schools of them) what they think of English and English learning is not likely to instigate institutional reconsideration of established curricula at a level that will effect changes in their current classroom learning experience or routine.

From a practical standpoint, therefore, why bother? This may in fact be one reason very few studies exist that specifically investigate attitudes toward English among Japanese middle school students. As of 2007, I am aware of only two that have been published in English: one by Koizumi & Matsuo (1993), a longitudinal study of motivation among 296 Japanese seventh-graders at two schools in suburban Fukuoka, and an earlier, cross-sectional study of 123 middle schoolers in Niigata by Yoneyama (1979). Two brief surveys by Matsuhata (1970) and Ishiguro (1961) exist in Japanese, but Yoneyama's (1979) was likely the first study written in English, and whose questionnaires were based on contemporary L2 motivation theory. A second reason for the scarcity of research at the Japanese middle school level may be that obtaining permission to carry out surveys among Japanese middle school students is difficult. Schools, school boards and the teachers of these students may be reluctant to accommodate research efforts, especially since the results are unlikely to improve, or have any impact at all on, current routine.

My employment as an assistant language teacher (ALT) at three Japanese

middle schools offered an opportunity to respond to Oxford & Shearin's (1994) call for more teacher-initiated, teacher-directed research into L2 motivation (p.16), as well as to Dörnyei's (1998) comment that research into motivation among specific learner groups has been significantly understudied (p.130). Daily contact and good relations with would-be gatekeepers such as Japanese homeroom teachers, vice-principals and principals facilitated obtaining permission to execute the questionnaire which generated the data for this study.

Referring to a handful of studies that regard Japanese middle school students, Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) observe that while it has been posited that attitudes among students become negative over the course of three years, "studies based on subjects' real-time responses" do not support this claim (p.1). From a teacher's point of view, it is easy to state that the primary *motivation* for students' studying English is because schools require it, and that their *attitudes* toward studying decline as the material increases in difficulty. In her survey of 480 Taiwanese middle school students, Ho (1998) reports that "general teacher perceptions are that junior high school pupils are not well motivated" (p.174). It is possible that this teacher perception arises from observations of students not being very engaged in classroom tasks.

However, student attitudes toward classroom tasks are only one part of a larger attitudinal picture. For example, a student may be required to study English, but at the same time may enjoy doing so. Some students who dislike reading and memorizing vocabulary may be eager to commute to a "conversation school". Others may enjoy ruminating over the English that peppers their favorite pop songs, or perhaps they like watching foreign movies. Some may have a desire to live overseas someday. Still others may enjoy translating. In other words, it is possible that

students with potentially negative attitudes toward English classroom tasks may have hidden interests in English that are not apparent to teachers or do not manifest in a classroom setting. In an assessment of attitudes, these potential 'extracurricular' English interests must be taken into account as well. It is too general to claim that students have 'low' motivation to learn English because they don't *appear* interested in what goes on in the classroom.

Although it is not yet clear *how* motivation affects learning (Crookes & Schmidt, 1989, p.225), nor has it been proven a generally reliable predictor of L2 achievement (Ellis, 1994, p.510; Ho, 1998, p.170), it is apparent that a significant relationship between L2 motivation and L2 learning *does* exist. However, until only recently, empirical investigations of this relationship have focused mainly on situations where the L2 has a functional role in the society outside the L2 classroom. Gardner and his associates' extensive surveys, particularly of Canadian Anglophones learning French (Gardner, 1985), have become something of a paradigm for this type of research (Lifrieri, 2005, p.18). However, although Gardner's motivation-measuring instruments have been widely adapted to a variety of learning situations all over the world (Dörnyei, 2005, p.71), there is still a scarcity of studies that analyze attitudes among learners in situations where:

a) there is no immediate need or opportunity to use the L2 outside the classroom, and
b) learners are required to be in L2 classes which, as is the case in most Japanese secondary schools, are often not taught in a way that results in communicative ability (Gorsuch 1998).

The middle school English classroom, where the six-year compulsory study of English formally begins for Japanese students, is a prime example of this kind of learning situation.

Dörnyei (2001) observes the importance of designing surveys that align with the population under study (cited in Chen *et al.*, 2005, p.615). The challenge lies in determining how such surveys *can* and *should* be designed or modified from existing surveys. Many studies, including Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) and Yoneyama's (1979), employ abridgements of much longer questionnaires that were constructed and used in very different learning contexts. The present study used an updated extension of Yoneyama's (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) questionnaires, incorporating some new elements into its design based on ideas regarding L2 motivation that have come to light since the time of those studies.

The goal of the present study is to add the scant body of knowledge about Japanese middle school students' attitudes toward English and English learning by following in the footsteps of previous studies while taking account of more recent developments in the research literature. Specifically, its objective is to determine whether the "real-time responses" to an updated questionnaire to Japanese middle schoolers in a rural environment support Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) assertion that attitudes toward English and English learning among this group of learners do not tend to be negative (p.1).

The format of the questionnaire used in the present study is similar in form to the questionnaires used in two predecessor studies by Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) and Yoneyama (1979). However, its content has been modified to a degree that a detailed comparative treatment with past data is unfeasible. Further, it did not seek to make quantitative, statistical comparisons between, for example, grade levels or between gender groups, as its two predecessors have. This report is a qualitative treatment of data gathered in a quantitative way. I have deliberately titled this study 'preliminary' because it is hoped that its structure and results can be useful, or at

very least inspiring, for future studies of a similar nature. The structure of this report is as follows:

Chapter 1 discusses the Gardnerian L2 motivation ideology upon which the questionnaires in the present study and its two predecessor studies are based. Where appropriate I discuss several other studies relevant to an updated assessment of attitudes toward English at the Japanese middle school level.

Chapter 2 contains an overview of the participants involved in the study, a brief review of the socio-educational environment they are in, and an account of the development and delivery of the questionnaire used to assess their attitudes.

Chapter 3 presents the data from the questionnaire followed by commentary on salient results. Where possible, contrasts are made to previous studies.

Chapter 4 summarizes key conclusions, the limitations of this study, and avenues for future research.

Chapter 1: Background and literature review

If we consider that humans have throughout history been trying to understand their own behavior, it is not surprising that the study of *motivation*—in other words, the study of "what compels a person to do something"—has its roots in the much older field of psychology. The field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), on the other hand, which includes the study of language learning motivation, or "what compels a person to learn a second or foreign language," is comparatively new (Ellis, 1994, p.36). Researchers and educators would probably agree, as van Lier (1996) comments, that motivation "is a very important, if not *the* most important, factor in language learning" (p.98), and also that, as Dörnyei (2001) observes, it remains "one of the most elusive concepts in the whole domain of the social sciences" (p.2). There is considerable disagreement over how to define the term, what variables comprise the construct, and how they interrelate (McDonough, 1981, p.143). Before I discuss the influential L2 motivation theory that underlies the majority of L2 classroom-based attitude surveys in existence, including the present study, it will be helpful to clarify several key terms.

1.1 Discussion of key terms

1.1.1 Motivation and attitudes

Just as the term *motivation* is difficult to define in general, the distinction between *motivation* and *attitudes* seems hazy. Gardner's landmark motivation-measuring instrument, the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, or AMTB (discussed in Chapter 1 below), upon which the questionnaires in Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) and Yoneyama (1979) are based, juxtaposes both terms in its title, making the two terms seem interchangeable. However, in many L2 motivation models (see for example Gardner, 1985; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995; Williams & Burden, 1997;

Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998), *attitude* constructs occur as subcomponents of a larger L2 motivation construct (Mitchell & Myles, 2001, p.24), In simple words, *attitudes*—for example, toward the L2 community, the L2 culture, the L2 classroom, the L2 teacher—are "affective components [that] are either mediated or subsumed within motivation proper" (Lifrieri, 2005, p.13). Hence, an attitude survey and a motivation survey are not really one and the same: a study of motivation often implies broader goals. Attempts to identify correlations between L2 motivation and L2 achievement are an example.

The present study, although its theme can be generally classified under L2 motivation, focuses on student *attitudes*, a term which I will use to encompass other elements such as *interest*, *desire*, and *perception*. This study is not a sophisticated attempt to operationalize a motivation construct, as Gardner's AMTB does with his *integrative motive* (Dörnyei, 1994b, p.516); nor does it attempt to identify correlations between Japanese middle school students' attitudes and their English achievement test scores, as was one of Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993, p.9) and Yoneyama's (1979, p.137) objectives.

1.1.2 "Motivation" as defined by teachers and by researchers

There is a division between what the term *motivation* means to teachers and what it means to researchers. Dörnyei (1994b) comments that this division involves differences in "the face and content validity of the terms" (p.516). In Crookes & Schmidt's (1989) words,

> When teachers say that a student is motivated, they are not usually concerning themselves with the student's reason for studying, but are observing that the student *does* study (or at least engage in teacher-desired behavior in the classroom and possibly outside it). … In general, it is probably fair to say that teachers would describe a student as motivated if s/he becomes productively engaged on

> learning tasks, and sustains that engagement, without the need for continual encouragement or direction. (p.226-227)

Recognizing that teachers are more interested in strategies for motivating their students than in models that parse what 'motivation' means, Oxford & Shearin (1994) offer a list of practical suggestions for teachers to use in motivating their students, based on a number of motivation theories that their article discusses (p.23-25). Dörnyei & Csizér (1998) furthered this effort by constructing a list of 'ten commandments'—a title that aptly appeals to teachers, whose work often deals in imperatives—for motivating students in the L2 classroom, based on empirical data from a survey of more than 200 teachers of English in Hungary.

The distinction that teachers are more concerned with *motivating* than with *motivation* is important to consider amid claims in reports and surveys that students are unmotivated or demotivated or have low motivation or no motivation to learn English. Likely, these claims arise from teacher observations of student interaction (or lack thereof) with classroom tasks. For example, Ho's (1998) study begins with the statement that "A feature shared in most foreign language classrooms where the language in question is a required school subject is the problem of lack of motivation" (p.165). This problem, as it were, is not difficult to understand. Gorsuch's (1998) and Li's (2001) surveys of secondary school teachers in Japan and Korea (respectively) illustrate teachers' frustration with having to teach English within the confines of centralized curricula to students who are as aware as the teachers themselves that they do not *need* the language other than for test-taking purposes.

It seems natural that teachers frustrated at this kind of learning environment—where students may be considerably disinterested in classroom routines—would claim their students' motivation is 'low'. However, students' attitudes toward English derive from more than just their interaction with classroom

tasks. Further, stereotypes of 'low motivation' learners are not always accurate. The results of Ho's (1998) survey revealed that the majority of students had a positive attitude toward English, even toward the classroom tasks (p.175-178). Similarly, a case study comparing student attitudes at several middle school English classrooms in Hong Kong by Lin (2001) indicated positive student attitudes toward studying English among students of low socio-economic and educational background—a somewhat surprising outcome, Lin states, that is likely attributable to particularly high levels of teacher effort and rapport with students (p.409-410).

