# PERCEIVED EFFECTS OF PEER COOPERATION ON MOTIVATION IN THE JAPANESE UNIVERSITY EFL CLASSROOM

by

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## ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study was to explore whether or not low achievers in EFL at a Japanese university perceive peer cooperation in cooperative learning contexts to be effective in improving their levels of expectancy, motivation and ultimate attainment in the L2. The main findings in this study pertain to the relationship between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation. The relationship involved several perceived routes which mainly indicated that the learners felt that peer cooperation had had a positive influence on their levels of motivation.

The perceived routes linking peer cooperation to motivation can be roughly divided into two types; 1) the two routes which were mainly focused on in this study: through expectancy alone or a combination of levels of English and expectancy; and 2) other routes identified during the course of the study: through group cohesion and/or cohesion-generated factors (a sense of responsibility for their peers and having fun in class) or through factors related to status ordering or hierarchy among students (feelings of superiority/inferiority to their peers).

These findings have four particularly interesting aspects: 1) the more indirect route from peer cooperation to increased motivation (included in the first set of the main findings), through a combination of levels of English and expectancy, calls attention to the ways in which these variables, from the students' point of view, are connected in a single model (although the relations between these variables have only ever been studied separately by previous researchers); 2) part of the indirect route, a perceived relationship between peer cooperation and level

of English appeared to be particularly important for the students in this study due to 'peer feedback effects' created by peer cooperation. This feedback was found to be effective in two different ways: raising the level of English (by learning from each other) and creating a belief in controllability; 3) routes through group cohesion and/or cohesion-generated factors (included in the second set of the main findings) indicate that Dörnyei's (1997) framework (for CL-generated L2 learning motivation) may be extended to include a more explicit indication that group cohesion may not directly influence students' levels of motivation; 4) a route through a factor related to status ordering (included in the second set of the main findings) indicates that Cohen's (1994) view of status ordering (that it may create demotivation among learners who feel inferior to others in cooperative learning contexts) might be extended to include a positive effect; it may increase levels of expectancy and motivation among low achievers who feel superior to learners whose levels are even lower than theirs.

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Research backgrounds and aims

As an English teacher, I have witnessed many of my Japanese university students, in non-language-related faculties, being hesitant or unwilling to study English as a foreign language (EFL). Although their EFL classes are compulsory, as in other universities in Japan, some of them repeatedly come to class without a dictionary or textbook. Some sleep in class. Others chat with their friends, not listening to what the teacher is saying. In my own classes, at the beginning of the session when I see my students for the first time, I feel that most of them see me as an opponent. One of my students actually told me, "Every time I attend an English class, I feel I'm beginning again in a class where I can't understand anything!" Such feelings, they say, come from their experiences of English classes in secondary schools. This reluctance to learn EFL occurs not in my classes alone but in other colleges and universities in Japan.

I am not alone in this view. For example, Nakata (1999) claims, from his experience of teaching in Japanese colleges, that it is noticeable how many students dislike studying English; he mentions the possible causes of this, such as secondary school education. Many researchers and educators are also concerned about this problem (e.g., Servetter, 1999; Kobayashi, 2001; Takahashi, 2004). The students' reluctance appears to be a serious problem in Japanese college and university EFL classrooms, particularly in non-language related faculties.

Moreover, the students' reluctance seems to be related to their expectations of success (what I shall later call their "expectancy") in English classes. Many of my students who are low achievers typically say, "I hate studying English because I can't understand anything in English classes, I don't even know elementary level

English". These words seem to imply that their low expectancy relates to their demotivation.

Interestingly, self-confidence and previous performance seem to be factors in determining students' attitudes to their language classes. Falout and Maruyama (2004) surveyed the attitudes of Japanese college students to studying English before they entered college, using a 6-point Likert-type scale and open-ended questionnaires. Their results show that the most common significant variable in the scale to cause demotivation is *self-confidence*, and similarly, that *disappointment in performance* is the factor which the respondents to the open-ended questions identified as a causal factor in their demotivation. Although this happened to students of both lower and high proficiency, Falout and Maruyama found that the tendency is particularly distinct among low proficiency students. This may suggest that students' low expectancy in English classrooms is likely to be closely associated with their negative attitudes towards the subject of English, leading to low motivation.

Relationships between (de)motivation and expectancy (i.e. the levels of performance which students expect of themselves) have been identified by many researchers and theorists in the fields of psychology and/or educational psychology (e.g., Seligman, 1975; Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In the field of language learning, the relationship has also been demonstrated in different settings (see e.g., Dörnyei, 1994a; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Mori, 2002) (see Chapter 2 for details).

In an attempt to improve levels of motivation and expectancy in my students, I have been using a cooperative learning (CL) approach in my English classes, which has worked well for my students. The effectiveness of CL as something which enhances motivation, as well as expectancy, has been shown by many researchers and theorists in mainstream education (see e.g., Slavin, 1995 and Chapter 3 for more details). In addition, Dörnyei (1997) identifies *expectancy* as

one of the important components of his CL-generated motivation system in second/foreign language (L2) learning. Other researchers (e.g., Crookes & Schmidt, 1991) also make similar claims (see Chapter 3 for details).

However, in the field of L2 learning, there is only a limited number of empirical studies of the relationship between CL and expectancy. Further, in the context of EFL classrooms in Japan in particular, there are hardly any empirical studies of the relationship. In other words, although low expectancy in EFL in Japan seems to be a serious problem, it has not yet been studied in a comprehensive way and there is clearly a need for it to be investigated. For example, I need to know whether my attempts to improve motivation through the use of CL are likely to bear fruit. Thus, this research focuses on the nature of the relationship between CL and students' expectancy, as well as that between expectancy and motivation in the context of EFL classrooms in Japan. Further, lower expectancy, which may be related to lower language ability, is a critical problem for the students and teachers in this country; therefore, I intend to explore how language ability relates to learners' expectancy. I am also interested in exploring the relationships between CL and language ability.

Among many of the components in CL, such as lesson content, teachers' instruction and so on, I have chosen to examine *peer cooperation*, which means the way in which learners cooperate with each other in the classroom. This is because it is one of the most important differences between CL and other instructional methods. In the field of educational psychology, peer cooperation has been identified as one of the main factors accounting for the achievement effects of CL; it has been studied from three major theoretical perspectives, namely, the motivational, social cohesion and cognitive (see Chapter 3 for details). This suggests that peer cooperation is an important element of CL. Thus, the present investigation includes an exploration of the way in which peer cooperation may or may not change between the beginning and the end of CL in a Japanese EFL setting.

Finally, the variables associated with EFL classrooms are likely to have complicated relationships and are difficult to measure. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on the participants' points of view rather than my own. Thus, the purpose of the study is to offer an interpretation of the classroom phenomena through understanding them from the students' perspectives, not in terms of 'generalizability' and/or 'prediction', as could be done by means of quantitative research. The design and implementation of this thesis are basically qualitative in nature (see Chapter 3 for details).

In the following section, Japanese school education and its cultural context will be discussed in order to examine how and why it has generated low levels of expectancy and motivation among many students in English classrooms in colleges or universities.

## 1.2 Problems in the Japanese school education

In order to understand the English learning environment in Japan which seems to alienate the students so much, it is first necessary to take a look at the school education system and the educational culture in Japan, and to look at why they appear to be producing such disaffected students. The following section is divided into four subsections. The first presents the influence of university entrance examinations on the school curriculum and on students, in connection with the strong governmental control on the curriculum. In the second, exam-oriented EFL instruction at secondary school level is examined in relation to discovering how and why low expectancy is created. In the third, the social environment and examination alternatives is discussed in order to find why low achievers seek a place at university and how they can gain one. In the final subsection, the educational reforms in state academic schools is also discussed, as a possible reason for the growing number of low achieving university entrants.

### 1.2.1 The impact of the university entrance examination and governmental control on Japanese school education

In Japan, there are six years of elementary school (for 6- to 11-year-olds) and three years of lower secondary school (for 12- to 14-year-olds). These are compulsory. After this, most students go on to upper secondary school. According to government statistics, the proportion of lower secondary school graduates who enrolled in upper secondary schools between 2006 and 2009 was over 97% (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2010; henceforward, the MEXT, its official abbreviation[1]). The transition to upper secondary schools, as well as to colleges or universities, is determined by entrance examinations. In 2009, 53.9% of secondary school graduates enrolled in either two-year colleges or four-year universities. This rate is getting higher every year (ibid.) and is one of the highest rates in all the developed countries. According to Takahashi (2004), if the figures for returnees — adult students who return to study in colleges or universities — are discounted, the rate is the highest in the industrialised world.

