Types of Motivation in Classroom Foreign Language Learning: A Step toward a Better Understanding and More Precise Analysis of Affective Variables*

Minato Ando

This study preliminarily explores distinctive types of motivation in foreign language learning caused by different skills in the target language. The Skill-Specific Motivation Test（SSMT）, consisting of eighteen items, was created and administered to 91 students of Italian as a foreign language at a major northeastern university in the United States. A factor analysis showed that there were five factors: General Motivation, Confidence in Italian, Translation Motivation, Motivation for Lessons Exclusively in Italian, and Pair/Group Work Motivation. Among these factors, three sets of items included in General Motivation, Confidence in Italian and Translation Motivation were found to be reliable subscales of the SSMT.

The role of affective variables in second language acquisition, such as motivation and anxiety, has been a topic of controversy among, and of interest to, many researchers. These two affective variables are often assumed to have opposite effects. The effects of motivation, if any, have always been assumed to be positive（e.g., Gardner, 1985; Gardner, Moorcroft ＆ MacIntyre, 1987; Gardner, Smythe

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& Brunet, 1977; Gardner, Smythe & Clément, 1979; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003, etc.), while traditionally, anxiety has been associated with negative effects (e.g., Aida, 1994; Cheng, Horwitz & Schallert, 1999; Gardner & Smythe, 1975; Gardner, Smythe & Brunet, 1977; Gardner, Smythe & Clément, 1979; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991a, 1991b; Phillips, 1992; Rodriguez, 1995; Young, 1986, etc.). It should be noted, however, that some researchers have pointed out that anxiety could have positive effects on performance if it leads to increasing learners' effort and/or concentration on the task at hand (e.g., Alpert & Haber, 1960; Backman, 1976; Easterbrook, 1959; Eysenck, 1979; Kleinmann, 1977; MacIntyre, 1995b; Scovel, 1978; Yerkes & Dodson, 1908, cited in Egeth, 1994, etc.).

The causal effects of affective variables have been difficult to demonstrate consistently with clear evidence due to several confounding factors. First, previous research suggests that ability factors seem to have a greater power in predicting achievement (Ganschow, Sparks, Anderson, Javorshy, Skinner & Patton, 1994; MacIntyre, 1995a, 1995b; Philips, 1992; Sparks & Ganschow, 1995; Young, 1986). The results of these studies indicate the direction in which the quality of the learners' performance (and/or learning abilities) determines the quality of affective variables (e.g., successful performance causing low anxiety or high motivation, and vice versa), rather than affective variables causing the observed performance. This may partially explain, for example, cases where some slow learners with poor performance may have a keen interest in language learning (i.e., high motivation), still enjoying learning at their own pace (i.e., low anxiety), while the expected pattern of causal effects of affective variables would predict successful performance. Secondly, the definitions of affective variables are often inconsistent (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003; Young, 1993). If the predictive power of ability factors is much greater than that of affective variables, research on the causal effects of affective

variables should be an investigation of the remaining portion of variance with ability factors controlled for. It will then be mandatory that the affective variable under question be clearly and appropriately defined so that it may best suit the achievement measure. For example, the use of a general language motivation/anxiety test battery, which may include items for listening and speaking motivation/anxiety, would obscure the results of research into the direct relation between writing motivation/anxiety and achievement in writing. In that case, obviously, a writing motivation/anxiety test should be utilized. For this reason, researchers of language anxiety have been attempting to define the variable of interest clearly, creating skill-specific anxiety measures, such as those for reading anxiety （Saito, Horwitz & Garza, 1999） and writing anxiety （Cheng, et al., 1999）. However, research on motivation, such as studies conducted by Gardner and his associates （e.g., Gardner, 1985; Gardner, et al., 1977, 1979, 1987; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003, etc.）, has employed rather general measures. For instance, the Attitude//Motivation Test Battery （AMTB）, developed by Gardner （1985）, consists of such subscales as attitudes toward the learning situation, integrativeness, motivation, and integrative versus instrumental orientations, all of which consist of multiple subtests. None of these subscales are designed for measuring skill-specific motivation unlike current language anxiety measures. If the best attempts are to be made at investigation of the truly direct relation between motivation and foreign language achievement, the development of skill-specific motivation measures seems indispensable.