The Japanese teachers of English with whom I team-taught at the three middle schools included in this study have, in the context of many personal conversations, reechoed the frustrations of teachers mentioned in Li (2001). They have also asserted that student interest in English decreases as the material increases in difficulty over three years, a claim which Koizumi & Matsuo (1993, p.1) say is unsubstantiated. Again, this teacher assertion refers to what they witness *some* of their students doing in the classroom, for example chatting with others, not focusing on tasks, not making effort to answer teacher questions, staring out windows, or even napping. Chambers' (1993) study of British secondary students learning a compulsory foreign language lists similar observations (p.13). However, the questionnaire data in the present survey seem to reflect non-negative attitudes, and in some cases, positive ones.

1.1.3 ESL and EFL learning situations

According to Ellis (1994, p.11-12), the acronyms ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) are sometimes used interchangeably in the SLA literature. This is plausible from a common-sense point of view, as any language acquired after one's 'first' (native, mother, primary, L1) is

necessarily a 'second' (another, additional, L2) language, regardless of its function in the learner's social context. Commonly, however, the distinction is made that "ESL" implies a learning situation where an immediate communicative need for English exists outside the classroom, and that "EFL" implies relatively little immediate communicative need, although its study may be a requirement, and qualification and/or ability with it may be highly valued. Kachru & Nelson (2001) illustrate the ways and degree to which English functions in the society of various countries with a model of three concentric circles. In this model, the English language:

a) is the dominant, mainstream language of 'inner circle' countries (e.g. Australia, Britain, the United States);
b) has at least some communicative role in the mainstream societies of 'outer circle' countries (e.g. Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa); and
c) has little or no communicative role but may be highly regarded and widely studied in 'expanding circle' countries (e.g. China, Korea, Japan).

Kachru & Nelson caution us against simplistically classifying countries into 'native', ESL and EFL categories (2001, p.14). However, since social context affects attitudes toward language learning (Spolsky, 1989, p.16-17), whether or not English has communicative value outside the classroom is significant to the design of attitude surveys. As both Dörnyei (1990, p.46) and Yashima (2002, p.56) comment, the same social factors that affect student attitudes in ESL environments may not be readily applicable to, or may be absent altogether in, EFL settings. Most notable is the concept of how L2 learners identify with the culture(s) associated with the second language. In an ESL setting—for example, French being learned in Canada or English being learned in the United States—the culture that the L2 represents is both relatively defined and immediately accessible. The Japanese middle school students at the focus of the present study, on the other hand, have almost no direct contact with any of a variety of cultures that English represents. This discrepancy in

L2 contact brings into question the validity of superimposing ESL-based motivation research onto EFL settings (Noels *et al.*, 2000, p.60; Dörnyei, 2005, p.95).

If a questionnaire constructed in an ESL setting is to be used in an EFL setting, it needs to be adapted both to the learning environment and to the responding students' actual lives. Yoneyama's (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) questionnaires include items that solicit information on 'ethnocentrism' with statements that broadly stereotype English-speaking cultures. One item in Yoneyama (1979) reads: "I think British and American people are very democratic in their politics and ways of thinking." Another item in both Yoneyama (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) reads "I am opposed to the borrowing of foreign words into the Japanese language. I think we must treasure our own language." These are not necessarily 'wrong' or misguided questions to ask. However, the students in Yoneyama's (1979) survey, for example, attended a more cosmopolitan "junior high school attached to the Department of Education of Niigata University" (p.125). It is possible, therefore, that these students had comparatively higher-level exposure to foreign studies. Yoneyama may have therefore deemed his survey respondents to have enough background information to form an opinion on these kinds of survey items. By contrast, the respondents in the present study are in a rural, non-college track educational environment, which may less likely afford students a background advantage in foreign studies.

Yoneyama's (1979) exclusive use of "Britain and America" to represent 'foreign cultures' in his questionnaire's "Ethnocentrism" category seems questionable. His choice is based on his estimation that Britain and America are prominently studied by his students in their history classes (p.128-129). Indeed, these two inner circle countries have historically had a large influence on Japan. Kachru & Nelson

(2001) point out that outer circle countries, as well as expanding circle countries such as Japan, "have always looked to external reference points (i.e. British and, to a lesser extent, American) for their [language] norms" (p.15). Clément *et al.* (1994), who studied Hungarian 11th grade students, similarly use this "UK/US" pairing in two questionnaire items (p.418); however, their questionnaire is sufficiently counterbalanced by items that treat 'foreign cultures' with non-specific wording. Where attitudes toward L2 cultures are concerned, "Britain and America" cannot serve as an abbreviation for the plethora of cultures across the globe that employ a variety of, as Kachru & Nelson (2001) term it, 'world Englishes' in a variety of ways.

Having reviewed the above three terms, I will turn now to a synopsis of the L2 motivation theory and the survey instrument that empirically supports it which have influenced the design of similar instruments worldwide (Dörnyei, 2005, p.71), including the one used in the present study and its two predecessor studies.

1.2 Gardnerian L2 motivation theory

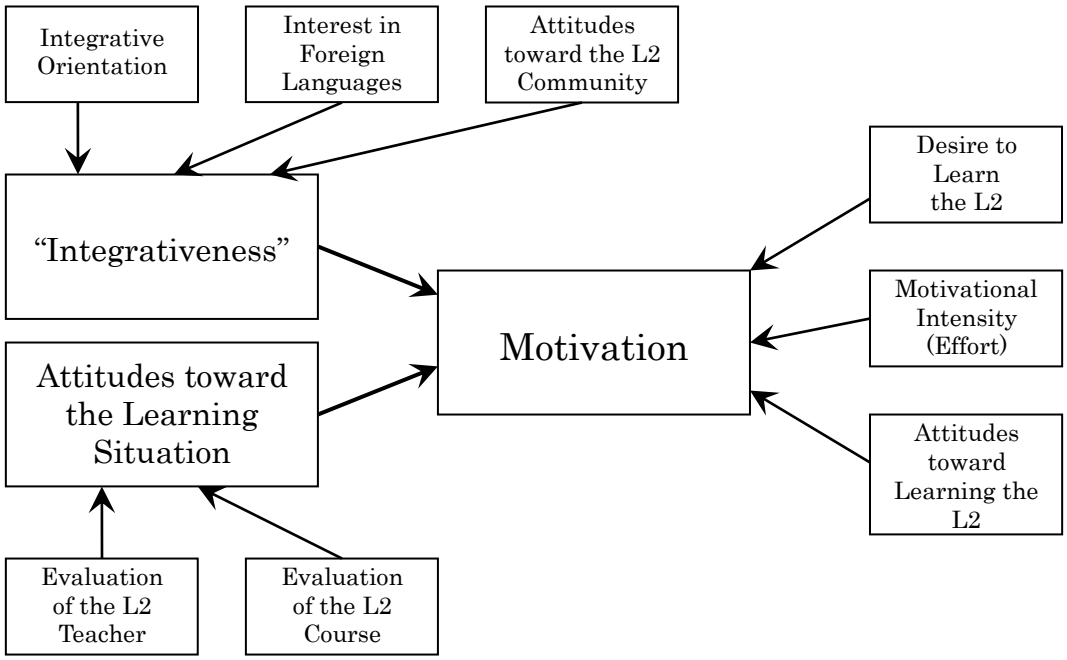
To this day, R.C. Gardner and his associates' work serves as the cornerstone in the foundation of what we have come to understand about L2 motivation. In Oxford & Shearin's (1994) words, it was Gardner and his colleagues "who put L2 learning motivation on the map as a very important issue and provided the current theoretical underpinnings" (p.16). Gardner & Lambert (1959) first proposed an *integrative* and *instrumental* aspect—one they precisely refer to as an *'orientation'*—of L2 motivation, a proposal that "has influenced virtually all research on the topic of motivation and SL learning" (Crookes and Schmidt, 1989, p.219). Gardner's landmark "Socio-Educational Model of SLA," first published in the 1970s and revised a number of times over subsequent decades, stood out from other contemporary models for two reasons. First, it was the first model to account for

foreign language learning in a classroom setting (Crookes & Schmidt, 1989, p.223). Others, for example Schumann's Acculturation Model, had been concerned with the social factors at work in natural settings (*ibid.*, p.223; Ellis, 1994, p.236). Second, Gardner and his associates quantified the operationalizations of the constructs in their theory with data from extensive administrations of questionnaires. As Mitchell & Myles (2001) state, "Worthwhile theories are collaborative affairs, which evolve through a process of *systematic enquiry*, in which the claims of the theory are assessed against some kind of evidence or data" (p.12). These extensive, empirical, systematic efforts, Dörnyei (1998, p.122; 2005, p.71) comments, are what have given Gardner's model its lasting credibility.

1.3 'Integrative motive' and the AMTB

Gardnerian theory of L2 motivation seems to revolve around a construct he refers to as *integrative motive*, an essential part of his Socio-Educational Model (Gardner 1985, 2000, 2001, 2002). He defines *integrative motive* as a "motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language" (Gardner, 1985, p.82-83). Gardner's claim—initially at least—was, the more language learners want to 'integrate' with the target language community, or the more they identify themselves with the L2 culture, the more likely they are to succeed at learning the target/L2 language (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000, p.318). Figure 1 below illustrates the dynamic of the *integrative motive* construct, and what sub-constructs comprise it.

Figure 1: Diagram of Gardner's (1985) "Integrative motive" construct



In order to quantifiably test the hypothesis of *integrative motive,* Gardner and his associates developed a survey instrument they dubbed the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. The AMTB is a 'battery' of more than 130 'test' statements, or items, that a taker is asked to rank on one of three scales: Likert, multiple choice and semantic differential. Responses to items are calculated to produce a numeric index for a number of categories (also referred to as subscales) represented in the *integrative motive* construct. These indices in turn are combined to yield a composite 'attitude/motivation index' (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.116). In

its most recent incarnation, the AMTB is parsed as follows in Table 1:

Table 1: Sub-constructs and subscales of the AMTB
(compiled from Gardner, 2001, p.8-9; Dörnyei, 2005, p.72-73)

Sub-construct 1: Integrativeness

- Subscale 1: Integrative orientation (4 items, Likert)
- Subscale 2: Interest in foreign languages (10 items, Likert)
- Subscale 3: Attitudes toward the target language group (10 items, Likert)

Sub-construct 2: Attitudes toward the Learning Situation

- Subscale 4: Evaluation of the Language Instructor (10 items, semantic differential)
- Subscale 5: Evaluation of the Language Course (10 items, semantic differential)

Sub-construct 3: Motivation

- Subscale 6: Motivational intensity (10 items, multiple choice)
- Subscale 7: Desire to learn the language (10 items, multiple choice)
- Subscale 8: Attitudes toward learning the language (10 items, Likert)

Sub-construct 4: Instrumental Orientation

- Subscale 9: Instrumental orientation (4 items, Likert)

Sub-construct 5: Language Anxiety

- Subscale 10: Language class anxiety (10 items, multiple choice)
- Subscale 11: Language use anxiety (10 items, multiple choice)

It is interesting to note that Gardner (1985) does not represent sub-constructs 4 and 5 in the Integrative Motive diagram (Figure 1 above).