The high rate reflects one of the country's priorities; ensuring that Japan is an education-oriented society. This cultural priority is supported by an exam-oriented school system and social culture, including the system (or customs) of Japanese corporations when recruiting and setting salaries (see Section 1.2.3). Secondary school education in Japan has been criticised for being over-oriented towards passing entrance examinations, first for upper secondary school and eventually university. By concentrating on success in the entrance examinations, in particular in the university tests, the classes are said to be teacher-centred and text-obsessed with the purpose of transmitting huge amounts of dry, fact-oriented information merely for the sake of passing examinations.

[1] The name of the Ministry was changed in 2001 from the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (*Monbusho*) to the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (*Monbukagakusho*).

It should be noted here that *on the surface* this situation appears to have changed as a result of recent educational reforms. According to Sasaki (2008), from 1990 to the present, Japanese education has experienced a distinctively stressful period due to new educational reforms which responded to public opposition to the results of previous educational policies. These issues included the exam-oriented classes discussed above, as well as other problems, such as "juvenile delinquency, bullying and dropping-out" (ibid: 73). However, despite the reforms, the classroom environment is still basically the same and therefore the classroom problem appears not to be solved or alleviated (see Section 1.2.4 for more details).

Previous research has found that the dominating features in Japanese secondary school education bring a climate of obsession to the entrance examinations. In the lower secondary schools, education is gradually guided into preparing students for the upper secondary school entrance examinations. Similarly, most academic upper secondary schools insist on an even more intense focus in preparing students for the university entrance examinations. In these schools, the curriculum and teaching methods tend to address only the entrance examinations. Leestma et al. (1987) describe the typical teaching styles in Japanese secondary schools as follows:

> Instruction in most subjects is teacher-centered and takes place in a straightforward manner, usually through lectures and use of the chalkboard. Students are frequently called on for answers and recitation. They stand to respond (p.34)…Student questions or challenges are uncommon and not encouraged (p.43).

More recently, Fukuzawa (1998) identified the negative characteristics of the upper secondary school education as "a text-centered, lecture format geared to transmitting information necessary for university entrance exams" (p.295)…"intense, fact-filled and routinized" (p.300).

This criticism applies to secondary school classes in general throughout the country, because the entire course of secondary school education and also of that

in elementary schools is firmly controlled by the government, which claims the importance of *equality* in education.

In this sense, the MEXT appears to encourage teacher-centred and exam-oriented classes. In fact, the excessive control over the curriculum has been criticised for causing the rigid, uniform and exam-centred nature of school education (e.g., Wray, 1999). In particular, all secondary school textbooks must be approved by the MEXT. This means that the textbooks adhere to the course of study issued by the MEXT, which teachers should follow in every detail. In this environment, there is no doubt that the classes are too rigid and monolithic and therefore it is difficult for teachers to create their own ways of teaching, which would be adapted to their students. In other words, teachers are too preoccupied to pay attention to individual students because they have to cover the entire content of the textbook, which contains a considerable amount of information. Shimahara (1992: 9-10) describes the governmental control as follows:

> [The Ministry of Education] carefully monitors the curricula at all levels throughout the nation, and it requires that textbooks comply with the ministry's course of study … the ministry expects every Japanese teacher to follow the course of study irrespective of local differences and preferences …

Consequently, many students have difficulty in keeping up with the steady rate of progress through the content in class and are sometimes left behind. Once this happens, the academic content which they have to master increases very quickly and they eventually give up, feeling that the whole subject is too difficult to understand.

It is almost natural that such low achievers have low expectancy of their own performance in class. For the purpose of conveying how low achievers usually feel in secondary school classes, I can quote the words from a participant (Ken: 18 year-old) in this study, which gives a clear insight into their state of mind:

> "There are always three groups in class. One is the *able student* group made up of high achievers, another is the *unable student* group made up of low achievers, and the third is the *between student* group who try to be *able students* and always try to stay with *able students* to learn something from them. *Unable students* never talk to *able students* about academic subjects. So, I never talked to *able students* in certain classes which I don't like, such as English" (Ken; Please note that in this study all participants' names have been changed to keep their anonymity).

This statement seems to typify the low expectancy of unable/weak students and their feelings in class. Weak students can be easily identified by their class-mates and they admit to themselves that they are not able to do well. For this reason, they do not want to talk to able students because they do not want to be looked down on and/or they think that it is useless to ask questions of able students, due to their *self-determined* low expectancy. This means that they believe it is impossible to be high achievers and understand the responses of the able students.

The number of weak students is noticeable and it has become a social problem. Such students have been called 'ochikobore', a term which has become common (Tsuneyoshi, 2004). Needless to say, among weak students the motivation to study can be very low. In summary, low ability leads to low expectancy and it generates low motivation (see Chapter 2 for details).

### 1.2.2 The problems which may lead to low expectancy in the EFL classroom

To aggravate the difficult situation in which these students find themselves, English is one of the most important academic subjects for them because it is one of the main subjects in the entrance examinations. The importance of English language is exemplified in the figures for the National Center Test for University Admissions. All students who want to enter a national university take this test, and so do growing numbers of applicants seeking places in private universities[2].

[2] Increasing numbers of private universities require candidates to submit test scores for certain subjects in the Centre Examination as part of their entrance examinations.

Of all the subjects in the exam, English attracts the most candidates every year. In 2010, 98.4% of all test-takers (512,451 out of 520,600 test-takers) took the English test (NCUEE, National Center for University Entrance Examinations, 2010). Therefore, the unpleasant situation for *weak students* in the English class is aggravated and their expectancy must be extremely low. It may be useful at this point to look at the way in which English classes are typically conducted, in order to clearly understand where the students' low levels of expectancy come from.

A typical English class mainly uses the grammar-translation method. One of the main reasons for adopting this approach is that the entrance examinations very often test the translation of texts. In addition, the teaching focuses mainly on the memorisation of grammar rules, drills for vocabulary and idiomatic phrases, because these appear frequently in the examinations. The classes are mostly routinized, and the language used in class, by both teachers and students, is almost always Japanese. Teachers often play recorded tapes of text so that students can learn English pronunciation. Students are often called on to read texts aloud in front of their class-mates. They are usually expected to prepare for the class by translating a text from English to Japanese. In class, they are asked to present their translation. Then, the teacher demonstrates his/her translation as a model, correcting the students' translations. Questions from students are usually neither welcomed nor encouraged. In classes at lower secondary level, teachers often explain and/or demonstrate grammatical rules. However, at upper secondary level, such demonstrations are greatly reduced and the focus is much more on drills and memorisation. This is because there is much more content to cover in the higher classes and the content itself is also much more difficult.

Many researchers have pointed out the problems with the teaching method described above (e.g., Sakui and Gaies, 1999; Kobayashi, 2001). Fukuzawa (1998: 298-299), too, describes a typical English class in a Japanese lower secondary school as follows:

When Okabe-sensei [the teacher] walks into the class a few minutes after the bell has rung, the class slowly quiets down for the opening greeting. A student calls out "Stand up!" and the students rise. "Attention!" he calls, and most students stand straight without talking. "Nakamura, be quiet!" Okabe-sensei reprimands one boy. "Bow!" says the voice. Everyone bows and sits down. As the noise subsides, Okabe-sensei says, "Now take out your textbooks and turn to page 14. Today we will begin Lesson 4. This lesson deals with comparatives and superlatives. In Japanese we use motto (more) and ichiban (the most) plus an adjective to express such differences. Please look at the key sentence at the bottom of the page. 'I am smaller than a whale,' " he reads. He translates the sentence into Japanese and explains the basic rule for forming English comparatives. "In English you add '-er' to some adjectives to form the comparative. Now let's listen to the tape." He plays the tape recorder, and the students repeat the new words and the six sentences of text after the tape recorder as a group.

