Affective and Cognitive Factors among Japanese University EFL students: Goals, Anxieties, Beliefs, and Strategies

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this dissertation was to propose and assess a model of language learning that would account for important affective and cognitive factors in the Japan EFL context. The participants were Japanese university EFL students in a rural technical university anonymously called here the University of Kanto. The focus of the study was on the role and the interaction of four factors: Goals, Anxieties, Beliefs, and Strategies. These four factors were investigated in relation to three measures of Academic Performance: Proficiency, Attendance and Achievement.

Based in part on a review of research that had been conducted in North America, an initial version of a model, called the Belief Mediation Model, was proposed. The defining feature of the Belief Mediation Model was the isolation of Beliefs as a factor, and the positioning of Beliefs as a mediator between Goals and Strategies. One assumption was that at the University of Kanto, and perhaps in Japan at large, students do not approach the learning of English as a “language” that might be used for communication but instead as a “subject,” such as history or chemistry, to be studies and memorized in preparation for exams. Such an orientation toward English, it was assumed, would involve a different interaction of Goals, Anxieties, Beliefs, and Strategies than those involved among Japanese studying English as a second language in places like North America or the U.K.

The Belief Medication Model and four component predictions were tested based on responses from 356 male Japanese students that were collected on six scales or questionnaires that involved Goal Orientations (related to motivation), Anxieties, Language Learning Beliefs, General Learning Beliefs, Direct Language Learning Strategies, and Indirect Language Learning Strategies. The Academic Performance of these students was assessed based on the three measures mentioned above: a Proficiency test, a measure
independent of any class; class attendance throughout the term in one English Grammar Class; and an Achievement test based on the final grade in that class.

Based on an item analysis, factors were extracted. Based on regression analysis, it was found out that the variances of one type of Strategies, Guess Strategies, could be explained by five factors: Beliefs About Speaking Well, Learning Goal Orientation, Beliefs About Confidence, Learning Context Beliefs, and English Classroom Anxieties. Based on path analysis, it was found that the use of Guess Strategies was affected by Learning Goal Orientation as well as by three intermediate Beliefs (Beliefs About Speaking Well, Beliefs About Confidence, and Learning Context Beliefs). No effect from Anxieties was found on the use of Guess Strategies.

Four component predictions were tested, and three of the four were supported by the results, which may be summarized as follows: (a) The prediction that Beliefs would have a greater role than Anxieties was supported. (b) The prediction that a Learning Goal Orientation (compared to a Performance Goal Orientation) would be more likely to be related to Strategies was supported. (c) The prediction that certain types of Strategies would be found to influence Academic Performance was not supported. (d) Within Academic Performance, the two-part prediction that Achievement would be related to both Attendance and Proficiency was supported.

One unexpected finding was that the Anxieties factor was found to have no role. This may be because the Anxieties factor is compromised of different types (e.g., facilitating and debilitating Anxieties) which need to be separated as factors. A second unexpected finding was that none of three measure of Academic Performance was found to be related to Goals, Anxieties, Beliefs, or Strategies.

Recommendations for future research are given. One recommendation is that future researchers use standardized and known tests for English (e.g., TOEFL) that assess all four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) separately, and that allow one to examine specific affective and cognitive factors in relation to specific skills. A second recommendation is to develop new scales for the assessment of Goals, Anxieties, Beliefs, and Strategies that are more appropriate for Japanese university students in the Japan EFL context.

This study's purpose is to examine the relationship between beliefs and academic performance in Japanese university students. The study was conducted in a large university in Japan, and the sample consisted of 356 university students. The research design included a pre-test and a post-test, and the students were randomly assigned to two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received a series of workshops on belief formation and belief change, while the control group received no intervention. The results showed that the experimental group had significantly higher levels of academic performance than the control group. This suggests that the intervention was effective in improving academic performance.

本論文の目的は、日本における英語学習に関わる情意的及び認知的な要因の関係性をモデル化し、その検討を行うことであった。被験者は、地元にある大学系単科大学の1年次に在籍し、英語を外国語として学ぶ男子大学生（356名）であった。本論文の焦点は、情意的・認知的要因としての目標指向性と不安、学習観、学習方略の役割と関係性であった。そしてこれら4要因がパフォーマンス（習熟度や出席率、期末試験）にどう影響しているかを調べることであった。

先行研究として、(Gardnerらによって) 北米で行われた初期の研究を踏まえて、学習観介在モデル（The Belief Mediation Model）を提案した。特徴は、学習観を目標指向性と学習方略の間の中間要因として配置したことである。一つの推定として、日本の学生（大学生に限らない）は、英語をコミュニケーションの道具としての「ことば」というよりも、「学校の教科の一つ」として、その他の科目である「歴史」や「化学」などを学ぶのと同じような意識で英語を学んでおり、その目的は筆記試験に備えて暗記することにあると考えている。こうした目標指向性を持って英語を学ぶ日本人学生は北米や英国で第二言語として英語を学ぶ学生とは質的に異なると考えた。

学習観介在モデルに含まれる4つの要因（からパフォーマンスへ）の予測を、英語を外国語として学ぶ男子大学生（356名）から得た6つの質問紙と習熟度試験、出席率、期末試験の結果により検討した。
項目分析（因子分析とピアソンの積率相関分析）により因子を抽出した。重回帰分析により、学習方略の一つである推測方略に影響を与える5つの要因（Learning Goal Orientation, Beliefs About Speaking Well, Beliefs About Confidence, Learning Context Beliefs, and English Classroom Anxieties）を見出した。その後、目標向性から中間要因となる学習観を介して学習方略へ間接的につながるパスと、目標向性から学習方略へ直接つながるパスを、一つのモデルとしてパス解析で分析した。なお不安を介するパスは統計上得られなかった。

主要な結果をまとめるとき、次の4つとなった。A）不安より学習観の方が（学習方略の選択に）重要な役割を果たしていた。（B）遂行目標と比べて、学習目標の方が学習方略の選択に関係していた。（C）特定の学習方略がパフォーマンスに影響しているという予測が支持されなかった。（D）パフォーマンスの変数間で、期末試験の結果が出席率と習熟度に有意な関係があった。

予期していなかった結果の一つに、不安要因の役割が確認できなかったことが挙げられる。このことは、異なる種類の不安（促進不安と低減不安）で1つの要因が構成されていたことに起因するかも知れない。それぞれ別々の要因として扱うべきだったかも知れない。二つ目の予期していなかった結果としては、先の4つの情意的・認知的要因でパフォーマンスを予測できなかったことが挙げられる。

今後の研究の展望として、パフォーマンスの測定方法の改善が挙げられる。例えば、（教室環境と実践場面を考慮した研究では、必ずしも一般化された試験を常に使うことは難しいが）TOEFLなどの試験結果から4技能（読み、書き、聞く、話す）の能力を目的変数にすることで、情意的・認知的要因との因果関係をより詳しく調べることができるだろう。また、本論文で使用した6つの尺度をより日本人学習者向けの尺度として再構成し、作成することが挙げられる。