Originally, the AMTB was designed for and extensively administered to groups of Anglophone Canadian students in a French language immersion program, with the intent of investigating the relationship between motivation indices and proficiency test scores. However, Oller (1981) and Au (1988), Gardner's perhaps most notable critics, found that the results from extensive surveys of learners in different learning contexts, using instruments similar to the AMTB, yielded "nearly every possible relationship between various measures of integrative motivation and measures of proficiency: positive, nil, negative, and uninterpretable or ambiguous" (Au, 1988, cited in Crookes & Schmidt, 1989, p.220-221). These findings attracted further criticism that 'integrativeness' is neither a superlative element of motivation

(Williams & Burden, 1997, p.117; Ho, 1998, p.171), nor does it have a causal relationship to L2 achievement (Crookes & Schmidt, 1989, p.221). On the other hand Gardner, although he admits that his model has focused on *integrative motive* and that he has, in more recent past, adjusted it to better account for other sub-constructs such as 'instrumental' orientation, has counter-argued that the excessive focus on the primacy of integrative motivation is a result of his model having been misinterpreted (Gardner & Tremblay, 1994a, p.360, Williams & Burden, 1997, p.118), and that he never proposed that a causal relationship existed (Lifrieri, 2005, p.13). These debates are detailed in *The Modern Language Journal* (Dörnyei, 1994a, 1994b; Gardner & Tremblay, 1994a, 1994b; Oxford, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994).

The direct relationship between the AMTB and the integrative motivation construct it operationalizes (Dörnyei, 1994b, p.516) is evident at face value by comparing the terms in Figure 1 and Table 1 above. However, there are questions regarding the construct validity of several of its sub-constructs (Dörnyei, 2005, p.71). For example, although Tremblay & Gardner (1995, p.507) have disagreed, it has been suggested that self-report questionnaires are a poor measure of 'motivational degree' which the *motivational intensity* sub-construct (See Figure 1 and Table 1 above) purports to measure (Crookes & Schmidt, 1989, p.222; Ellis, 1994, p.511). Further, the integrative motive construct is fraught with confusing terminology (Oxford & Shearin, 1994, p.13-14). For example, as Dörnyei (1994b) observes, "There are three components at three different levels in the model that carry the term 'integrative' (integrative motive/motivation, integrativeness and integrative orientation)" (p.516). This face-value overlap seems readily apparent in Figure 1 above. Gardner & Tremblay (1994a) have asserted that the contrast between integrative and instrumental *orientation* cannot and do not imply a similar contrast between

integrative and instrumental *motivation* (p.361). This explanation is precise; however, the sheer similarity of the terms renders them easily confusable. As Dörnyei (1994a) points out, "The popularity of the integrative-instrumental system is partly due to its simplicity and intuitively convincing character, but partly also to the fact that broadly defined 'cultural-affective' and 'pragmatic-instrumental' dimensions do usually emerge in empirical studies of motivation" (p.274-275). This misconceptualization has been pervasive in the SLA literature (Dörnyei, 2005, p.70).

1.4 Integrativeness, instrumentality and the Japanese middle school context

It has been demonstrated that Gardner's motivation model "works in environments that are considerably different from the Canadian context where it originated" (Dörnyei, 1998, p.129). On the other hand, the argument exists that 'integrativeness'—specifically the integrative motive construct—has dubious applications to monolingual contexts (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Yashima, 2002; Dörnyei, 2005, p.95; Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005), such as Japan or Taiwan. As Oxford & Shearin (1994) state,

> "integrative motivation is much more meaningful for second language learners, who must learn to live in the new culture and communicate fluently in the target language, than for most foreign language learners, who are separated in space and attitude from the target language culture and who rarely surpass intermediate language proficiency. (p.15)

Where 'integrativeness' and Japanese middle schoolers in rural Hokkaido are concerned, there is, in essence, no immediately accessible L2 culture with which to integrate. Further, as Kachru & Nelson (2001) have pointed out, the countries and cultures associated with English are vast and varied. An assessment of 'attitudes toward the target language culture', as the construct of integrativeness implies, becomes an almost infinitely complex endeavor.

'Instrumentality, ' meanwhile, has had a positive correlation with L2

achievement in a number of studies conducted in EFL contexts, as Ellis (1994) describes, "where learners have little or no interest in the target-language culture and few or no opportunities to interact with its members" (p.514). A study utilizing a questionnaire that focuses on instrumental rather than integrative motivation, therefore, seems enticing. However, in Yoneyama's (1979) words, instrumental motivation exists when a learner "places a utilitarian value on the achievement of proficiency in the foreign language, without seeking active contact with the speakers of that language nor further knowledge of their culture" (p.122). Ellis (1994) refers to instrumental motivation using the phrase "provision of an incentive to learn" (p.514). In my opinion, these definitions imply an informed *choice* or *option* as to whether or not to study the language for reward or to avoid punishment. Japanese middle schoolers can choose not to study and/or to get poor scores on English tests. However, they have little choice as to whether or not they are exposed to English study.

There has been increasing focus on the need for a reinterpretation of 'integrativeness' with respect to EFL contexts, where the 'target language culture' is multifarious and comparatively distant. With regard to Japan, McClelland (2000) has called for a definition of 'integrativeness' that reflects "integration with the global community rather than assimilation with native speakers" (p.109, cited in Dörnyei, 2005, p.95). Yashima's (2002) attitude survey of college students in Osaka, using a blend of McCroskey & Richmond's (1991) "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC) model and Gardner's Socio-Educational model, modified specifically for the Japanese EFL environment, is a good beginning toward this reinterpretation. However, although English is a partial requirement at some Japanese universities, in Yashima's (2002) study the participants had selected English from among seven foreign language choices (p.58). Japanese middle school students, as mentioned above, can choose

whether or not to complete the classroom tasks in front of them, but they are required by law to be exposed to English study. Therefore, a learning-context based attitude survey that focuses on incentives for learning the language seems only obliquely applicable. This coincides with Dörnyei's (1994b) observation that, because short-term pragmatic, utilitarian goals such as getting a job are remote, "instrumental motivation is actually very often not relevant to school children" (p.520).

I have chosen not to use 'integrative' and 'instrumental' motivation as categories or items in the questionnaire at the center of this survey, following Irie's (2003) comment that some researchers avoid these labels because their original definitions do not fit the contexts to which they are being applied (p.90-91), and because a redefinition of the terms is not essential to the aims of the present study. I have preferred instead to re-title some categories and re-categorize some items, as well as to introduce new items and two new categories inspired by ideas from Dörnyei & Csizér (2002) and Yashima (2002), which are outlined in the following Chapter 2 under the heading "**Questionnaire construction**" on page 26.

Chapter 2: The study

The following section discusses the questionnaire used in the study, its respondents and their socio-educational setting.

2.1 Participants

This study administered a questionnaire to a total of about 250 students at three middle schools. Table 2 below lists the population at each school. All students were between the ages of 13 and 15.

Table 2: Student population, grades 1 & 2, at three Marshfield middle schools

Middle School	Grade 1			Grade 2			Total boys	Total girls	Total students	Survey responses
North Marshfield	9			12			14	7	21	21
South Marshfield	11			13			14	10	24	24
Central Marshfield	Class A	Class B	Class C	Class A	Class B	Class C	86	94	185	180
	31	31	32	30	30	31				
All schools, grades 1 & 2							114	111	230	225

Originally, the survey sought responses from all grades (1 – 3). However, due to scheduling difficulties, administration of the questionnaire was delayed from December until April, the beginning of the Japanese school year. As the incoming first graders have no experience in this learning environment, they were not included in the survey. I have retained last school year's titles of "1st Grade" and "2nd Grade" for presentation of the data because they more clearly represent the one year and two years, respectively, of experience that the surveyed students have.

2.2 Setting

The schools that this study concerns are located in the town of Marshfield (an Anglicized pseudonym), a town of about 10,000 on the northern island of Hokkaido, Japan. Marshfield is about an hour away by car from Sapporo, the largest

city on the island (pop. 1,850,000, one-third of Hokkaido's overall population). Despite its proximity to the largest city on the island, Marshfield can be referred to as a 'rural' environment because it is surrounded by farmland, as well as the fact that the nearest railway stations require at least a 20-minute bus or car ride to a neighboring small city or outer suburb of Sapporo.

In a study of foreign language attitudes and language choice among several thousand middle school-age children in Hungary, Dörnyei & Csizér (2002) examined among other variables the "quantity and quality of contact with L2 speakers" as well as "cultural interest," or "indirect contact with the L2" (p.432). Lifrieri (2005) refers to these variables as "availability" of the language (p.19). The ruralness of Marshfield, added to the overall monolingual nature of Japan (Lai, 1999, p.216), suggests a significant *un*availability of the L2 for Marshfield middle school students. They are more distanced than their peers in larger cities from foreign elements—native speakers, foreign-related festivals or events, or language schools. Thus, their exposure to L2 culture and to English outside the classroom is likely limited to, for example, what they see on TV or hear in popular music. Some students may be proficient with computers and may therefore be familiar with the Internet, however, it is not known how many have regular access or how frequently they use it. Even if some students are Internet-proficient, it can be safely assumed that few of them access anything other than Japanese sites.

2.3 Marshfield middle school structure

The structure of the three schools in this study is the same for all middle schools across Japan: there are three grade levels (1 – 3, equivalent in Western terms to grades 7 – 9). In larger schools such as Central Marshfield, grade levels are subdivided into classes, commonly labeled A, B, C, and so forth, depending on the

number of students in each grade level and the size of the schools. Central Marshfield classes have about thirty students each, a common figure for larger schools. Central Marshfield has two English teachers: one teaches four of a total of nine classes, and the other teacher the remaining five classes. North and South Marshfield, smaller schools, have one English teacher each.

2.4 The Japanese middle school English curriculum

In Japan, English is highly regarded, widely studied, but hardly used. Lai (1999) points out that, despite its popularity, English has no 'diglossic' value as a higher language in Japan. Comparatively, in Hong Kong, for example, it is used as a medium of instruction at all public universities and in some government institutions (p.216-217). In Japan, where English has no significant communicative role in society outside the classroom, from a learner's perspective the *need* for learning English is an abstract one.