Purpose of the study

This study preliminarily investigates to what extent foreign language students' motivation may vary and be distinctively defined by different learning tasks involved in the acquisition of the four skills and knowledge of grammar, as well as in

classroom activities for practicing each area. It can be assumed that the levels of foreign language students' motivation may differ, depending on specific skills of the language to be learned for the following reasons:

a）students may be better at learning one skill than another, which may result in different levels of confidence, determining the levels of motivation;

b）students' orientation（i.e., integrative or instrumental）may vary and possibly lead to different levels of motivation in learning specific skills（e.g., foreign language students with integrative orientation possibly having higher motivation on skills for spoken language than those for written language）;

c）students' motivation on activities focused on learning and practicing specific skills may reflect their motivation on the respective skills（e.g., foreign language students who like communicative activities may not like reading activities）.

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which these assumptions are supported, by creating a foreign language motivation test scale, which is able to measure students' motivation for each of the four skills and knowledge of grammar separately. The specific hypothesis formulated in this study is that foreign language students' levels of motivation on the four skills and knowledge of grammar is different and can be subcategorized accordingly.

Method

Participants

The subjects in this study were 91 college students studying Italian as a foreign language at a major northeastern university in the United States in the Fall of 2004. There were 34 males and 58 females（10 freshmen, 20 sophomores, 33 juniors, 27

seniors, and 1 graduate student). 53 students were in Italian 101, 27 in 102, and 11 in 203. 55 students were required to take these courses, while 38 students were not. Their ages ranged from 17 to 43, with a mean of 20.74.

Material

The Skill-Specific Motivation Test (SSMT) was created and prepared in the form of a questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire was composed of several questions to obtain the subjects' background information, followed by the SSMT. The SSMT consisted of 18 items, which were divided into three sections. Section 1 (8 items) was designed as an activity-specific motivation section. This section inquired after the extent to which the students wished to work on the following activities in their Italian courses: 1) Translation into Italian; 2) Translation into English; 3) Conversation; 4) Listening; 5) Pronunciation; 6) Speech; 7) Pair or group activities; 8) Lessons exclusively in Italian. The alternatives ranged from: A = Never; B = Not much; C = No preference; D = Some; E = A lot. Section 2 (5 items) referred to the subjects' levels of confidence in the four skills and knowledge of grammar, each of which had alternatives ranging from: A = No confidence; B = Not much confidence; C = I don't know; D = Some confidence; E = I am confident. Section 3 (5 items) explored the subjects' willingness to improve their four skills and to increase their knowledge of Italian grammar, with the same alternatives as those for Section 1, ranging from "A = Never" to "E = A lot." For all items, the students' response on A was entered with a numerical value of 1, B with 2, C with 3, D with 4, and E with 5.

Procedures

The SSMT was anonymously administered between the sixth and the ninth

week of the subjects' Italian courses in Fall 2004.　The researcher visited each class, explained the purpose of the research, and requested the students' cooperation.　The questionnaires were prepared in separate envelopes and distributed among the students.　The subjects were asked to take the questionnaire out, fill it out, put it back in the envelope, and place it on the teacher's desk when they were finished. In each class, the student who returned it last was asked to shuffle all the returned envelopes before the researcher took them and left the classroom.