At the end of the tape he asks who has looked up the meaning of the words for this lesson. "Have you done your lesson preparation? Nakamura, what does 'ocean' mean?" The boy quickly turns around to face the front. "You don't know? I thought so. You'd better prepare next time. Kubo, what about you?" This student is unable to answer either. "Sasaki," he says, calling on a better student to get the answer. This goes on until the new vocabulary words have been defined. He puts them on the board. He puts up the key sentence. Under it he writes "S be (verb) + er than (noun)" and gives a Japanese translation.

"I want you to memorize this sentence." He repeats the sentence and asks five students to stand up and read it from the book and then another two to repeat it without looking. He seems to call on the less able students to read and better students to repeat without looking. Next he reads the first sentence and calls on a student to stand and translate it. "Very good," he says of the performance and repeats the translation. The class is very quiet as students write the translation under the English in their books. He continues to call on better students to translate, correcting and supplementing their translations. All students can answer. He then asks two students to read the whole dialogue. Just as the second student begins to read the last sentence, the bell chimes the end of class. Okabe-sensei has him finish reading. The students stand, bow, and class is dismissed.

When I ask my students about their English classes in secondary schools, they almost always complain about them. Their complaints are more or less the same, and typical sources of discontent include: being ignored by teachers when they ask

questions, looked down on by teachers, taught as if they already possess much grammatical knowledge, too rapid progress through the content, in particular at upper secondary level (the content of the class proceeds so quickly that they cannot understand anything) and too many things to memorise and/or understand.

To illustrate this unprofitable classroom situation, when asked why he so hated to study English and why he still felt that he could not understand English at all although he had taken English classes for six years at secondary school, one of the participants in this study (Ken) related his experience from lower secondary school. His story was as follows:

> "One English teacher from my lower secondary school was horrible and ill-natured. I hated that guy! He usually ignored me in class. One time, when he asked me a question and I was trying to find some sort of answer, he said to me, 'I knew *someone like you* would never be able to answer questions'. I have never forgotten these words. From then, I completely stopped studying English. Now I don't even know elementary level English, including vocabulary and grammar." (Ken)

Many other students have similar experiences with English teachers in secondary schools, such as always being ignored in class, and teachers being unwilling to answer questions or being easily upset when students ask questions.

This is not only the case among my students. Falout and Maruyama (2004), from their survey of Japanese college students' attitudes towards English in the past (excluding their time at college), found the importance of two factors. They report that among students with lower proficiency, the *teacher* and the *courses* (course contents and pace) are among the most influential external sources of demotivation, as reported in both Likert-type and open-ended questionnaires. These researchers also found that low achievers experienced a loss of self-confidence between the time when they started learning and the present (when they were being questioned), while high achievers did not. Furthermore, for

low achievers, based on a correlation result, there is a causal relationship between this past demotivation and their attitude at present. In addition, the researchers report the informers' frustration about their former teachers as follows (p. 7):

> When speaking of their former teachers, these college freshmen displayed the most emotion…Others got on bad terms with their teachers simply because they asked questions about English. Their reward was humiliation…A common report: teachers responded with ridicule and blame, remarking only upon the ignorance of the questioner. Another common report: teachers responded, "First, go study it harder by yourself."…

These reports are strikingly similar to those mentioned above, which I heard from my students. This implies two causal relationships. *Teachers* influence students' self-confidence or *expectancy*, and lowered expectancy leads to *demotivation*.

Of course, English teachers are not always forbidding, and some students have told me about teachers who were likeable. However, the classroom environment is far from satisfying, due to the conditions imposed, such as having too many things to do and no time to provide supplementary instruction (see Section 1.2.1). By frequently hearing how low achieving students were treated in secondary schools, I realised why my students were showing hostility towards me or reluctance at the beginning of term.

It is possible that teachers' inconsiderate attitudes may partly be caused by the stressful environment which results from lack of time and the rigid framework which they have to follow. Takanashi and Takahashi (1988 cited in Nakata, 1999) also identify *teachers' arrogant attitudes* and the *severity of their working conditions* as among the important reasons for student demotivation. However, such attitudes easily hurt students' feelings and consequently they intensify students' low expectancy. Moreover, when teachers constantly behave in such ways, students may be 'brainwashed' into believing that learning English is a formidable task. As a result, their low achieving students have low expectancy

and consequent demotivation.

It should be mentioned here that in the 1990s and 2000s the MEXT implemented a major curriculum reform in elementary to upper secondary schools, as a remedy for the above-mentioned problems in Japanese education. This involved a drastic reduction in the content of secondary school textbooks, considerable reduction of class hours in the main subjects (to make more hours available for selective subjects and a new subject called Integrated Learning) and a move towards a 5-day school week to replace the 5½-day week (see Section 1.2.4 for details). However, it is widely believed that this reform did not change mainstream education (e.g., Cave, 2003) and students' attitudes towards the main subjects (e.g., English, mathematics) still exhibit low expectancy. This is because the entrance examinations still exist and the style of the tests remains the same for the vast majority of students, in particular for the applicants to the better universities. In other words, enrolment at the universities depends on the candidates' performance in short-answer or multiple-choice examinations. These require test-taking knowledge or skills and involve an enormous amount of memorisation and translation skills in the case of the examinations in English.

### 1.2.3 The Japanese social environment and diversified entrance examination

Although the mainstream trend has not changed, some minor changes to the selection procedures for university examinations have been made. These changes have resulted from one of the governmental proposals in 1997 (Cave, 2001) regarding a relaxation of the conditions for the exams. The proposal advocated less emphasis on traditional written tests for entrance examinations, and more use of diversified selection methods, such as interviews and essay-based exams. This was welcomed particularly by the less prestigious colleges or universities, owing to their need to attract more applicants in order to survive when the number of applicants was declining due to Japan's low birth rate. Such alternative procedures relate to the way in which low achieving EFL students can

enrol in colleges or universities. In other words, the exam procedures partly explain why so many students in the post-compulsory schools have low expectancy and low motivation. Therefore, this subsection will describe the exam methods in more detail.

Before referring to the examination alternatives, we should first understand another important aspect of the students' background: the social environment. In other words, we need to know why low achievers in important subjects for college entrance exams (e.g., English, mathematics) desire to enter colleges or universities, although they usually dislike everything to do with studying, in particular their least favoured subjects. Therefore, the social environment is briefly overviewed in this subsection.

In Japan, enrolling in an elite upper secondary school means ensuring the high probability of a place at an elite university. Correspondingly, entering an elite university means, in general, being qualified after graduation to get a well-paid job or get on a 'promised course' in an elite corporation. Once graduates are employed, their social status is judged by which firm they work for. In summary, the entrance examinations are the crucial turning point in their life, in terms of determining their social status and/or career, and thus also have significant implications for their families. Okada (2001) notes that in no industrial country is one's career apparently determined to such a degree by academic background as in Japan.

However, even if someone cannot enrol in a prestigious university, being a 'university graduate' still has some influence on future employment. This is because Japanese enterprises in their recruitment generally distinguish university graduates from those who only have a secondary school diploma. From the very beginning, the enterprises usually allocate jobs and salaries according to their employees' diplomas. The allocation is commonly based not on an employee's abilities, except when one is highly qualified or has certain skills as well as

diplomas. This can be confirmed from job advertisements. In 2009, the average first month's salary[3] for graduates of 4 year university courses in Japan was 208,306 yen (approx. 1,400 pounds sterling) and for upper secondary graduates 163,038 yen (approx. 1,100 pounds) (Nippon Keidanren, 2010). In this sense, university graduates are privileged members of society. Thus, more than half of all upper secondary graduates go on to college or university.

In this environment, one can understand why pupils try to enrol in a university even if they are low achievers in important academic subjects[4]. In addition to the practical needs, social needs may affect the students' ambitions as well as those of their family. As mentioned above (Section 1.2.1), Japan is indeed an education-oriented society. The influence of this cultural priority seems to be immense.

The following example may illustrate how deeply people care about educational background. Some low achieving students do not have to look for a job because their families own their business or company and they know they will take it over eventually. Even in such circumstances, however, their parents still want them to take a BA degree. Another example may indicate the extent of pride. When we ask about the educational background of individuals who have dropped out of university, they almost always emphasise that they are dropouts of universities, and not mere secondary school graduates. This can also be seen in written statements, such as authors' or other people's introductions to books. From these instances, it is plain that university diplomas, even if not practically significant, are socially meaningful. In summary, social pride is also an important factor in the desire of low achievers to enter colleges or universities.