The Japanese Ministry of Education's reason for requiring the study of English in middle and high schools is worded as follows:

> With the progress of globalization in the economy and in society, it is essential that our children acquire communication skills in English, which has become a common international language, in order for living in the 21st century. This has become an extremely important issue both in terms of the future of our children and the further development of Japan as a nation. (Japanese Ministry of Education website, retrieved March 2007)

This goal, however plausible, seems to have little relevance to the here-and-now of the middle school students concerned in this report, considering that the great majority of them will continue on to another three years of English at a local high school but will not continue to higher education (personal conversation with a Marshfield high school English teacher, August 2005).

2.4.1 The Japanese middle school syllabus

The middle school English syllabus in Japan is structural and centralized (Garant, 1994, p.106). Classroom instruction centers on English language structures and forms. What is taught is regulated by a central entity, the Japanese Ministry of Education (hereinafter, the Ministry), in a publication of guidelines referred to as the *Course of Study*. Hall (2001, p.229) refers to this centralization as a 'straitjacket' that limits teachers as to what content they can teach. However, as DeCoker (2002) observes, while it is easy to envision a "faceless bureaucrat in Tokyo extending his reach to every classroom" throughout Japan (p.xiv), the actual influence the Ministry wields over local schools is neither as top-down nor as power-coercive as it seems. He comments, "Even with its control over the curriculum, the Ministry of Education often finds its policies significantly altered by the time they reach the classroom" (p.xiv). O'Donnell (2005) concurs: "Bureaucrats may give orders, but it is up to the individual teachers to implement those changes at the classroom level" (p.301). Lee *et al.* (1998) comment that the curriculum is not defined in such detail that "every first grader will be studying the same lesson at the same time on the same day," and that the curriculum is in reality a set of guidelines, which each school must interpret to fit its own needs (p.163).

It would seem, then, that although teachers are instructed *what* they must teach, they are not necessarily bound and restrained as to *how* they can teach. On the other hand, the majority of them—both out of convenience and perhaps out of lack of knowledge of other, more "communicative" approaches—use a method (described below) that does not foster communicative skills. Certainly, such skills are not necessary in an environment such as Marshfield. Still, it is my opinion that students become keenly aware of the non-communicative orientation of their classes. Many of

my students have commented to me that they are interested in learning simple 'conversational English', but have become exasperated with difficult vocabulary, grammar and reading passages taught in class.

2.4.2 Objectives of Japanese middle school English course

The Ministry of Education's *Course of Study* obliquely states the following objective for English language instruction:

> 外国語を通じて，言語や文化に対する理解を深め，積極的にコミュニケーションを図ろうとする態度の育成を図り，聞くこと，話すこと，読むこと，書くことなどのコミュニケーション能力の基礎を養う。
> Through foreign language [English], to deepen understanding of language and culture, to encourage the development of positive attitudes toward communication, and to lay the foundation for practical communication skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing.
> (Japanese Ministry of Education, Guidelines for Middle School English, 1999, p.6, author's translation from Japanese).

The Ministry seems to contradict itself, however, by offering this vague objective, and at the same time requiring that all textbooks used in middle and high schools, as well as university examinations, be based on the content of the *Course of Study* (Azuma, 2002, p.11).

The Ministry's Website (accessed November 2006, available at http://www.mext.go.jp/english/topics/03072801.htm) features an "action plan" designed to "cultivate Japanese with English abilities". If one assumes that "English abilities" are the fundamental objective of English instruction anywhere, the development of such an action plan seems to hint that the Ministry has acknowledged the claim that English instruction based on the *Course of Study* it has promulgated has failed to produce students who can actually communicate in English. There seems little doubt that English, as Henrichsen (1989) puts it, continues to be taught and learned in Japan more as "an examination subject to sort students than as a

basis for communication" (p.121).

2.4.3 Teaching method

Yakudoku, which directly translates from Japanese as "reading-translation," has been called the Japanese equivalent of the grammar-translation method (O'Donnell, 2005, p.302), although Jannuzi (1994) asserts that it is its own distinct form of *reading method* (p.121-122). The fact that reading methods do not require teachers to be proficient in the target language (Celce-Murcia, 1991, p.6) is likely one of the key reasons *yakudoku* remains the preeminent method for teaching English in Japanese schools (Hino, 1988, p.46). *Yakudoku*, as Gorsuch (1998) observes, focuses heavily on vocabulary, reading comprehension and word-for-word translation of text into Japanese, and virtually precludes any development of speaking ability (p.7).

2.4.4 Teaching materials

Textbooks are written by various publishers based on the content outlined in the *Course of Study*. The publishers are independent of the Ministry, but the Ministry ultimately approves textbooks for use in schools. From among these textbooks, school districts choose which will be used in local schools (Azuma, 2002, p.8-10). Aside from these required textbooks, course content and materials are at the discretion of the individual teacher (Lee *et al.*, 1998, p.163). Various assortments of supplementary workbooks and ready-made worksheet books are available to supplement these textbooks. I have observed the English teachers at the three schools this report concerns use these kinds of supplementary materials often.

2.4.5 Assessment practices

According to a number of conversations with Marshfield middle school teachers, students periodically encounter two main types of tests throughout the year: school-based term tests, which are constructed by the teachers, and

standardized achievement tests, which are created and distributed by an organization independent of both the Ministry and the textbook publishers. The school-based term tests largely determine the grades that appear on a student's report card. Meanwhile, standardized achievement test scores are used particularly in middle school third year (ninth grade) as an estimate of how a student is likely to perform on high school entrance exams. These scores are often used to determine which high schools a student can apply to with a reasonable chance of passing the entrance exam. Only a small percentage of students who graduate from Marshfield middle schools go on to college-track high schools.

The socio-educational environment of the participants in this survey is one which is both removed from direct contact with the L2 community, and which implies no need for communicative ability in the L2. Students' attitudes toward the L2 culture are, therefore, as mentioned above, likely to be based largely on what they see on TV, such as movies, popular programs about foreign cultures, or commercials for English conversation schools. Similarly, Marshfield middle schoolers' opinions toward English learning are based on a classroom experience that does not (and arguably cannot) foster communicative ability.

2.5 Questionnaire construction

A questionnaire that directly replicated either Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) or Yoneyama's (1979) study would have offered a better opportunity for data comparison. However, the aims of this study and the questionnaire it employs are different enough that only superficial comparisons are feasible. I have introduced a number of new items and re-categorized others. An outline of the questionnaire's format, as well as considerations in constructing it, follows below.

2.5.1 Questionnaire categories

Table 3: Categorical structure of questionnaire used in this survey

Category 1: Interest in extracurricular English (6 items)
Category 2: Interest in the international community (5 items)
Category 3: Perceived utility of English (5 items)
Category 4: Attitudes toward studying English (5 items)
Category 5: Personality (extroversion) (6 items)
Category 6: Parental influence (4 items)
Category 7: Attitudes toward English class (4 items)

1. *Interest in extracurricular English.* This category of questions attempts to elicit the degree to which students are interested in the English they encounter outside the English classroom. It draws on Dörnyei & Csizér's (2002) concept of 'indirect contact with the L2,' and on Yashima's (2002) observation that attitudes of learners in settings with no immediate contact with L2 cultures are significantly influenced by what they see through the media (p.57), including among other things popular music (radio, CDs), TV programs and movies.

2. *Interest in the international community.* This category is inspired by Dörnyei & Csizér's (2002) concept of EFL learner inclination to 'identify' rather than 'integrate' with L2 cultures (p.453), as well as Yashima's (2002) concept of *international posture*. Yashima (2002) defines *international posture* within a blended WTC/Gardnerian-concept model modified with specific respect to the Japanese EFL learning environment (p.55). *International posture*, she says, denotes attitudes toward what English *symbolizes*, involving "willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, one hopes, openness or a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures, among others" (p.57).

3. *Perceived utility of English*. This category solicits the utilitarian value that students *perceive* the study of English may have. It is borrowed from a category

of six similar items in Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) which, they claimed, was a "combined measure of integrative and instrumental motivation" (p.4). Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) are correct to observe that the distinction between the two motivations was not always clear (p.2). Dörnyei (1994a, p.274; 2005, p.70) cautions us against a poorly simplified dichotomization of the terms "integrative" and "instrumental" motivation. Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) combination of the two terms under one category is problematic, because they state that one of the purposes of their study was to examine the validity of the *distinction* [author's emphasis] between the two terms with respect to the Japanese junior high school level (p.2).

4. *Attitudes toward studying English.* This category is derived from Yashima's (2002) "Desire to study English" category as well as Yoneyama's (1979) "Desire or Motivational Intensity" category, both of which seem to have been drawn from a similar category in the AMTB (although the AMTB category employed multiple choice items rather than Likert items for this category). It should be noted, however, that as Dörnyei (1994b, p.517) and Crookes and Schmidt (1989, p.222) have pointed out, self-report questionnaires are a dubious measure of intensity. I have therefore deliberately re-titled the category not to include the terms 'intensity' or 'desire'. The five items comprising it refer to positive or negative attitudes toward the actual studying of the language, not the 'degree' to which they do or do not study it.

5. *Personality (extroversion).* This category draws from "personality" and "extroversion" categories appearing in Yashima (2002), Koizumi & Matsuo (1993), and Yoneyama (1979), which incorporate concepts of Gardnerian 'language anxiety' and WTC 'self confidence.' The present study does not similarly seek to correlate personality with attitudes or L2 achievement; I included the category to see how these students rate their own personality.

6. *Parental influence.* This category also appeared in past studies as well as in the AMTB. I have included it here to follow the form of past studies, one of whose goals was to examine possible correlations between parental influence and language achievement (however the present study does not examine this correlation). In a rural environment such as Marshfield, it could be hypothesized that parents, although they also encountered English in middle and high school, have even less immediate contact with English than their children because they are no longer in school. Accordingly they may not perceive more value in the study of English than any other subject.

7. *Attitudes toward English class.* This category is a brief representation of two key constructs in the AMTB: attitudes toward the L2 course and toward the L2 teacher. The AMTB devotes 25 semantic differential items to each construct. Here, I have included only only four multiple choice items. Several reasons for this brevity of items are offered under the heading "**Limitations of this study**" in Chapter 4 on page 49.

2.5.2 Considerations in questionnaire construction

Wording of statements. Care was taken to write the items so that they could be easily understandable and quickly answered by middle school students, in order to avoid confusion and to keep the questionnaire response time within a 20-minute time frame. The questionnaire was, unlike Yoneyama's (1979), originally written in Japanese and translated into English for purposes of this report. In an effort to convey a friendly stance with the respondents, I deliberately used a Japanese familiar "plain" form—one used in addressing peers and friends—rather than the standard form (referred to as *'desu-masu'* in Japanese) that is most commonly used in formal written correspondence when addressing persons *outside* of one's circle of

acquaintances. It was hoped that this would in some way affirm a 'personal' relationship that would allow students to feel more at ease about expressing their opinions than a more 'formal', impersonal approach might.