　　The students' responses to the SSMT were analyzed with a factor analysis and scale analyses.　In the factor analysis, a principal component analysis was performed with an eigenvalue greater than one, and varimax orthogonal rotation was used with a cutoff of factor loading of .50.　Scale analysis was performed on the extracted factors, regarding them as subscales of the SSMT.　The internal reliability of the subscales, which consisted of items loading on one of the extracted factors with a factor loading of .50 or greater, were computed, and a cutoff of corrected item-total correlation of .50 was used.　All analyses in this study were performed with SPSS.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

　　The results of the descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 1, in which all the percentages of students' responses, as well as the standard deviations and mean scores for the SSMT items, are presented.　Except for Items 7 and 8, all the other items in Section 1 and Section 3 produced a mean score of 3.79 or above.　The means for Items 7 and 8 were somewhat lower than the others while in the mid range (3.01 for both items).　Compared with the other sections, the Section-2 items (a skill-specific confidence section) were scored generally lower except for

Item 9. The subjects were most confident in reading $(M = 3.90)$ and least confident in speaking $(M = 3.09)$. The mean scores for listening (3.46), writing (3.48) and grammar (3.38) were close, falling between those for reading and speaking.

The results of Section 1 and Section 3 items indicate that the motivation of the present sample for most classroom activities, as well as for learning the four skills and grammar, was generally high, except for "Pair or group activities (Item 7)" and "Lessons exclusively in Italian (Item 8)." "Lessons exclusively in Italian" may have seemed somewhat difficult and challenging to the students. With more than fifty percent of the participants enrolled in Italian 101, the mean score of 3.01 seems understandable. The same level of mean for Item 7, "Pair or group activities," is more difficult to explain. Such activities are commonly used for speaking and communicative activities, for which they seem to have been highly motivated (e.g., Items 3-6, 16 and 17). There may be at least two possible reasons for this. One is that the subjects may not have become familiar with one another very well, leading to their reluctance about working with their peers. If this speculation is correct, the educational implication is that creating a cooperative classroom atmosphere is very important, even if students' motivation for language learning is generally high. Another possible explanation is that pair or group activities may have been employed for practicing various skills, in which case the students might not have had a clear idea of what kind of pair/group activities were being asked about. Nevertheless, this second explanation seems less likely because the students' responses indicated generally high motivation for most activities, regardless of the types of skills involved in them.

The mean scores for the Section-2 items indicate that the students' confidence is the strongest in reading and the weakest in speaking, and their confidence in listening, writing and grammar is at similar levels. This appears to reflect the

subjects' perceptions of difficulties in practicing and mastering each of the four skills and learning the knowledge of grammar. A possible way to understand such perceived difficulty levels refers to two simple yet important dichotomous distinctions. One is that productive activities (i.e., writing and speaking) are more difficult than receptive activities (i.e., reading and listening) because the capacity of passive memory (i.e., receptive processing) is greater than that of active memory (i.e., productive processing). The other is that spoken language (i.e., listening and speaking) is more difficult than written language (i.e., reading and writing) because of much less time allowed for cognitive processing in the former case.[1] In light of these distinctions, it seems understandable that "Speaking" (i.e., a combination of 'productive' and 'spoken language') is scored the lowest, while "Reading" (i.e., a combination of 'receptive' and 'written language') is scored the highest, with "Listening" and "Writing" falling in between. While the difficulties of "Listening" and "Writing" are not determinable with these distinctions due to their incomparable combinations of the dichotomous characteristics, it is interesting that the mean scores for these skills turned out to be almost equal. The similar mean score for "Grammar" is also interesting. This might reflect that in addition to the difficulties in conceptualizing grammatical rules, students may feel forced to use grammar correctly in productive activities more often than in receptive activities. For instance, writing correctly requires active and accurate application of the rules, while passive knowledge of grammar is needed for reading comprehension. Also, students can often take advantage of guessing from context while reading if the grammatical forms are unfamiliar. Such a strategy, however, is not applicable in writing.