By considering the two reasons mentioned above, we may reach the conclusion

[3] This was the average first month's salary for university graduates and upper secondary school graduates who were office workers.

[4] English, mathematics and Japanese are generally included as subjects in the examinations. More importantly, English is almost always one of the mandatory subjects, notably in the entrance tests of prestigious universities.

that the recent diversified entrance examinations are welcomed by many candidates. The existence of these students and the willingness on the part of the MEXT to promote university education, as well as the shrinking number of 18-year-olds, have encouraged the emergence of new methods of selection.

However, it should be mentioned here that, before 1997, when the governmental proposal was issued, most of the universities were already using other selection procedures, such as recommended (*suisen*) examinations. These may be described as follows: universities select students partly or mainly on the basis of written recommendations from upper secondary schools. This procedure has, as a matter of fact, been traditional, in particular among private universities, regardless of school level or ranking. The content of the recommendations usually consists of a student's grade point average (GPA) and teachers' written recommendations, and in some cases it also includes records of outstanding sports achievements. After the recommendations are checked by the universities to make sure that the student is qualified, the individual universities hold final tests in the form of academic examinations and/or other kinds of evaluation, such as interviews and short essays. The kinds and/or combinations of the procedures depend on the individual university as well as the required level or quality in terms of candidates' performance. Of the entire enrolment in each university, the proportion decided by *suisen* exams also depends on the individual university.

The methods of *suisen* are generally of three sorts: recommended by designated secondary schools (*shiteikō suisen*); recommended by non-designated schools (*ippan suisen*), and by the applicants' sports record (*supōtsu suisen*). In the first case, the applicants usually have a very good chance of passing the tests because they are recommended by the designated schools. This means that the level or quality of the schools has already been assessed and the number of applicants from them and their GPAs are also specified by individual universities. In summary, such candidates are supposed to be good or better students in terms of their academic ability. Therefore, the applicants usually take an interview and/or

a short essay test without the traditional written tests. In contrast, the students recommended by non-designated schools usually have to take normal examinations and an interview and/or a short essay test. The third case is normally conducted on the basis of the excellence of the students' sports record, although universities commonly require an interview and/or a short essay as supplementary evaluation methods. This is because when the students win a national championship or some similar contest and their names appear in the national and/or local news, the universities use these students partly for purposes of publicity.

It should be noted here that the above description of the *suisen* exam is only a broad outline; the styles and the conditions of the tests all depend on individual universities. In addition, the procedures have tended to be modified, in particular since the MEXT's 1997 proposals.

Until the early 1990s, this exam system was working moderately well, which means that the system selected fairly good students (in terms of academic ability), except for the sports *suisen*. In the sports recommendation exam, the number of candidates was usually very limited and therefore even if the entrants were chosen mainly on the excellence of their sports record, the visibility of low achievers used not to be so apparent. However, the number of 18-year-olds has declined dramatically since the peak of around 2 million in 1992 and is expected to decline to 1.2 million by 2009 (Tsuruta, 2003). This means that by 2009 the supply of places at university will completely fulfil the demand. In other words, all the candidates will get a place at a college or university unless they are selective. This issue, the Crisis in 2009, has accelerated the emergence of various examination alternatives. Not only middle and lower level universities, but even prestigious universities (mainly private ones, but including some national and public schools as well) are trying to use alternative methods. This is because the income from examination fees has gone down owing to the reduced number of 18-year-olds and the tuition income has fallen due to the declining numbers of

students. Needless to say, this situation is particularly severe for the lower-level universities. Some universities are suffering from a lack of candidates and several have already closed their institutions.

Consequently, this has encouraged the emergence of non-traditional examinations, particularly after the governmental proposal in 1997 which suggested flexible access to universities in order to reduce examination pressure on students. One representative form of such tests is called AO (Admissions Office) examinations, which are the main ones in use at most private universities (Kawaijuku Educational Information Network, 2010). In this system, applicants do not need recommendation letters and any students who fulfil the requirements of the individual university can take the exam without the traditional written tests. Although the design or procedures of the tests depend on the individual institutions, it usually requires long hours or days to select new students, using individual methods such as interviews, presentations, short research papers, group discussion and attendance at mock lectures. Although the methods are broadly diversified, the fundamental idea is consistent in all AO exams (Knowledge Station www.gakkou.net, 2010): it is to select students who have the motivation to learn and whose unique individuality cannot be evaluated by academic tests (the stressing of individuality in elementary and secondary education has also been proposed by the MEXT; see the next section for further details). Therefore, the exam has focused not on academic ability but on applicants' motivation and strong determination to study. Additionally, in some colleges or universities, the non-designated school recommendation exams mentioned above tend also to be more flexible than the traditional ones, for example, in requiring certificates in certain skills or abilities (computer programming, accounting, etc.) instead of academic exams. Furthermore, even some of the national and public universities which are usually regarded as better or more competitive institutions have adopted the AO exam system. Many of the universities have also reduced the standard number of subjects required in the Centre Exam, which all candidates for national or public universities are

supposed to take as part of their entrance exams.

Thus, by one means or another the number of low achievers in universities has tended to grow. In fact, a recent phenomenon has emerged, which may illustrate the universities' sense of crisis in terms of dropping entrants' academic abilities. Most of the national universities have decided to return to the basic principle of measuring overall academic ability by requiring 7 subjects to be taken in the Centre Exam, covering all subject areas. This was first implemented in 2004 (Tsuruta, 2003).

Given such a trend, which has admitted students to university without the ability to meet the university standard, the number of students who are reluctant to study is increasing. And these low achievers are likely to have low expectancy, which leads to low motivation. Their growing number makes the reluctance problem worse.

### 1.2.4 Recent educational reforms which may lead to a drop in average academic ability

Like the diversified entrance exam problem above, the educational reforms introduced by the government appear to have increased the number of low achievers. In other words, the reforms may actually have contributed to the lowering of average academic ability among university entrants. In this section we look at some possible reasons for this.

From the late 1980s to the 2000s, the MEXT implemented major educational reforms from elementary level to upper secondary level. The reforms implemented from 1992 to 2002 had a particularly intense impact on the public. This is because the reforms involved drastic reductions in content and class hours in core subjects which are important for the university entrance examinations. The reforms appear to have affected the academic abilities of schoolchildren and will

eventually affect those of university entrants.

The reforms may be outlined as follows: in Japan, the state school system had been criticised for its rigidity, uniformity and exam-orientedness, as mentioned above (see Section 1.2.1). The purpose of reforming it was to give children more flexibility and less pressure in their lives and the new system was called *yutori kyōiku* (relaxed education or education which gives students room to grow), emphasizing the slogan: *kosei jūshi* (stress on individuality) (Tsuneyoshi, 2004). Although curriculum revision had been introduced gradually since 1989, the 1999 revision is the most radical since the introduction of a national curriculum in the late 1950s (Cave, 2001). The two reforms which seemed to have the most influence on almost all schoolchildren (Cave, 2003) were curricular reform and the adoption as standard of a 5-day school week instead of the previous 5½-day week. Among the curricular reforms, the crucial change was a considerable reduction of content and class hours for the traditional compulsory subjects[5] in elementary and lower secondary schools. At primary level, 14%-18% (15% on average) of class time per subject was lost and at lower secondary, 17%-34% (25% on average; 25% in English) (ibid: 89). This reduction aimed to allow more hours for elective subjects and for a new subject called Integrated Learning (sōgō-teki na gakushū). In addition, 30% of the curriculum content was dropped (Tsuneyoshi, 2004). The 5-day school week was gradually introduced from 1992 and was implemented in 2002 (ibid.).

This reform has been criticised for leading to a decline in academic achievement, particularly among middle and lower achievers (see, e.g., Goodman, 2003). The problem appears to have been quite predictable because of the loss of content and class hours. In addition, there is little time for teachers to give extra support, such as supplementary lessons. One reason for this is the burden of Integrated Learning and elective subjects. The MEXT has provided only very general guidelines in these subjects in the course of study, unlike its predecessors in the

[5] They are Japanese, mathematics, social studies, science, English, art and craft, and music.

past. This means that teachers may need much more time to prepare the subjects, in particular the subject called Integrated Learning, which might be better described as "topic-based exploratory learning, cutting across traditional subject areas" (Cave, 2003: 89). The subject often involves 'experiences in society at large', such as volunteering to help collect recyclable refuse in the local community and help nurses at nursery schools in order to raise environmental awareness; or learning through experience as a theme or topic (Personal interview, Keiko Kanazawa, 2007, see below in this section).