Six-point Likert scale. A majority of attitude questionnaires use odd-numbered Likert scales (often 7- or 5-point, and sometimes 3-point). Reid (1990, p.336) states that Japanese response to questionnaires is often subtle, rarely answering with "strongly agree" and "strongly disagree". In order to compel students to think about the statements, in addition to incorporating reverse-coded items and to randomizing item order, I chose an odd-numbered six-point scale to eliminate a neutral option, following examples by Clément *et al.* (1994), Burden (2002), Falout & Maruyama (2004), Nishino (2005) and Matsuoka & Evans (2006). Further, I felt that a range of six points rather than four, which would have sufficed for the same purpose, conveys the impression that I want students to consider responses to the items in terms of degree—even though the analysis thereof cannot technically be considered an interval measure of such degree.

2.6 Questionnaire distribution and data collection

The survey was administered at each school for about 20 minutes—exactly the same time frame as Yoneyama (1979)—of a standard 50-minute English class that the English teachers at each school graciously set aside for purposes of this study. After passing out the questionnaires, I provided (in Japanese) a verbal summary of the information on the first page of the questionnaire, which included the following statements in accordance with Macquarie University Ethics Committee guidelines:

- completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and was in no way related to student grades;
- as the survey was completely confidential, students should NOT record their names, and that no one but myself would see the actual completed

questionnaires;

- the aggregate results of the questionnaires would be made available to anyone who was interested; and
- if students were not interested in participating in the survey they would be free to work on other schoolwork during the 20-minute time allotted for the questionnaire.

The completed questionnaires were collected by me and put in a large envelope for each class, immediately after which I verified headcount (absent students) and gender data. Means (averages) and standard deviations for the questionnaires by school, grade and by total respondents were calculated in Microsoft Excel spreadsheets. A table of means and standard deviations for all items by school, grade, gender and total respondent population appears as Appendix B at the end of this report.

2.7 Analysis of data

I have not attempted statistical analysis of the figures for several reasons. First, I am not proficient in statistical analysis. Second, it is arguable whether scale points can be interpreted to represent human attitudes, and further, Likert data is, after all, ordinal rather than interval (Burns, 2000, p.560). In essence, Likert data can only indicate attitudinal polarity—that is, a positive, negative, or neutral position. As non-interval data, their applicability to treatment by parametric analyses is debatable. Despite this, many attitude surveys *do* often treat non-interval data, such as Likert data, as interval (*ibid.*, p.560) and draw conclusions from a variety of parametric tests. I have chosen to treat the data holistically, in terms of positive, negative, "more" positive, and "more" negative. Following examples in Yoneyama (1979), Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) and Ho (1998), I have presented the results of the questionnaire by grade (1 & 2), by school, by gender and by total student response. I have made only qualitative inferences and comparisons from these averages.

Chapter 3: Results & discussion

Tabulating the data from more than 200 survey forms was admittedly an arduous task. On the other hand, watching the figures emerge for each questionnaire item seemed a worthwhile reward. Most encouraging, however, was that the data indicate no overall negativity toward English among these students.

Following is a discussion of salient responses within each of the seven categories in the questionnaire. The six-point Likert scale used in the questionnaire assumes a neutral 3.5 mean, however, deviations from that mean have not been statistically identified. I have presented the results in 'raw,' by-category, by-item form in the hopes that readers of this report may draw their own conclusions in addition (or in contrast) to my analysis and commentary.

3.1 Category 1: Interest in extracurricular English

Table 4: Mean responses to Category 1: Interest in extracurricular English

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
4. I wish I could watch foreign (English) movies without subtitles or dubbing.	4.78	4.42	3.55	4.46	3.89	3.84	3.97	3.93	3.95
5. When I hear English songs (or songs with English in them), I wish I knew what they were saying.	5.00	5.42	4.09	4.92	4.58	4.80	4.62	4.82	4.72
12. If I had my family's permission, I would to go to an English conversation school (like GEOS, AEON, etc).	1.67	2.17	2.55	3.00	2.22	2.26	2.05	2.50	2.27
17. The most important thing about studying English is getting good grades. **(Reverse Coded)**	3.78	3.33	3.27	3.23	3.86	3.83	3.89	3.60	3.75
36. I'd like to learn English beyond what is taught in class and in the textbook.	3.33	2.92	4.09	3.62	3.70	3.83	3.43	3.99	3.70
37. While flipping through TV channels, if I happen upon an "English language" program, I watch it.	2.56	3.00	3.55	3.23	2.98	2.91	2.83	3.13	2.98

The positive response to Item 5 (an item I devised specifically for this group of students) is intriguing. The lyrics of Japanese pop music, especially as may appeal to the adolescent age group, are heavily peppered with English words and phrases. From a native speaker's perspective, these phrases are sometimes syntactically or semantically implausible or awkward. However, the fact that lyrics can be memorized and sung without being understood seems to call for a more neutral response to this item. The actual response—nearly the same for both boys and girls—suggests a distinct interest in the meanings of lyrics. This apparent interest in song-lyric English contrasts to a neutral response to Item 36, which suggests that students are specifically interested in song-lyric English, but may not be as generally interested in the English they encounter outside the classroom.

The response to Item 12 is also intriguing. 'Conversation schools', a popular pastime in Japan, feature small classes with lessons oriented toward developing communicative ability (particularly in listening and speaking) rather than the test-taking ability (almost wholly reading and writing) that dominates the Japanese middle school English syllabus. TV commercials for large corporate schools such as GEOS, NOVA and ECC run year-round, peaking especially during winter and summer holiday periods. The somewhat negative response to Item 12 suggests an aversion to learning English in a classroom setting that a 'conversation school' implies, regardless of its communicative orientation. It should be taken into consideration, however, that this potential aversion to conversation schools may also be related to the fact that they are costly and time-consuming. A routine commute from Marshfield to the nearest schools would require considerable effort. The nearest schools are about the same distance away as the nearest train stations. Further, the contrast of a negative Item 12 response with the positive Item 1 response in Category

3: *In the future, I want to be able to speak English well*, suggests a positive image of being able to speak English, but at the same time a noninterest in undertaking efforts to actualize this goal.

The relatively neutral response to Item 37 was similar to responses to a near-identical item in both Koizumi & Matsuo (1993, p.6) and Yoneyama (1979, p.129). Finding out which English-learning-oriented TV programs are of interest to students who answered this question positively might be helpful for designing classroom materials that prompt students to think about English outside the classroom. Considering the apparent interest in song-lyric English, however, soliciting which songs with English lyrics are popular among middle schoolers, as well as an analysis of the English in them, may be more popularly received.

3.2 Category 2: Interest in the international community

Table 5: Mean responses to Category 2: Interest in the international community

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
6. I'm interested in English-speaking countries.	3.44	3.75	3.45	3.85	3.62	4.16	3.73	3.95	3.84
7. English-speaking foreigners scare me. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.78	3.00	2.36	2.69	2.11	2.17	2.08	2.43	2.25
21. If I had my family's permission, I would go on an exchange program in a foreign country.	2.44	1.92	2.55	2.69	2.48	3.01	2.42	2.93	2.67
24. I'd like to live in an English-speaking country in the future.	2.89	2.17	2.55	3.00	2.78	3.30	2.93	2.98	2.96
35. If I were to meet a non-Japanese-speaking foreigner in Marshfield, I'd like to try talking in English even just a little.	4.33	4.08	4.36	4.08	3.92	4.10	3.84	4.27	4.05

Responses to this category suggest a fairly neutral attitude toward the idea of directly interacting with an international community. Responses to Items 21 and 24, which represent going overseas into an environment that carries an immediate *opportunity* and *need* to use English, were slightly negative. Conversely, responses to Item 35 as well as Item 13, Category 3: *I want to be able to talk in English to foreigners who can't speak Japanese*, were slightly positive. Where Yashima (2002) defines her concept of 'Approach/Avoidance Tendency' as "the tendency to approach or avoid non-Japanese within Japan" (p.60), these two slightly positive items, as well as the negative response to reverse-coded Item 7, suggest that students are not averse to interacting with an international community, but that they would rather do so on their own ground. Venturing overseas as an adolescent into an unfamiliar world of non-Japanese may be perceived as intimidating.

It must be remembered that, in reality, these students have extremely little direct contact with people and events that are non-Japanese. Although Marshfield is not significantly distant from more metropolitan areas, it is still a rural community, such that many (if not most) of these students have little contact with people and events outside the local Marshfield community. A one-day festival, sponsored by the Marshfield chapter of the Rotary Club (in whose planning and organization I was involved at the time of my appointment as an ALT), is held every year in June. The festival includes a series of activities and games based on a theme of 'international exchange.' The participants include a contingent of exchange students staying with local host families for a two-week program. These students come from a variety of countries: there are usually large representations from China, Vietnam and Korea, as well as the United States, Australia, Canada and several other countries. From what I have observed over four years, a considerable number of Marshfield students of all ages drop by to join in the activities, however, the focus is on 'international exchange' rather than 'communication in English'. Many of the visitors, in fact, have been conversant in Japanese.

Other than this festival, it is likely that Marshfield middle schoolers' exposure to the 'international community' is predominantly influenced, as Yashima (2002) proposes, by what they encounter through the media (p.57)—particularly what they see on TV. This includes news coverage, foreign movies (which are almost always dubbed into Japanese, although some TVs have a 'bilingual' language feature), and language learning programs for children. A number of popular TV personalities and comedians are English-speaking long-term foreign residents in Japan; most of them, however, are extremely fluent in Japanese and use it almost exclusively on TV.

For purposes of future studies, it may be helpful to ascertain to what extent TV influences student perceptions of the 'international community', both in Japan and outside Japan. Soliciting which TV programs around foreign themes are of interest to students, and an analysis of those programs' content, might be useful toward this goal.

3.3 Category 3: Perceived utility of English

Table 6: Mean responses to Category 3: Perceived utility of English

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
1. In the future, I want to be able to speak English well.	4.44	4.33	4.18	4.46	4.66	4.84	4.61	4.74	4.67
13. I want to be able to talk in English to foreigners who can't speak Japanese.	4.78	3.83	4.18	3.69	4.07	4.11	3.93	4.25	4.08
14. In the future, I want to have a job that involves using English.	2.89	2.33	3.18	3.00	2.97	3.01	2.78	3.15	2.96
15. I honestly think that I will not need English in my future. **(Reverse Coded)**	3.44	3.42	2.64	3.15	2.68	2.69	2.79	2.78	2.78
38. It will be a definite plus to have English ability when looking for a job in the future.	4.44	4.42	5.36	3.77	5.02	4.90	4.88	4.84	4.86

Responses in this category to Item 1, Item 38 and (reverse-coded) Item 15 suggest that students perceive the idea of having English ability in a generally positive light. This response resembles data for Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) similarly titled category as well as 'instrumental' items in Ho's (1998) survey, but contrasts somewhat to more neutral responses to 'instrumental' items in Yoneyama (1979). The positive response to Item 38 is interesting because the likelihood that these students will undertake employment that requires them to use English, or for which English certification would be regarded as a significant qualification, seems slight. As mentioned before, a majority of these students will not pursue higher education that would better qualify them to apply for jobs whose nature necessarily involves English.