Table 1: Descriptive results of the SSMT

Section 1

1 - 8 To what extent would you like to work on the following activities in this course? (A = Never; B = Not much; C = No preference; D = Some; E = A lot) [1]

	A	B	C	D	E[2]	SD	M
1. Translation into Italian	5.6	5.6	17.8	33.3	37.8	1.13	3.92
2. Translation into English	2.2	8.9	11.1	38.9	38.9	1.03	4.03
3. Conversation	2.2	8.9	13.3	28.9	46.7	1.08	4.09
4. Listening	2.2	12.4	13.5	33.7	38.2	1.11	3.93
5. Pronunciation	4.6	11.1	18.4	31.0	34.5	1.17	3.79
6. Speech	7.9	6.7	14.6	32.6	38.2	1.23	3.87
7. Pair or group activities	19.3	17.0	22.7	22.7	18.2	1.38	3.01
8. Lessons exclusively in Italian	21.3	15.7	21.3	19.1	22.5	1.44	3.01

Section 2

9 -13 To what extent are you confident on the following abilities? (A = No confidence; B = Not much confidence; C = I don't know; D = Some confidence; E = I am confident.)

	A	B	C	D	E	SD	M
9. Reading	2.2	16.9	6.7	37.1	37.1	1.15	3.90
10. Writing	9.0	11.2	19.1	43.8	16.9	1.17	3.48
11. Listening	4.5	22.5	13.5	41.6	18.0	1.16	3.46
12. Speaking	12.5	22.7	15.9	40.9	8.0	1.21	3.09
13. Grammar	11.4	15.9	15.9	37.5	19.3	1.28	3.38

Section 3

14-18　To what extent would you like to work on the above skills and knowledge as in 9-13?
　　　　(A = Never; B = Not much; C = No preference; D = Some; E = A lot)

		A	B	C	D	E	SD	M
14.	Reading	2.2	13.5	14.6	39.3	30.3	1.08	3.82
15.	Writing	3.4	9.0	14.6	38.2	34.8	1.08	3.91
16.	Listening	3.4	9.0	14.6	34.8	38.2	1.10	3.96
17.	Speaking	2.3	4.5	9.1	27.3	56.8	.98	4.31
18.	Grammar	3.4	6.8	13.6	35.2	40.9	1.07	4.02

Notes: 1.　Items are numbered from 1 to 18 for all the tables in this article for the convenience of the reader's reference. In the actual questionnaire, however, they were numbered from 6 to 23 in order to include five background questions to be answered on a scantron sheet prior to the SSMT.
　　　　2.　All the percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, the percentages may not add up to one hundred.

Factor Analysis

　　　　The results of a factor analysis on the eighteen items are displayed in Table 2. There were five factors extracted, which together explained 73.27 percent of the total variance. With a cutoff of factor loading of .50, eight items were included in Factor 1 (Items 4-6 in Section 1 and all the five items in Section 3), accounting for 25.48 percent of the total variance. The three items in Section 1 refer to oral/aural aspects of the target language usually practiced in a teacher-directed situation, and the Section-3 items reflect students' motivation for all the skills and knowledge of grammar. Therefore, this factor was labeled, "General Motivation."

　　　　Factor 2 consisted of all of the five items in Section 2, explaining additional 16.96 percent of the total variance. Since this entire section is designed to explore the students' confidence about the four skills and knowledge of grammar, it was named "Confidence in Italian."

　　　　Factor 3 was comprised of two items referring to translation exercises (Items 1 and 2 in Section 1) and one speaking-related item, Item 17 in Section 3 (also