There are two probable ways in which the reform has increased the burden on teachers. One is that teachers were used in the past to very detailed guidelines, namely, they were trained to follow specific suggestions in detail. It is, therefore, fairly probable that they find it a struggle to teach the new subject; they have little idea of planning what to teach, how to teach it, where to take students, getting permission from an institution to take students there or allow them to work there, and so on. More importantly, the MEXT requires them to make detailed plans, including the purpose, content, ability to cultivate or attitude to foster, activities entailed, procedures to follow, settings and evaluation methods (MEXT, 2010). Among the required items, evaluation methods appear to be difficult to decide on or even to think of, because "the aims of Integrated Learning are laid down [so] as to foster the ability to think, learn, and explore independently and creatively, and to discover and solve problems by oneself" (translation from the course of study to be followed cited in Cave, 2001: 179). This kind of ability is difficult to measure, unlike the abilities trained by other more traditional subjects. Since they have to include certain results or specify improvements in methods of marking, it is likely that teachers have to make 'carefully worked-out' and logically understandable programmes, which are predictably time-consuming.

Furthermore, although the content has been slimmed down, class hours have also been cut and there are no more Saturday classes. This means that teachers have

no time to provide supplementary classes or tutoring. In summary, teachers have ended up with more work to do because of the additional classes and the tight time schedule.

Comments from the field may give added confirmation. Keiko Kanazawa, an experienced teacher who has worked for more than 10 years in Japanese state secondary schools, comments:

> Although the academic burden on students seems on the surface to be diminished, this is not really true. For example, students need traditional content to understand the next step or unit in materials, but many of the traditional intermediate parts have been reduced and there is no time for supplementary activities for such parts in school. This situation produces more students with difficulties of learning and 'ochikobore'. The burden appears to be the same as or heavier than before, particularly for students in state schools who want to enrol in better ranking high schools and universities. Ambitious students tend to enrol in private schools because such institutions have a better curriculum for passing entrance exams…
>
> Concerning our tight working schedule, one important reason which makes us busier than before [the reform] is Integrated Learning, because the aims are vague to us and also Monkasho [MEXT] requires certain results or evaluation in written form…Unlike other subjects where traditional tests can be given, evaluating students in this subject is difficult. So, we have to make a 'well-planned' programme which is time-consuming. Also, Integrated Learning usually involves 'out-of-school' activities, such as helping nurses in nursery schools…Taking children out of school is very stressful because they can easily create problems… (Personal interview, 2007; Original in Japanese, translated into English by the author).

Therefore, there is almost no doubt that students have the same negative feelings towards core subjects, such as low expectancy and low motivation. This is because the classroom situation remains the same, even though the curriculum has been radically reduced.

It should be noted here that although the exam pressure has grown less due to the alternative exams, many still believe that the surest way to enter universities is

to pass the traditional written tests. In other words, the great majority of candidates are still under the same pressure as before. But other students, including middle or lower achievers, tend to study less because of the radical reductions. This may lead to a wider gap between top-achieving students and middle or lower achievers.

This gap seems to be shown most clearly in the differences between private and state secondary schools, because private schools are less controlled by the MEXT than state ones. Around one-third of the private secondary schools in the Tokyo and Osaka areas have no plans to introduce the five-day school week as standard. In addition, private lower secondary schools in Tokyo area are likely to give 50% more lesson time to the core subjects in upper secondary school entrance examinations than state schools do (Cave, 2003). This means that for the purpose of entering better schools students need to study as much as before, regardless of the curriculum changes. Consequently, top-achieving pupils, particularly in state schools, have to study outside school. Yet middle and lower achievers now study less than before. Thus, the number of low achievers may grow because the average academic level of the middle achievers may sink. Many commentators and scholars in Japan also discuss the decline in performance (see, e.g., Falout and Maruyama, 2004; Tsuneyoshi, 2004).

Considering this, the complicated situation which produces numbers of low achieving university entrants should not be surprising. That is, some less industrious students may enrol through the non-traditional exam system, while examination pressure and a non-supportive class environment may continue to create candidates reluctant to study core subjects, such as English. In a nutshell, the educational reforms seem to have made the problems worse in terms of students' low expectancy. Lower ability leads to lower expectancy and eventually to lower motivation.

By surveying school English education and its cultural background in Japan, I

have attempted to provide readers with some idea of the English learning environment of Japanese students and their unique situation. Many EFL learners in Japan are inclined to have a low level of expectancy in English classes because they are in an unsupportive setting which leads to low levels of English proficiency. Additionally, other aspects of the situation, such as the diversified entrance examination procedures and lower competition due to the reduced numbers of 18-year-olds, are likely to increase the number and proportion of low-achieving EFL students in colleges or universities. Knowing the background of my students will, I hope, make it easier to understand the aims of this research and the results which follow the investigation.

Before moving to the next chapter, the following section will present the outline of this thesis.

## 1.3 Outline of thesis

In this chapter, we have observed that the non-supportive classroom context in secondary school could be a cause of the low level of English among many students in Japanese universities. We have also observed that their low levels of English appear to have a negative impact on their levels of expectancy, and that this may eventually demotivated them in the study of English in class. In relation to these discussions, it is necessary to examine the links between these factors in greater depth; we need to consider the links between levels of English and expectancy, and between levels of expectancy and motivation.

Thus, Chapter 2 takes an in-depth look at these two types of relationships, on the basis of the rationale and findings of previous studies in the psychological literature and L2 motivation field. These relationships are discussed in the Japanese context. Throughout the chapter, as a result of these literature reviews, two sets of research questions are posed. The first set is associated with students' perception of the relationship between levels of English and expectancy. The

second set pertains to their perception of the relationship between levels of expectancy and motivation.

Cooperative learning is considered to generate supportive classroom settings which may lead to increase learners' levels of expectancy, motivation and English; this could be a solution for the Japanese students' demotivation (see Chapter 3 for more details). Therefore, Chapter 3 mainly explores how cooperative learning works to provide this solution.

More specifically, I first define cooperative learning and also outline an example of cooperative learning methods. I also identify peer cooperation as a vital component in the method, clarifying the suitability of peer cooperation as a key variable in this study. I then discuss two possible effects of peer cooperation on expectancy, one direct and one indirect (the indirect effect involves the level of English as a mediating factor; and these two effects are the primary focus in this study). With the aim of exploring these two effects, I examine three types of relationship between variables; between peer cooperation and levels of English, and between levels of English and expectancy (for the indirect effect); between peer cooperation and expectancy (for the direct effect). Rationales and previous research relevant to these relationships are reviewed for this examination. Throughout the chapter, as an outcome of this examination, three sets of research questions (Sets 3, 4 and 6) and two single research questions (questions 5 and 7) are posed. Set 3 concerns students' perceived changes in peer cooperation. Sets 4 and 6 mainly concern their perceived relationships between variables: between peer cooperation and levels of English (for Set 4); between peer cooperation and expectancy (for Set 6). Question 5 aims to collect supplementary information about the relationship relevant to Set 4; it concerns the *actual* relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English. Question 7 relates to other possible relationships between four key variables (peer cooperation, levels of English, expectancy, L2 classroom motivation) from the students' point of view.

Chapter 4 describes the research procedures of the present study. In addition to a detailed description of them, it discusses the suitability of the qualitative technique used in this study, defining the investigation as an exploratory case study. It also discusses the trustworthiness of the procedures.

Chapter 5 examines the findings to answer the research questions of Sets 1 and 2. As mentioned above, these sets of questions mainly concern the perceived relationships between levels of English and expectancy, and between levels of expectancy and motivation; the chapter discusses the nature of these relationships in the minds of the participants. These sets of research questions also concern the students' perceived changes in some related variables (levels of English, expectancy and motivation). Therefore, the chapter examines these changes over the cooperative learning course.

Chapter 6 reports the findings to answer all the other research questions, Sets 3, 4 and 6, and question 5, but not question 7. As stated above, the three sets of research questions relate to changes in peer cooperation (over the course), relationships between peer cooperation and levels of English, and between peer cooperation and levels of expectancy, as the students see them. The chapter discusses the perceived nature of these relationships as well as the perceived changes in peer cooperation. In addition, only question 5 requires statistical analyses which concern an actual relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English. Therefore, the chapter also discusses the results of the quantitative analyses.