The positive responses to both Item 1 and Item 38 suggest students have a positive *image* associated with being able speak English or to claim 'English ability' for job application purposes, even if they never have to. In contrast, the slightly negative response to Item 14 implies that these students may not be aspiring to such employment. Positive responses to items representing a general *image* of having ability or qualification (Item 1 and Item 38, as well as the negative response to reverse coded Item 15) contrast to lower responses to items that imply a need for realization of ability (Item 14, and Items 21 and 24 in Category 2). This contrast seems to illustrate a gap between attitudes toward the general *idea* of ability and attitudes toward goals that imply a *need* for actualization of ability (e.g. having a job that uses English or going overseas). As mentioned previously, the environment these students are in offers almost no direct experience with anything that could give them a more concrete idea of what, for example, having a job that uses English involves. A survey that could solicit *why* students want to be able to speak English, or *what kind* of English-related job (if any) they might like to have in the future may be useful in revealing what images (or stereotypes) their perceptions of English usefulness are based upon.

3.4 Category 4: Attitudes toward studying English

Table 7: Mean responses to Category 4: Attitudes toward studying English

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
9. Of the five main subjects (science, math, etc.), English is my weakest. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.89	2.50	3.45	3.08	2.63	2.61	2.95	2.43	2.69
16. If I didn't have to study English, I wouldn't. **(Reverse Coded)**	3.11	3.17	2.60	2.85	3.17	3.11	3.20	3.00	3.10
19. This is Japan. There's no need to study English so assiduously. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.78	3.25	2.36	2.31	2.72	2.57	2.78	2.52	2.65
23. To be frank, I have no interest in learning English. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.22	2.42	2.09	2.23	2.43	2.26	2.32	2.34	2.33
31. Even if English homework is dull, I stick to it until I finish.	4.56	4.42	5.00	4.85	5.01	4.41	4.59	4.85	4.72

Overall, responses to this category suggest a non-negative attitude toward the idea of 'studying' English. The negative response to (reverse-coded) Item 23, which was more neutral in Yoneyama (1979), and the slightly negative response to (reverse-coded) Item 16 seem to support this. Generally affirmative responses to Item 31 are similar to those obtained by Yoneyama (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo (1993). These responses contrast somewhat to the previously mentioned negative response to Item 12 in Category 1 regarding a desire to attend conversation schools.

Item 19, an item of my own creation that might have been appropriate to Yoneyama's (1979) 'ethnocentrism' category, was inserted into this survey based on sidelong comments I occasionally overhear from students complaining about English classroom tasks. The British students in Chambers' (1993) study who "find difficulty in seeing the point in learning other languages, when everyone seems to manage with

English" (p.14) could probably empathize. On the contrary, however, the response to this (reverse-coded) item is decidedly negative, which suggests that many students at least tentatively place value on the study of English, despite the fact that it is a requirement and that the way it is taught offers little in terms of communicative ability. It also suggests that these students do not harbor the feeling that they are being 'subjected' to English against their will. Pennycook (2001, p.82) refers to this concept of being subjected to foreign language study as 'linguistic imperialism.' According to Dörnyei & Csizér (2002), the study of Russian was compulsory at all levels of the school system for four decades in Hungary during the Soviet era, but was never favorably received (p.423, 425). It is interesting and perhaps encouraging to find that students in the present study do not generally perceive the study of English negatively, or that it is somehow being 'imposed' on them, despite that it is a mandatory subject.

3.5 Category 5: Personality (extroversion)

Table 8: Mean responses to Category 5: Personality (extroversion)

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
10. I get nervous in English class. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.89	2.42	2.09	1.46	2.14	2.15	1.99	2.31	2.15
29. During class, even if I don't understand, I try my best.	4.67	4.08	4.55	4.62	4.75	4.51	4.51	4.69	4.60
30. When I don't understand, I ask the teacher and/or other students questions.	4.11	4.17	4.45	3.62	4.04	3.95	4.01	4.02	4.01
32. To be honest, I'm a shy person. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.44	3.42	3.55	4.00	3.60	3.81	3.23	4.09	3.65
33. I like to volunteer answers to questions (and speak in class), regardless of whether I'm right or wrong.	3.89	3.25	3.82	3.38	3.09	2.93	3.22	3.02	3.12
34. Making mistakes and being wrong is very embarrassing for me. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.56	2.83	2.36	3.23	3.34	3.40	3.04	3.46	3.25

Responses to items in this category are relatively neutral, reflecting similarly neutral responses to nearly identical items in Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) and Yoneyama (1979). The exceptions are Item 10 and Item 29. The considerably negative response to (reverse-coded) Item 10 seems to indicate that students regard their language classroom as a non-threatening environment. Generally this has positive implications for learning. However, whereas assessments of language classroom anxiety are considered a factor of successful language learning, it must be remembered that these classrooms are not oriented toward 'communicative' ability. Listening and speaking activities, for example, are largely limited to listening comprehension practice for test items, or oral recitation of written passages. Thus the

response to Item 10, although it has positive implications for the Gardnerian construct of 'attitudes toward the learning situation' (MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003, p.594; also see Figure 1 and Table 1 in Chapter 1 above), cannot be assumed to indicate it is an environment that potentially fosters communicative ability.

Considering the relatively neutral response to items 30-34, the positive response to Item 29 (as well as Category 4 Item 31: *Even if English homework is dull, I stick to it until I finish*) suggests a generally self-confident approach to classroom activities and work. On the other hand, these positive responses could also be attributed to 'self-flattery' motives (Hashimoto, 2002, p.35).

3.6 Category 6: Parental influence

Table 9: Mean responses to Category 6: Parental influence

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
25. My parents think studying English is important.	3.67	2.92	4.91	3.00	3.74	3.77	3.73	3.71	3.72
26. My parents are interested in English.	3.00	2.50	2.91	2.77	2.94	2.86	2.70	3.06	2.88
27. My parents will readily buy me any English study materials I want.	2.56	1.75	4.18	3.15	3.26	2.77	2.85	3.16	3.00
28. My parents say that being able to speak English is important for my future.	4.00	2.92	4.27	2.77	3.41	2.99	3.21	3.29	3.25

Like Category 5 described above, Category 6 was used by both Yoneyama (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) to compare English achievement scores, a goal which the present study did not seek. Responses in this category are, as with Category 5 above, relatively neutral, slightly lower than responses to similar items in both Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) and Yoneyama (1979). This may be attributed to the fact that the academic level and social context (metropolitan versus rural) of Marshfield schools compared with those in the two previous studies differ. It should be noted that Yoneyama's (1979) reason for including this category was to compare results with student achievement scores, as well as to identify a parental encouragement trend between grades. His conclusion for 'ascending results' between grade levels for an item nearly identical to Item 27 above was that, as time passes, parents are "more willing to buy necessary things for the use of the subjects' study" (p.131). However, the somewhat negative response in the present study, as compared to Yoneyama's (1979) positive response, could be interpreted as a subjective judgment

based on a common adolescent complaint that 'my parents don't buy me what I want.' There is also the possibility that Hokkaido's depressed economy would influence this opinion among students. The fact remains that the textbooks and class materials for public middle school English classrooms are decided by the schools and/or made by the teachers. Purchasing anything beyond that would be a student's personal choice. Considering the responses to items mentioned above with regard to 'actualizing' English ability, this choice seems a remote one.

It should be kept in mind that these items solicited students' opinions of their parents' opinions. A number of students (24 total) made the effort to write comments on the questionnaires under these items that they "didn't know" or "had no idea". This seems an honest response, which suggests that the numeric data for these items may be 'guesses.' It seems to suggest as well, however, that many students have never heard their parents express directly that "English is important," and/or that they have never asked their parents to buy them English study materials. Items such as these may be better served by a multiple choice scale with a definite 'I don't know' option, rather than an ordinal Likert scale. It occurs, too, that the nature of the relationship between parents and students with respect to attitudes toward learning would in itself be a useful separate study.

3.7 Category 7: Attitudes toward English class

Table 10: Mean responses to Category 7: Attitudes toward English class

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
8. The English textbook we use is hopelessly confusing. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.89	3.50	2.91	2.92	2.65	3.19	3.04	2.85	2.95
11. I'm looking forward to studying English in high school.	2.89	2.50	3.27	3.08	3.15	3.00	2.95	3.15	3.05
20. I find at least some parts of the English textbook and handouts interesting.	4.67	4.08	4.36	4.69	4.00	3.82	4.14	3.89	4.02
22. In general, I like English class.	4.33	3.83	4.09	4.23	4.14	4.11	4.05	4.20	4.13

Responses for all four items in this significantly abridged representation of the Gardnerian construct 'attitudes toward the L2 classroom' do not stray far from the neutral 3.5 mean, which at very least indicates that most students do not have a negative view of their classroom English studies. This non-negativity runs contrary to the expectation of a more negative response that the descriptions of 'bored students' in Chambers (1994, p.13) and Kuramoto, (2002, p.45) portray.

Kuramoto's (2002) study investigated interest in classroom tasks—which are 'most interesting' and 'most boring'—among her own Japanese high school students. A similar investigation among the students in the present study would, among other avenues I have suggested herein, ostensibly prove the most practical for purposes of improving 'motivation' among students in the teacher-defined sense of the term. In my situation as an ALT, however, such an investigation was hindered by a potential conflict of interest: I was not, as Kuramoto (2002) was, in charge of my own classes. Thus it is possible that, however well intended, attempts at investigating (or even

suggestions of desire to investigate) interest levels in classroom tasks from my position as an 'assistant' teacher—which is considered subordinate to the main Japanese teacher of English (Tajino & Walker, 1998, p.114)—may have been perceived as an affront to the main teachers' teaching styles. This is further explored in Chapter 4 below. More feasible would be a critical analysis of the mandatory textbooks, even though the results would unlikely affect any change. More fruitful but more difficult might be an investigation of how material in these textbooks could be more creatively taught, or even supplanted by similar, perhaps less artificial material that could potentially generate more student interest and at the same time prepare them for discrete-point form-focused tests.

Chapter 4: Conclusions

4.1 Key findings

Overall non-negative attitudes. The most important conclusion that can be drawn from the above results is that, in an L2 learning environment which a) does not foster communicative ability in the L2, b) does not imply any need or even opportunity to use the L2 for communicative purposes, and c) requires its study, attitudes toward the L2 and the people it represents (or is perceived to represent) do not lean toward the negative. It does not seem unreasonable to speculate that many students would be averse to having to study a language they will likely never use, and in a way that doesn't train them to use it for much more than taking tests. However, although not statistically represented here, the preliminary finding of this study aligns with Koizumi & Matsuo's (1993) statement that claims of "low" motivation (p.1) or negative attitudes among Japanese middle school students—even in a rural environment such as Marshfield—are empirically unfounded. The results also reflect an unexpected positive (or at very least, non-negative) attitude toward language learning, as similarly revealed in Ho's (1998) study.