loaded on Factor 1), which together accounted for additional 14.35 percent of the total variance. It appears that students' motivation for translation exercises, whether it is from the target language into the native language or from the native language into the target language, are somewhat distinguished from other types of activities. Therefore, this factor was named, "Translation Motivation." From a methodological point of view, translation exercises are typically carried out in a traditional fashion; that is to say, translating from the target language into the native language is used as a reading activity, and writing is often focused on translating from the native language into the target language. Interestingly, however, the present subjects seem to have associated translation exercises with neither reading nor writing with respect to their motivation. Furthermore, it should be noted that as shown in Table 1, the students' motivation for translation exercises was generally high, and the mean scores for these items were even higher than those for the items for reading and writing motivation in Section 3. These somewhat perplexing results could be attributed to insight into students' underlying belief about how language learning happens. Whereas items that loaded on the factor of Translation Motivation with a factor loading of $.50$ or greater are Items 1, 2 (both translation-related items) and 17 (a speaking-related item), Items 3 (conversation) and 18 (a grammar-related item) produced somewhat high factor loadings of $.49$ and $.41$, respectively. This may imply that there may be a shared belief at least among some students that translation exercises can be effective for language learning, which will become useful for learning grammar and speaking through practices. If this belief indeed exists, the fact that Translation Motivation is distinctive of General Motivation and of reading- and writing-related motivation items becomes understandable. Such belief may reflect the instructors' teaching styles. If some teachers teach the language with that belief but others do not, then students' beliefs can also differ. The implication of this speculation is that the

kinds of activities given in class must be regarded as appropriate by students because their beliefs about foreign language learning, whether or not they are theoretically correct, are deeply related to their motivation. The instructor's attempts at making students understand how language acquisition happens and giving tasks accordingly should be quite important for enhancing their motivation.

There were two items that loaded on Factor 4: Items 8 in Section 1 and 11 in Section 2 (also loaded on Factor 2), together explaining additional 9.45 percent of the total variance. "Lessons exclusively in Italian" (Item 8) would require a reasonably high ability in listening, which may as well be associated with the levels of students' confidence in listening (Item 11). As mentioned earlier, there seem to have been a certain level of reluctance about "Lessons exclusively in Italian" ($M =$ 3.01) because the present sample includes many beginning-level students. Also, the low factor loadings yielded by the Section-3 items on this factor suggests that "Lessons exclusively in Italian" is not closely related with students' *motivation* for listening, speaking, and other skill areas and other types of activities, but *confidence* in listening. These observations suggest that motivation for "Lessons exclusively in Italian" may gradually increase in accordance with improvement in listening. Since this speculation suggests that "Lessons exclusively in Italian" is the core of Factor 4, it was labeled, "Motivation for Lessons Exclusively in Italian."

Only one item loaded on Factor 5 with a factor loading of .50 or greater: Item 7, "Pair or group activities." This factor was named, "Pair/Group Work Motivation," which explained additional 7.04 percent of the total variance. While Item 7 was one of the items intended for measuring students' motivation for speaking, conversation, and communicative activities, it was isolated from any other item. The previous explanation for the somewhat low mean for this item ($M =$ 3.01) may still apply: a) the level of familiarity among students; and b) the clarity of the content of pair/group activities (See analysis in *Descriptive Statistics*.).

Table 2: Varimax-rotated results of the factor analysis

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5
1 *[1]	.29	-.08	**.83**	-.03	-.02
2	.18	-.04	**.88**	.03	.00
3	.44	.22	.49	.47	.10
4	**.67**	-.01	.30	.36	.23
5	**.61**	-.09	.19	.10	.44
6	**.66**	.08	.33	.06	.31
7	.05	.07	-.08	.01	**.86**
8	.26	.06	.09	**.87**	.06
9	.00	**.56**	.32	.32	.32
10	.01	**.88**	.05	.09	.00
11	.03	**.58**	-.09	**.65**	-.11
12	.04	**.85**	.06	.09	.11
13	.03	**.89**	-.06	-.03	-.06
14	**.83**	.11	-.03	.01	.09
15	**.86**	.03	.10	.09	-.08
16	**.81**	-.09	.18	.14	-.04
17	**.64**	.09	.55	.09	.03
18	**.68**	.00	.41	.08	-.14
% of variance	25.48	16.96	14.35	9.45	7.04

Total % of variance explained by the five factors   73.27

Note: 1.   Items are numbered from 1 to 18 for all the tables in this article for the convenience of the reader's reference. In the actual questionnaire, however, they were numbered from 6 to 23 in order to include five background questions to be answered on a scantron sheet prior to the SSMT.