Chapter 7 focuses on the findings related to the last research question, question 7. This question concerns, as mentioned above, other possible relationships between all four key variables from the students' point of view; the chapter discusses several other perceived relationships which are not included in the main research questions (the main questions refer to all the other questions except question 7 because they relate to the two possible effects of peer cooperation on

expectancy/motivation). The chapter also discusses the theoretical and pedagogical implications which are associated with these findings.

The conclusion (Chapter 8) draws together the findings in the present study. The chapter summarises the main findings and describes some theoretical and methodological implications which may contribute to the field of second/foreign language learning motivation. It also describes the pedagogical implications for English teaching in Japan as well as for other contexts. It then considers the limitations of the study, followed by suggestions respecting possible areas of future research.

# CHAPTER 2

# LEVELS OF ENGLISH AMONG JAPANESE STUDENTS, THEIR EXPECTANCY AND MOTIVATION: RELATING THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE TO THE CURRENT RESEARCH LITERATURE

## Introduction

As discussed in Chapter 1, noticeable numbers of Japanese university students appear to suffer from demotivation in EFL classrooms and this is likely to be influenced by their low levels of expectancy. The expectancy level is likely to be positively related to their poor language ability, which can sometimes result from a non-supportive learning environment in secondary school.

To provide a rationale for the relationships above, this chapter discusses the relationships between students' levels of English and their expectancy and also those between their expectancy and their motivation. These relationships are discussed in the Japanese EFL context with reference to the wider research literature. In the course of the discussion, research questions concerning the two relationships are proposed.

## 2.1 Students' levels of English and expectancy

Students' levels of English are likely to influence their expectancy. Thinking of the unfavourable environment in EFL classrooms in Japan (see Chapter 1 for details), lower achievers are the most likely to have lower levels of expectancy. This is partly because they have often in the past experienced an *uncontrollable*[6] situation in classrooms, which undermines their expectancy. In language learning classrooms, in particular, where students' expectancy refers to their expectations of "successful task fulfilment" (Dörnyei, 1997: 489), it is understandable that the

[6] An *uncontrollable* situation means, for example, a situation in which a student cannot fulfil a required task in class through his/her own abilities and/or behaviour.

context and the students' previous learning experiences will have a significant effect on learning.

To understand these uncontrollable situations, we should first recall the classroom environment with which students have become familiar. In general, every student has his/her own pace of learning but teachers usually have their own plans and responsibilities and tend to keep to their own pace of teaching. Hence, it is unlikely that teachers can keep the content progress slow enough for low achievers to follow because they have to be concerned about other students (higher achievers). Even in a school which separates students into classes according to their achievement levels, there are still likely to be some lower achievers in each class. These students are likely to experience an uncontrollable situation, at least to a certain extent.

In Japanese state secondary schools, the situation seems to be particularly bad. To meet governmental requirements, teachers have to cover all the content in the textbooks, so they tend to keep to a rigid routine and have no time to provide supplementary lessons (see Chapter 1 for details). To make things worse, there is almost no system for dividing students into appropriate classes by achievement levels because of the MEXT's long-held policy of 'equality'. There are some 'speciality' schools based on a recent project which was initiated by the MEXT in 2002, namely, "after school learning tutors", "super science high schools" and "super English-language schools" (Tsuneyoshi, 2004: 385). The basic idea of these schools is to meet individual needs. However, the project appears to be more of a PR strategy, aimed at responding to the vast number of concerned critics in Japan who believe that the recent educational reform has lowered average academic achievement (see Chapter 1 for details of the reform). In fact, the number of such 'special' schools is limited and therefore the project's influence on schools in general seems to be slight. In addition, although grade-skipping was recently legitimised by the government, its extent is very limited and it appears to be rarely approved: it allows universities to accept candidates below the age of 18 in

cases of outstanding talent and motivation but fails to allow grade skipping at lower levels of the education system. The purpose of the restriction is to avoid encouraging competition and elitism (Cave, 2001). This is the MEXT's 'equality' policy, by which all students should be treated or educated 'equally' in terms of academic skills and knowledge, regardless of students' achievement level or ability (see Section 1.2.1 for details). In a nutshell, the MEXT's stance is basically unchanged in terms of its egalitarianism, even after the recent reform and the speciality school project.

Because of this 'equality' policy, the classroom environment in Japan can be non-supportive; many students can easily be left behind and eventually become unable even to understand what is going on in class. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter 1, the influence of university entrance examinations on the school curriculum and on students, which leads to exam-oriented lessons, appears to exacerbate the situation. In EFL classrooms, this situation is more serious than in other subjects, because English is one of the most important subjects in terms of passing entrance examinations for universities (see Chapter 1 for details). In this highly structured environment, low achievers seem to feel that they have little control over their ability to complete class tasks successfully.

Concerning the effects of uncontrollability, Miller and Seligman (1974 cited in Seligman, 1975) demonstrated that *learned helplessness*, which results from experience with uncontrollability, has harmful effects on expectancy of success[7] and on belief in the causality of success and failure. Miller and Seligman also showed that experience with controllability has positive effects on expectancy and the belief in causality. In their experiment, three student groups were subjected to different environments: one with loud noise from which they could not escape (inescapable), another with loud noise from which they could escape (escapable),

[7] The definition of *expectancy of success* is very similar to that of expectancy in this thesis, as mentioned above in this section. Although there are likely to be certain differences between researchers (see Section 2.2 for more details), expectancy of success is treated in this thesis as equivalent to expectancy, unless otherwise specified, in order to avoid unnecessary confusion.

and a third with no loud noise. All the students were given two new tasks: a task which required skill and a task where the results depended on chance (a guessing game). In the skill task, in each of ten trials the students sorted 15 cards into ten categories of shape, trying to finish within 15 seconds. At the end of each trial, they rated (on a 0-10 scale) what they thought their chances of succeeding on the next trial were. Informants who were previously helpless in the loud noise (inescapable) environment indicated very little change in their expectancy for success after each new success and failure. They had difficulty in perceiving that their action could affect success or failure. In contrast, the control group and the group who were subject to escapable noise showed great changes in their expectancy following each success and failure. These two groups seemed to believe outcomes to be dependent on their responses.

In a similar vein, *learned helplessness* may be a possible reason for low expectancy among Japanese university students in EFL classes. In other words, the students' levels of English seem to influence their expectancy (or motivation) because their classroom experiences with controllability or uncontrollability depend, at least to a certain extent, on their achievement levels. That is, lower achievers experience an uncontrollable situation more frequently than higher achievers, and higher achievers have more experience with controllability than lower achievers.

The relationship between achievement and expectancy may also be explained in a slightly wider way by attribution theory, which is one of "the most influential perspectives in achievement motivation research" (Elliott, Hufton, Anderman & Illushin, 2000: 125). The concept of learned helplessness can be considered one aspect of attribution theory, and this can be also clarified by understanding the concept of attribution theory. Let us look at the concept to see how the theory explains the link between achievement and expectancy, seeing how learned helplessness fits into attribution theory.

Attribution theory seeks to understand the attributions of causality for success and failure. It classifies attributions under three broad headings: *internal* versus *external* (locus of control), stable versus unstable, and *controllable* versus *uncontrollable* (Weiner, 1979). For example, ability is internal and is likely to be stable and uncontrollable; task difficulty is external and is likely to be stable and uncontrollable; luck is external, unstable and uncontrollable (ibid.). Learned helplessness, which was demonstrated by Miller and Seligman above, uses one of the three, *controllability*, to explain the effects. An important assumption of attribution theory proposed by Weiner (1994) is that personal attributional perception influences an individual's performance (and motivation). Thus, ascribing failure to lack of ability (uncontrollable) leads to lower achievement, while ascribing failure to lack of effort (controllable) leads to higher achievement. Importantly, he also affirms that lack of ability attributions are related to lower expectancy of success as well as to lower motivation, whereas lack of effort attributions are related to higher subsequent expectancy of success and increased motivation. In short, attributions of causality may influence learners' achievements through their expectancy and motivation. Considering this, we can see that low achieving EFL students in Japanese universities could have lack of ability attributions which may have resulted from their low levels of English (failure); this attribution may have a negative impact on their expectancy and motivation. In other words, this suggests the link between achievement (levels of English) and expectancy (and motivation).