Homogeneity of responses. Yoneyama's (1979) comparison of responses from three grade levels revealed a "high degree of homogeneity" (p.133). Results for the present study display the same trait. Aside from occasional variances (see for example Category 6, Item 27, 1.75 vs. 4.18), there are no significant differences in responses between grades or schools. Responses between genders are similarly homogenous. It is notable, however, that responses from girls were slightly more positive than boys. In other words, girls showed slightly more positive attitudes than boys toward learning English and potentially using it for communication. This trend is interesting in light of MacIntyre, Baker, Clément & Donovan's (2002) finding that

boys tend to be more apprehensive of communication than girls (cited in MacIntyre *et al.*, 2003, p.592). In the present study, boys provided lower responses to items that imply an idea of communication, or of learning English in order to achieve communication. The exception to this trend is Category 5: *Personality*: boys were slightly more willing to rank themselves as extroverted.

It would have been preferable to include in this survey the third-year students (ninth graders) who graduated before the questionnaire could be administered. The third year of Japanese middle school is largely devoted to study and preparation for a number of aptitude and achievement tests whose scores determine which high school the students may apply to. By the end of the school year in March, many third-year students appear mentally exasperated. It could be speculated, therefore, that third-graders' attitudes toward English (or any other subject, for that matter) may be generally more negative than other grades. On the other hand, the homogeneity between grades observed by Yoneyama (1979) and the similar homogenous results of the present study seem to suggest third-grader negativity may not be the case.

4.2 Limitations of this study

Limitations inherent in self-report-based surveys. Humans will respond to questionnaires in a human way. The assumption is that most people will make a good-faith effort to respond as honestly as they can; however, there is a chance that some items, no matter how well worded, will skew the results by prompting some respondents to 'flatter themselves', or to attempt to 'appease' what they may perceive as an unseen authority behind the questionnaire (Hashimoto, 2002, p.35). An example in this questionnaire is Item 30 in Category 5: *When I don't understand, I ask the teacher and/or other students questions.* It may seem to participants that a

positive response to this item may be regarded as 'appropriate to the expectation of the researcher.'

Another consideration is that questionnaire items can have meaning for more than one category (Williams & Burden, 1997, p.124). An example in this study is Item 13, Category 3: *I want to be able to talk in English to foreigners who can't speak Japanese.* This item primarily represents a utilitarian 'goal' for learning English, but it also has implications for interest in an international community. This study did not, like Yoneyama (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo (1993), draw comparisons or conclusions using indices derived from sums of item means. In future studies that employ such analyses, however, it would be beneficial to minimize items that can have meaning for more than one category.

Cultural differences and questionnaire response. There are cultural differences that must be taken into consideration when applying items from a questionnaire oriented toward respondents of one culture to those of another culture. A possible example in this survey has been the positive response to 'shyness' items in the *Personality (extroversion)* category. Japanese culture tends to value self-effacing humility, such that one might be 'flattering oneself' to claim being humble (non-outspoken or non-assertive). 'Extroversion' may carry negative connotations in a Japanese context, such that claiming to 'like' volunteering answers in class (Item 33) may be considered inappropriate to the Japanese cultural concept of 'good' student behavior (Nozaki, 1993, p.28). A future study may do well to reconsider these cultural factors, and to better account for 'personality' with respect to Japanese classroom dynamics and behavior.

Questionnaire administration constraints. Dörnyei & Csizér (2002) comment that a comprehensive measure of motivation requires a long and elaborate

instrument (p.428), such as the 130-item AMTB. In many cases the administration of long, elaborate surveys is simply not feasible. This survey, a mere 38 items, was allotted an average of 20 minutes for response time. On the other hand, even if time permitted a more comprehensive survey instrument, it may have just as well produced skewed results, as middle school students may understandably not, without a more appealing incentive than broadening the scope of motivational research, put a reasonably good-faith effort into completing a long questionnaire. In any event, as evidenced by a number of further-study suggestions I have provided above, attitudes for each part of the questionnaire used herein deserve to be explored in much greater detail.

Participant-researcher conflicts of interest. The opportunity to execute a survey created by my employment position was mitigated by my status as an assistant teacher. These students' exposure to English is predominantly through the classroom and the Japanese English teacher; therefore, a close examination of their attitudes toward these two elements seems essential to an analysis of student attitudes in this type of learning context. Indeed, the AMTB allots 25 semantic-differential items each to "L2 Classroom Attitudes" and "L2 Teacher Attitudes". However, as an assistant, I wished to respect the position of the main Japanese teachers with whom I work. Sufficient measures were taken to secure the anonymity of the questionnaire. However, as a condition to obtaining permission to conduct the study I showed a draft of the questionnaire to the teachers and also offered to make the results available (in the aggregate) to any involved and interested parties: students, teachers or any other staff. Therefore, I deliberately avoided including any items which may have potentially solicited teacher criticism, or which could have been construed as injurious to teacher reputation.

Another conflict that arises when researchers have a personal relationship with their subjects is one of potential bias. As discussed previously, the students' contact with native English speakers (or anyone foreign) is extremely limited. My family (wife, who is Japanese, and our daughter, age 3) was one of only two families with foreign members living in the Marshfield area at the time of this study. It is therefore conceivable that my own regular presence in the classrooms has considerable impact on students' perceptions of 'native speakers of English,' and perhaps on their overall attitudes toward English as well. As the person administering the survey, however, I am obliged to maintain as much impartiality as possible. Thus in order to avoid 'Hawthorne' or 'halo' effects in the results (Brown, 1988, p.89; Burns, 2000, p.149), I did not include questionnaire items that solicit student attitudes toward myself. Future studies that include a closer examination of student attitudes toward teachers would benefit, therefore, if the survey administrator had little or no personal relationship with any of the subjects.

4.3 Further research avenues

Need for a better model. This has been a preliminary study, hybridizing constructs from various past studies sources into a questionnaire that as yet lacks a model to represent, as the AMTB does with integrative motive, or as Yashima's (2002) questionnaire reflects her Japanese-EFL WTC model. For purposes of the educational setting that Japanese middle school represents, Yashima's (2002) efforts to construct a new model that specifically focuses on the Japanese EFL situation is, I believe, a big step in the right direction. An extension of this model that can account for the educational situation of EFL young adult learners, whose pragmatic goals such as widening career opportunities or getting a good job are not as immediate as adult learners (Clément *et al.*, 1994, p.432), would be a fruitful endeavor. Further,

although a treatment of the concepts can be avoided, the terms *integrativeness* and *instrumentality* cannot ultimately be ignored if a better model or a better survey is to be devised with respect to this specific group of learners. Once such a model has been established, a refined questionnaire that operationalizes its constructs can follow.

Longitudinal studies. Motivation is not a "static mental or emotional state" (Dörnyei, 1998, p.118), but instead a "dynamically evolving and changing entity, associated with an ongoing process in time" (Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998, p.44). Certainly, therefore, attitudes toward English and learning English can change over time. The longitudinal approach of Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) was a good improvement on Yoneyama's (1979) cross-sectional survey, which assumes static attitudes in its comparative treatment of grade levels. A logical follow-up to Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) would be a longitudinal study and comparison of motivational trends between all three middle school grade levels. Such an effort would, however, require considerable cooperation on the part of schools.

Achievement score comparison. Yoneyama (1979) and Koizumi & Matsuo (1993) both draw comparisons of attitude responses to English achievement scores. Such comparisons, where feasible, would be useful in further examining the connection between attitude and achievement.

Student comments. Below each item in the questionnaire was a blank comment line for students to record additional comments. During the administration of the questionnaire, I observed students putting considerable effort into filling in the comment lines, even though it was made very clear that they were not expected to write anything at all. This effort seems to suggest that many students have opinions they want to offer. Due to the 20-minute time constraint, however, comments tended to be unevenly distributed toward the beginning of the questionnaire; therefore, a

discussion of these comments was not included in this report. In future studies where more time is available for questionnaire response, soliciting student comments may offer valuable qualitative insights into student attitudes that Likert figures cannot capture.

4.4 Concluding remarks

Yashima (2002) rightly observes that "a careful consideration of what it means to learn a language in a particular context is necessary before applying a model [of motivation] developed in a different context" (p.62). Her questionnaire and the WTC model she adapted specifically for the Japanese EFL context are promising efforts toward this goal. 'Perceptions' of being able to communicate are as important as 'actual' communicative ability (McCroskey & Richmond, 1991, p.27) in a learning context that offers little contact with target-language speakers, and little need or opportunity to use the target language for communication.

The present study represents a call for re-evaluation of the way motivation is measured not only within the larger Japanese EFL context but within specific learner groups, as the factors that influence the attitudes of different groups, even within the same Japanese EFL context, are not necessarily the same. Identifying which factors influence attitudes among the Japanese middle school learner group is challenging. By and large, all Japanese students live in a social context that offers comparatively little opportunity or need to use the language outside the classroom. Their classroom situation, however, differs from that of their more studied college counterparts in that they are compulsorily exposed to a highly centralized, structural, non-communicative test-preparation-oriented syllabus that endows them with little communicative ability.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this report, there is a persistent lack of studies that investigate motivation and attitudes among students in this specific type of learning situation. Much more study is needed before we can understand the particular affective factors that influence the attitudes of the learner group that Japanese middle school students represent.

Joel P. Rian, May 2007, Hokkaido, Japan

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Appendix A:
Questionnaire items with original Japanese

Interest in extracurricular English

４．字幕スーパーや吹き替えなしで英語の映画が見られればいいなぁ。
I wish I could watch foreign (English) movies without subtitles or dubbing.
５．英語が入った歌を聴くと、どういう意味か何を言っているか知りたい。
When I hear English songs (or songs with English in them), I wish I knew what they were saying.
１２．家族の許可を得たら、ＧＥＯＳ、ＡＥＯＮなどの英会話スクールに通いたい。
If I had my family's permission, I would want to go to an English conversation school (like GEOS, AEON, etc).
１７．英語を勉強する事について、試験で良い点数が取れる事が第一。
The most important thing about studying English is getting good grades. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
３６．英語の授業や教科書以外の英語を学びたい。
I'd like to learn English beyond what is taught in class and in the textbook.
３７．テレビチャンネルを変えながら、偶然に「英語」の番組が出たら、つい見ちゃう。
While flipping through TV channels, if I happen upon an "English language" program, I watch it.