Scale Analysis

The first three factors, with more than one item which yielded a factor loading of .50 or greater, were scale-analyzed as three independent subscales of the SSMT. Item 11 (an item for confidence in listening), which loaded on both Factor 2

（Confidence in Italian） and Factor 4 （Motivation for Lessons Exclusively in Italian）, was included in Factor 2 because Factor 4, which had only two items with a factor loading of .50 or greater, was not found to be reliable with Item 11 （α =.60）. Item 17 （a speaking motivation item）, which loaded on both Factor 1 （General Motivation） and Factor 3 （Translation Motivation）, was included in Factor 1 but not in Factor 3 in scale analyses because the elimination of this item from Factor 3 in fact resulted in a higher internal reliability of this factor. Thus, scale analyses were performed on: the General Motivation subscale with eight items （Items 4-6 and Items 14-18）, the Confidence in Italian subscale with five items （Items 9-13）, and the Translation Motivation subscale with two items （Items 1 and 2）. All of these subscales yielded a satisfactory internal reliability: General Motivation, α =.91; Confidence in Italian, α =.85; and Translation Motivation, α =.84 （α =.82 with Item 17）. All items produced a corrected item-total correlation of .50 or greater within the respective subscales. These results are summarized in Table 3, together with the factor loadings on the respective factors.

Discriminant validity analyses of the three SSMT subscales showed that they had a low correlation with one another except for the correlation between General Motivation and Translation Motivation: General Motivation and Confidence in Italian, r =.12 （$n.s.$）; General Motivation and Translation Motivation, r =.52*** （$p <$ .001）; and Confidence in Italian and Translation Motivation, r =.11 （$n.s.$）. From these results, it is reasonably clear that motivation is distinct from confidence, while there is a moderate correlation between General Motivation and Translation Motivation. The commonality between General Motivation and Translation Motivation seems to be that they are both motivation for language learning activities.

Table 3: Summary of factor analysis and scale analyses

<u>Factor 1: General Motivation (α = .91)</u>

	Factor Loading	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
(Section-1 items)		
4. Listening	.67	.74
5. Pronunciation	.61	.63
6. Speech	.66	.70
(Section-3 items)		
14. Reading	.83	.67
15. Writing	.86	.75
16. Listening	.81	.76
17. Speaking	.64	.71
18. Grammar	.68	.67

<u>Factor 2: Confidence on Italian (α = .85)</u>

	Factor Loading	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
(Section-2 items)		
9. Reading	.56	.53
10. Writing	.88	.77
11. Listening	.58	.59
12. Speaking	.85	.70
13. Grammar	.89	.70

<u>Factor 3: Translation Motivation (α = .84)</u>

	Factor Loading	Corrected Item-Total Correlation
(Section-1 items)		
1. Translation into Italian	.83	.73
2. Translation into English	.88	.73

Note: 1. Items are numbered from 1 to 18 for all the tables in this article for the convenience of the reader's reference. In the actual questionnaire, however, they were numbered from 6 to 23 in order to include five background questions to be answered on a scantron sheet prior to the SSMT.