Interestingly, the '(internal) locus of control' (Rotter, 1954), which could be regarded as one aspect of attribution theory, appears to have noticeable similarities to other well-known concepts, such as 'self-efficacy' and 'expectancy of success'. These similarities may also help to explicate the connection between achievement and expectancy. In order to compare these three concepts, I would like to describe 'locus of control' first and then go into the similarities between the three concepts.

Locus of control refers to the dimension of *internal* versus *external* personality. For example, the internal locus of control refers to the belief that success or failure depends on people's own behaviour. A person with an external locus of control, however, is more likely to believe that uncontrollable factors, such as luck, cause success or failure (Slavin, 2006). From this it follows that a student who has an internal locus of control is likely to have better marks and do well in class than a student who has an external locus of control (ibid.).

Internal locus of control is sometimes compared to self-efficacy, due to the similarity of the two concepts. Both can refer to students' control-related beliefs about their academic capabilities which seem to play an essential role in their motivation to achieve (Zimmerman, 2000). Accordingly, some researchers regard them as equivalent (see e.g., Slavin, 2006) and many researchers consider them to be at least related (e.g., Shell, Bruning & Colvin, 1995). The closeness can be seen if we look at definitions of these two concepts. Bandura (1977: 193) defines perceived self-efficacy as the personal expectations that "one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome". According to Zimmerman (2000: 84), in questionnaires of self-efficacy, the items focus on task-specific *performance expectations*, such as "How certain are you that you can diagram this sentence?".

Expectancy of success is also similar to the two concepts above. The consistency can also be seen in the definition of this term. Expectancy of success is defined as students' "beliefs about how well they will do on an upcoming task (e.g., "how well do you think you will do in maths next year?")" (Wigfield, Tonks & Eccles, 2004: 171). Atkinson (1974: 14) defines it as "the strength of expectancy (or subjective probability) that performance of a task will be followed by success (Ps)". As we can see, the three concepts refer to personal beliefs about the capacity to reach designated goals. Thus, they seem noticeably consistent[8].

[8] In accordance with the small differences between the three concepts, they will be considered as the same construct in this thesis unless otherwise specified.

Taking account of this consistency, we may easily understand that the connection between achievement and expectancy could be also supported/explained by all the three concepts, as well as by the results of many studies relevant to these concepts. To put it another way, as described above, locus of control could be one aspect of attribution theory, and this means that the connection explained by attribution theory may be also explicated by the concepts of 'expectancy' or 'self-efficacy'.

It should be noted here, to avoid confusion regarding categorization, that although the concept of locus of control uses the same taxonomy (internal / external) as one of the three classifications in attributional factors which are suggested by Weiner (1979), they are not identical, although they seem to a great extent to overlap. Weiner (1992: 251) has pointed out the difference:

> …aptitude was contrasted with laziness, for although both are internal and stable, only the latter is perceived as controllable. In a similar manner, contrasts were made between fatigue and temporary exertion, both being internal and unstable, with only the latter considered controllable.

That is, the concept of locus of control focuses on a personality dimension, particularly one's beliefs; Weiner's attribution factors have a broader range than this, including personal health and customs[9].

Many researchers have demonstrated the relationships between expectancy and achievement (e.g., Nyce, Brannigan & Duchnowski, 1977; Bruinsma, 2004). However, contrasted with the abundance of expectancy-related literature, little work can be found on the influence of achievement on expectancy. In the L2 field in particular, it is rare to find such studies. In addition, although one key aim of this thesis is to explore how low-achieving EFL students in Japanese universities feel in the classroom, there are hardly any studies in similar settings which focus

[9] Although the two concepts are not identical, they are treated in this thesis as if they were the same, unless otherwise specified.

on the connection between these things. Considering the importance of social and cultural differences in studies in the L2 field (see e.g., Peck, 1998; Chen et al., 2005), such research is needed.

Moreover, there is need for more qualitative work in this area. According to Patton (1980: 22), the main advantages of qualitative procedures are *depth* and *detail*: qualitative data consist of "detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviours; direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts…". Quantitative procedures are different; they depend on the use of instruments based on a standardised framework and therefore they limit data collection to certain predetermined responses or analysis categories (ibid.). In addition, purely quantitative methods are often criticised for their tendency to neglect the social and cultural construction of the 'variables' which qualitative research seeks to correlate (Silverman, 2000). Notwithstanding the advantages of qualitative approaches, quantitative methods also have their strengths, such as preciseness and generalizability. However, considering the benefits of qualitative procedures and the lack of qualitative research at present on the topics of L2 motivation and L2 learning (see e.g., Dörnyei, 2001; Allen, 2006), there is a need for more qualitative exploration, in particular in Japanese settings.

In this section, I have looked at the relationships between low achievement and expectancy in Japanese EFL classrooms, focusing in particular on the dynamic nature of this relationship. To explore such relationships, my first set of research questions is as follows:

**RQ1a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**
**RQ1b: Do they perceive any changes in their levels of English between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**

**RQ1c: Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of English are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?**
**RQ1d: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

Although the key questions of Set 1 are 1c and 1d, RQ 1a and RQ 1b are necessary prerequisites because without knowing the students' perceptions of changes in the two key variables (included in RQ 1c: levels of English and expectancy), it would be difficult to understand the reasons and/or the background to their answers for RQ 1c and RQ 1d.

## 2.2 Expectancy and motivation

In this section, the relationships between expectancy and *motivation* are examined. As discussed in the previous section, students' levels of English seem to influence their expectancy. In other words, their poor language ability appears to reduce their level of expectancy. The reduced level of expectancy is likely to be related to their reluctance to study English. Specifically, considering students' disappointment in their performance in secondary schools and its influence on self-confidence, their unwillingness is understandable and they are likely to feel *unmotivated* (see Chapter 1 for details). In the previous section, I demonstrated how expectancy-related theories, involving the three concepts (expectancy, internal locus of control and self-efficacy), suggest close relationships between achievement and expectancy. In this section, the focus is shifted to the effect of expectancy on *motivation*.

The relationship between expectancy and motivation has been presented by many researchers and theorists in the psychological literature. One example is Graham's (1984) laboratory study, which involved sixth-grade children, using the attributional framework. The participants were allowed four trials to repeat failure on a puzzle-solving task. Following the failure, an experimenter pretending to be a teacher showed either sympathy, anger, or no affective

reactions to them. Then they were asked their self-ascriptions for failure in response to the question, "Why do you think you did poorly on these puzzles?" Graham predicted that when sympathy was shown the students would feel that failure was due to low ability and, when anger was conveyed, that failure was caused by lack of effort. Her assumptions were supported by this experiment. In addition, expectancy of success was also lower when sympathy was communicated and children given the sympathy signal tended to feel that they were less competent and to indicate less perseverance in the task. In other words, lack of ability attributions pertained to lower expectancy of success as well as to lower motivation. More importantly, this study also indicates that expectancy, perceived competence and persistence were all positively correlated, which means that "greater expectancy of success was accompanied by higher perceptions of competence and more persistence at the task" (ibid: 47). This suggests that positive expectancy of success has a positive impact on motivation and negative expectancy influences motivation negatively.

Empirical investigations in the framework of attribution theory also demonstrate the role of expectancy on motivation. Vispoel and Austin (1995: 385) found that higher achievers were more willing to endorse internal attributions (ability, effort, strategy, interest) and family influence as reasons for success, and less willing to endorse ability, luck, and the role of others (teacher and family members) as reasons for failure. They also found that outcome differences for all internal attributions (particularly effort and ability) were more noticeable than those for the traditional external attributions (luck and task difficulty). In accordance with the fact that students' performance appears to be closely associated with motivation to learn (e.g., Weiner, 1994; Atkinson, 1974), this hints that internal attributions are related to motivation. Further, considering that internal locus of control is substantially similar to expectancy (see Section 2.1 for details), the results also suggest that expectancy is positively related to motivation.