Interest in the international community (international posture)

６．英語を使う外国に興味ある。
I'm interested in English-speaking countries.
７．英語を話す外国人が怖い。
English-speaking foreigners scare me. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
２１．家族の許可を得たら、英語を使う国に留学したい。
If I had my family's permission, I would go on an exchange program in a foreign country.
２４．将来、英語が使われる国（アメリカ、イギリス、オーストラリアなど）に住みたい。
I'd like to live in an English-speaking country in the future.
３５．もし英語しか話せない外国人が長沼で出会ったら、少しでも英語でしゃべってみたい。
If I were to meet a non-Japanese-speaking foreigner in Marshfield, I'd like to try talking in English even just a little.

Perceived utility of English

１．将来、英語がうまく話せるようになりたい。
In the future, I want to be able to speak English well.
１３．日本語が話せない外国人と英会話ができるようになりたい。
I want to be able to talk in English to foreigners who can't speak Japanese.
１４．将来、英語を使える仕事をしたい。
In the future, I want to have a job that involves using English.
１５．自分の将来には、英語は必要ないと思う。
I honestly think that I will not need English in my future. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
３８．英語がうまく出来れば、将来仕事を探す時には絶対プラスになる。
It will be a definite plus to have English ability when looking for a job in the future.

Attitudes toward studying English

９．五科目（理科、数学など）の中で、英語が一番苦手。
Of the five main subjects (science, math, etc.), English is my weakest. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
１６．英語の勉強は必要でなかったら、しない。
If I didn't have to study English, I wouldn't. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
１９．日本では日本語で結構でしょう。こんな必死に英語を勉強するのは必要ない。
This is Japan. There's no need to study English so assiduously. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
２３．はっきりに言うと、英語には全く興味ない。
To be frank, I have no interest in learning English. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
３１．英語の宿題が退屈といっても、終わらせるまで頑張ってやる。
Even if English homework is dull, I stick to it until I finish.

Personality (extroversion)

１０．英語の授業中、緊張する。
I get nervous in English class.
２９．授業中、先生の言うことをちゃんと分からなくても、頑張ってやる事はやる。
During class, even if I don't understand, I try my best.
３０．授業内容が分からない時、先生にも他の生徒にも質問する。
When I don't understand, I ask the teacher and/or other students questions.
３２．正直に言うと、私は恥ずかしがり屋です。
To be honest, I'm a shy person. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
３３．授業中、答えが正しいか正しくないかを問わず、声で先生の質問に答えるのが好き。
I like to volunteer answers to questions (and speak in class), regardless of whether I'm right or wrong.
３４．「間違い」や「不正解」をしてしまう事は、自分にとって余りにも恥ずかしい事です。
Making mistakes and being wrong is very embarrassing for me. **(REVERSE-CODE)**

Parental influence

２５．私の親は英語の勉強が大切だと思っている。
My parents think studying English is important.
２６．私の親は英語に興味を持っている。
My parents are interested in English.
２７．英語の勉強の為、私の親は教材（本、ＣＤ、「ＤＳ英語漬づけ」など）を喜んで買ってくれる。
My parents will readily buy me any English study materials I want.
２８．私の親は、私の将来の為、英語が話せる事が大事だと言っています。
My parents say that being able to speak English is important for my future.

Attitudes toward English class

８．英語の教科書は難しくてわけが分からない。
The English textbook we use is hopelessly confusing. **(REVERSE-CODE)**
１１．高校で英語の勉強を楽しみにしている。
I'm looking forward to studying English in high school.
２０．授業で使う英語の教材（教科書など）はある程度面白いと思う。
I find at least some parts of the English textbook and handouts interesting.
２２．全体的に言うと、英語の授業が好き。
In general, I like English class.
ライアン先生はある程度日本語が話せるけど、もっと英語を使って欲しい。

Appendix B:

Complete table of questionnaire responses with standard deviations (in parentheses)

Category 1: Interest in extracurricular English

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
4. I wish I could watch foreign (English) movies without subtitles or dubbing.	4.78	4.42	3.55	4.46	3.89	3.84	3.97 (1.74)	3.93 (1.50)	3.95 (1.62)
5. When I hear English songs (or songs with English in them), I wish I knew what they were saying.	5.00	5.42	4.09	4.92	4.58	4.80	4.62 (1.33)	4.82 (1.13)	4.72 (1.23)
12. If I had my family's permission, I would to go to an English conversation school (like GEOS, AEON, etc).	1.67	2.17	2.55	3.00	2.22	2.26	2.05 (1.05)	2.50 (1.43)	2.27 (1.27)
17. The most important thing about studying English is getting good grades. **(Reverse Coded)**	3.78	3.33	3.27	3.23	3.86	3.83	3.89 (1.43)	3.60 (1.31)	3.75 (1.38)
36. I'd like to learn English beyond what is taught in class and in the textbook.	3.33	2.92	4.09	3.62	3.70	3.83	3.43 (1.39)	3.99 (1.61)	3.70 (1.52)
37. While flipping through TV channels, if I happen upon an "English language" program, I watch it.	2.56	3.00	3.55	3.23	2.98	2.91	2.83 (1.39)	3.13 (1.67)	2.98 (1.54)

Category 2: Interest in the international community

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
6. I'm interested in English-speaking countries.	3.44	3.75	3.45	3.85	3.62	4.16	3.73 (1.37)	3.95 (1.33)	3.84 (1.35)
7. English-speaking foreigners scare me. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.78	3.00	2.36	2.69	2.11	2.17	2.08 (1.24)	2.43 (1.47)	2.25 (1.37)
21. If I had my family's permission, I would go on an exchange program in a foreign country.	2.44	1.92	2.55	2.69	2.48	3.01	2.42 (1.34)	2.93 (1.68)	2.67 (1.54)
24. I'd like to live in an English-speaking country in the future.	2.89	2.17	2.55	3.00	2.78	3.30	2.93 (1.60)	2.98 (1.71)	2.96 (1.65)
35. If I were to meet a non-Japanese-speaking foreigner in Marshfield, I'd like to try talking in English even just a little.	4.33	4.08	4.36	4.08	3.92	4.10	3.84 (1.48)	4.27 (1.46)	4.05 (1.49)

Category 3: Perceived utility of English

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
1. In the future, I want to be able to speak English well.	4.44	4.33	4.18	4.46	4.66	4.84	4.61 (1.25)	4.74 (1.17)	4.67 (1.21)
13. I want to be able to talk in English to foreigners who can't speak Japanese.	4.78	3.83	4.18	3.69	4.07	4.11	3.93 (1.47)	4.25 (1.40)	4.08 (1.44)
14. In the future, I want to have a job that involves using English.	2.89	2.33	3.18	3.00	2.97	3.01	2.78 (1.43)	3.15 (1.49)	2.96 (1.47)
15. I honestly think that I will not need English in my future. **(Reverse Coded)**	3.44	3.42	2.64	3.15	2.68	2.69	2.79 (1.37)	2.78 (1.34)	2.78 (1.35)
38. It will be a definite plus to have English ability when looking for a job in the future.	4.44	4.42	5.36	3.77	5.02	4.90	4.88 (1.23)	4.84 (1.15)	4.86 (1.19)

Category 4: Attitudes toward studying English

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
9. Of the five main subjects (science, math, etc.), English is my weakest. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.89	2.50	3.45	3.08	2.63	2.61	2.95 (1.71)	2.43 (1.51)	2.69 (1.63)
16. If I didn't have to study English, I wouldn't. **(Reverse Coded)**	3.11	3.17	2.60	2.85	3.17	3.11	3.20 (1.65)	3.00 (1.52)	3.10 (1.59)
19. This is Japan. There's no need to study English so assiduously. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.78	3.25	2.36	2.31	2.72	2.57	2.78 (1.28)	2.52 (1.33)	2.65 (1.31)
23. To be frank, I have no interest in learning English. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.22	2.42	2.09	2.23	2.43	2.26	2.32 (1.27)	2.34 (1.23)	2.33 (1.24)
31. Even if English homework is dull, I stick to it until I finish.	4.56	4.42	5.00	4.85	5.01	4.41	4.59 (1.24)	4.85 (1.13)	4.72 (1.19)

Category 5: Personality (extroversion)

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
10. I get nervous in English class. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.89	2.42	2.09	1.46	2.14	2.15	1.99 (1.23)	2.31 (1.41)	2.15 (1.33)
29. During class, even if I don't understand, I try my best.	4.67	4.08	4.55	4.62	4.75	4.51	4.51 (1.04)	4.69 (1.06)	4.60 (1.05)
30. When I don't understand, I ask the teacher and/or other students questions.	4.11	4.17	4.45	3.62	4.04	3.95	4.01 (1.42)	4.02 (1.43)	4.01 (1.43)
32. To be honest, I'm a shy person. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.44	3.42	3.55	4.00	3.60	3.81	3.23 (1.53)	4.09 (1.51)	3.65 (1.58)
33. I like to volunteer answers to questions (and speak in class), regardless of whether I'm right or wrong.	3.89	3.25	3.82	3.38	3.09	2.93	3.22 (1.42)	3.02 (1.34)	3.12 (1.38)
34. Making mistakes and being wrong is very embarrassing for me. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.56	2.83	2.36	3.23	3.34	3.40	3.04 (1.50)	3.46 (1.44)	3.25 (1.48)

Category 6: Parental influence

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
25. My parents think studying English is important.	3.67	2.92	4.91	3.00	3.74	3.77	3.73 (1.47)	3.71 (1.44)	3.72 (1.45)
26. My parents are interested in English.	3.00	2.50	2.91	2.77	2.94	2.86	2.70 (1.20)	3.06 (1.47)	2.88 (1.35)
27. My parents will readily buy me any English study materials I want.	2.56	1.75	4.18	3.15	3.26	2.77	2.85 (1.67)	3.16 (1.62)	3.00 (1.65)
28. My parents say that being able to speak English is important for my future.	4.00	2.92	4.27	2.77	3.41	2.99	3.21 (1.60)	3.29 (1.64)	3.25 (1.62)

Category 7: Attitudes toward English class

Survey item (with original questionnaire number)	North		South		Central		Total boys N=114	Total girls N=111	Total students N=225
	Gr. 1 N=9	Gr. 2 N=12	Gr. 1 N=11	Gr. 2 N=13	Gr. 1 N=92	Gr. 2 N=88			
8. The English textbook we use is hopelessly confusing. **(Reverse Coded)**	2.89	3.50	2.91	2.92	2.65	3.19	3.04 (1.37)	2.85 (1.24)	2.95 (1.31)
11. I'm looking forward to studying English in high school.	2.89	2.50	3.27	3.08	3.15	3.00	2.95 (1.25)	3.15 (1.52)	3.05 (1.39)
20. I find at least some parts of the English textbook and handouts interesting.	4.67	4.08	4.36	4.69	4.00	3.82	4.14 (1.24)	3.89 (1.27)	4.02 (1.26)
22. In general, I like English class.	4.33	3.83	4.09	4.23	4.14	4.11	4.05 (1.32)	4.20 (1.39)	4.13 (1.35)