Limitations of the study

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution due to a number of limitations as follows. First, the sample size for the factor analysis in this study was not large enough. Even with the most lenient criterion of five subjects per variable (i.e., $5 \times 18 = 90$) but no less than a hundred, proposed by Kim and Mueller back in 1978, the present sample ($n = 91$) is barely marginal. It is strongly recommended, therefore, that the results in this study be considered as only preliminarily tentative, and subject to further investigation with a larger sample of preferably 400 or more. Secondly, this study did not perform a content validity analysis. It is necessary for the SSMT subscales to be examined with another motivation measure such as the AMTB (Gardner, 1985). Thirdly, no performance measures were employed in this study. Therefore, the effects of motivation as measured by the SSMT subscales are only to be determined by future research. Fourthly, as noted earlier, a majority of the present subjects were in the beginning- and elementary-level courses. Therefore, another sample with a broader range of proficiency levels may lead to different results. The quality of accumulating learning experiences tends to make it possible to predict the learner's attitudes and other affective variables more consistently (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991a). Fifthly, some of the SSMT subscales produced in this study had an item that loaded on more than one extracted factor, but such items were included in only one subscale in order to obtain the best possible results in the reliability analyses. However, those items may have an unknown level of influence on the scale-analytic results, particularly on those of discriminant validity analysis. Since an item loading on more than one factor increases the correlation between or among the subscales, the elimination or revision of such an item can improve the distinctiveness (i.e., lower correlation). Finally, the Translation Motivation

subscale was analyzed with only two items.   Although it yielded a satisfactory level of internal reliability, the inclusion of more items can further improve the validity and reliability of this subscale.

Suggestions for Further Research

With a number of limitations, this study shed some light on several directions for future research.   First, three Section-1 items were not successfully included in the SSMT subscales: Conversation, Lessons Exclusively in Italian and Pair or group activities.   The results in this study showed that: a) Conversation did not load on a particular extracted factor, while producing relatively high factor loadings on General Motivation, Translation Motivation and Motivation for Lessons Exclusively in Italian, but not on Motivation for Pair/Group Activities; b) Lessons Exclusively in Italian defined a factor of its own, and this teaching approach appeared to be related to student confidence about, and perhaps proficiency levels in, listening; and c) Pair or group activities also defined a factor of its own, and students' motivation for this activity was not very high even though their motivation was generally high. The characteristics of motivation for these classroom activities remain unclear and need to be further investigated.

Contrary to the initial hypothesis, students' motivation was not found to be clearly distinctive with respect to the four skills or the knowledge of grammar.   The present results suggest that foreign language students' perceptions of their own motivation originate from their willingness to improve their entire foreign language proficiency levels, rather than to improve on specific skills in the target language. One reason for this may be that the foreign language classes of the present subjects, as well as many others at colleges in the United States, are taught with a holistic teaching approach (i.e., the four skills are taught and practiced using the same

material）.　In other words, students read and listen to the material, write about it, and discuss it.　With such an approach, students may self-evaluate their motivation, regarding foreign language learning as a whole thing, without distinguishing their motivation for learning and improving on each of the four skills and grammar. However, there are schools in other parts of the world–and the US as well–which offer separate courses for specific skills in foreign language.　For example, Japanese high schools offer separate English courses for reading, writing and oral communication.　In such courses, students' classroom performance may vary with different materials and instructors, which may lead to differing levels of motivation for each of the skill-specific courses.　Furthermore, there may be differences in educational goals and teaching methods among schools for the same skill-specific course（e.g., an intermediate-level writing course at a competitive high school and at a non-competitive high school）.　In such programs, skill-specific motivation might be more distinctive because the required types and levels of achievement on the four skills may differ to a large degree.　More research is needed to clarify the identifications and the roles of skill-specific motivation, in relation to sample differences and program differences, including the purposes and goals of the programs and employed teaching methodology.　Further steps to research on these questions will lead to a better understanding of the complex issues of the role of affective variables in successful classroom foreign language learning.

NOTE

1）For example, it would be easier for nonnative speakers of English to read and understand the meaning of the newly introduced sentence, "Whereas the president is legally given the right to proceed with the proposed project, several residential and financial problems still remain," than to write it correctly. Likewise, producing this sentence orally with the native-speaker-level pronunciation and speed would be more difficult for a nonnative speaker of English than understanding it when uttered by a native speaker.

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