The outline of Vispoel and Austin's study is as follows. Junior high school students

(7th and 8th grade) responded to experimenter-designed questionnaires which included items assessing either success or failure attributions and course grades. All participants were enrolled in English, maths, general music and physical education courses. Questionnaires included separate pages for each of the four subject areas, and each page began with a set of directions asking for past experiences in junior high school classes which were important to the participants (the activities that they might think of were listed, with space for any other activities not listed). After they had identified a success or failure experience, pupils then chose a likely reason for each outcome (activity). Possible reasons consisted of eight attributions: ability, effort, strategy, interest, task difficulty, luck, family influence and teacher influence. Each reason was described by a statement (e.g., ability: "I have strong/weak skills in English"), followed by 6-point Likert-scale options ('strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree').

Like attribution-related investigations, research based on self-efficacy theory also looks at the relationships between expectancy and motivation. One empirical study, involving high school ninth and tenth graders, by Zimmerman, Bandura and Martinez-Pons (1992: 668) shows such relationships. In their study, the students in a social studies course responded to two subscales from the Children's Multidimensional Self-Efficacy Scales devised by Bandura (1989 cited in Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992): self-efficacy for self-regulated learning and self-efficacy for academic achievement. The scale for self-regulated learning consisted of 11 items, including such items, as "How well can you finish homework assignments by deadlines?" and "How well can you remember information presented in class and textbooks?". These items measured students' perceived capability to use a variety of self-regulated learning strategies. The scale for academic achievement comprised nine items which measured students' perceived capability to achieve in nine domains: mathematics, algebra, science, biology, reading and writing language skills, computer use, foreign language proficiency, social studies, and English grammar. The scale included items such as "How well can you learn social studies?" Students rated self-efficacy according to a

7-point scale (*not well at all* for a rating of 1, *not too well* for 3, *pretty well* for 5 and *very well* for 7). The results showed that their achievement self-efficacy was significantly predictive of their final grade in the course. In addition, a significant causal path was found between the efficacy for self-regulated learning and that for academic achievement. These results suggest that self-efficacy influences motivation. Considering the consistency between self-efficacy and expectancy (see 2.1 for details), they imply altogether that expectancy is positively associated with motivation.

Other studies also support the connection between self-efficacy (expectancy) and motivation (persistence). Multon et al. (1991) conducted a meta-analytic review of nearly 40 studies. The overall criteria for a study to be included in the analysis were that the study provides: a measure of self-efficacy, a measure of academic performance or persistence, and sufficient information to calculate appropriate effect size estimates. A total of 39 studies were included in the analysis. (The original sample was 68 studies in total but 28 were eliminated for failing to meet one or more of the criteria.) As regards efficacy-performance analysis, 36 studies were used, involving nearly 5,000 subjects across 38 samples with an average age of 16.6 years; the great majority of samples consisted of elementary school children (60.6%) and college students (28.9%), involving 7.9% of high school students and 2.6% of non-students. Regarding the academic levels of the students, 55.3% were normal-achieving and 42.1% were low-achieving (2.6% were undetermined). The total effect size (.38) significantly supported the positive relation between self-efficacy (expectancy) and academic performance. With respect to the efficacy-persistence analysis, 18 studies were involved (15 of which were also used in the performance analysis). The total sample size was nearly 1,200 subjects and the ages ranged from 9.1 to 20, the average being 11.9 years. The overall effect size between self-efficacy and persistence (.34) was significant. The findings indicate that expectancy has an impact on motivation (persistence).

Expectancy-value theory, which has often been used by many researchers

(DeBacker & Nelson, 1999), also suggests the relationship between expectancy and motivation. This long-standing perspective on motivation originated from a formula which was developed by Atkinson (Slavin, 2006). According to this formula, people's motivation to achieve something is determined by the product of their estimation of their chance of success (perceived probability of success: *Ps*) and the value which they place on success (incentive value of success: *Is*) (ibid.). An extensive model of expectancy-value theory has been developed by Eccles and her colleagues (Elliott et al., 2000). This model assumes that expectancy directly predicts achievement-related choices, and it also influences performance, effort and persistence (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). Many studies on this model show that expectancy beliefs predict students' marks and test scores (Elliott et al., 2000).

As for the relationship between expectancy and motivation, a study conducted by Meece et al. (1990) shows the linkages between these factors. Methodologically, their study can be outlined as follows. Their empirical investigation continued for two years, involving lower secondary school students (in its second year, they were 7th through 9th graders) in classes of mathematics. Using questionnaires, they examined the relative influence of past grades, students' self-perceptions (ability perceptions, performance expectancies, value perceptions and anxiety) on their subsequent grades and course enrolment intentions in mathematics. The Student Attitude Questionnaire (SAQ) was partly administered during the spring term of both years. The affective variables were assessed by 7-point Likert-type items, and final grades for both years were collected from school records as measures of previous and current performance (scores ranged from 2 for E as failure to 14 for A+). The ability measure consisted of three items asking about students' sense of their maths ability and how well they were doing in maths. The expectancy measure included two items, inquiring how well they expected to do in their present maths course. The importance measure comprised two items asking how important it was to them to be good at maths and to get good grades in this subject. The SAQ also contained an item asking whether they would voluntarily take more maths in the future (intentions). The anxiety measures were included

in the SAQ during the second year of the study (5 items), focusing on negative affective reactions, such as nervousness about maths and maths tests.

The findings of Meece et al. (1990) may be summarised as follows. Patterns of relations in the results were similar across all groups. Regarding the relations, the findings indicated that in both years ability perceptions, expectancy and importance all related positively to grades. For each year, the relations between *ability perceptions* and grades and between *expectancy* and grades were stronger than those between the importance of the subject and grades. In addition, the year-1 *ability perceptions* directly and positively predicted year-2 *expectancy* and importance. These results suggest that expectancy and ability perceptions are closely and positively related, and their effects on grades are stronger than the effects of subject importance on grades. In other words, expectancy can be considered an influential factor on motivation.

Interestingly, the findings also suggest that the factor of ability perception is so closely related to expectancy as to be inseparable. When we think realistically of judging our own expectancy, it seems to be difficult to separate ability perception from expectancy, because we usually judge how well we can do a certain thing on the basis, mainly or partly, of our estimation of our own ability.

The study of Meece et al. gives more expectancy-related findings in connection with anxiety in their study; both expectancy and importance have strong, negative and direct effects on students' anxiety, which indicates that students who have more positive expectancy are less anxious. The findings also show that expectancy has stronger negative effects on anxiety than subject importance has. This relationship between expectancy and anxiety appears to indirectly exhibit a positive relationship between expectancy and motivation. According to Ehrman (1996: 138), students' motivation is negatively related to anxiety, and "intense anxiety interferes with their ability to use their skills and abilities". This may suggest that less anxiety leads to the enhancement of motivation. Accordingly, the

findings of Meece et al. about expectancy and motivation might suggest that greater expectancy is likely to increase to some extent the level of motivation by reducing the level of anxiety.

## 2.3 Expectancy and motivation in L2 learning

Up to this point, the discussion has focused on mainstream psychological and educational psychological theories of motivation and related research. Here, the focus moves to the L2 field because the thesis investigates events in an L2 environment. Many researchers have proposed its importance in leading motivational theories, such as attribution theory (e.g., Kraemer, 1995) and self-efficacy models. In particular, from the perspective of self-efficacy, the sensitivity which a student feels about a certain task and/or academic subject seems to be well documented (see e.g., Randhawa, et al. 1993; Zimmerman, 2000; see also earlier in this section). Therefore, this section discusses the relationships between expectancy and motivation in the L2 field.

Here, concern was expressed in the early 1990s over the somewhat narrow perspectives on motivation. Several researchers in the L2 field (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994a, 1994b; Oxford & Shearin, 1994) pointed out that mainstream psychological and educational psychological theories of motivation, such as are mentioned above in this section, are not reflected in L2 motivation theories and research. These researchers, at the same time, identified expectancy as one important motivational component in L2 learning. Since then, there has been a growing number of empirical studies involving such theories or expectancy, although their number is still limited in comparison to those in the psychological literature.

One empirical study which responded to this gap in the research was conducted by Tremblay and Gardner (1995). Their research is based on Gardner's (1985) Socio-Educational Model, which is a well-known motivation theory in L2 learning.

They extended the model by introducing 'new motivational variables' which are derived from some dominant motivation theories in the psychological literature, such as the expectancy-value model, attribution theory and goal setting theory[10]. Roughly speaking, what they mainly tried to find out was whether the motivational variables (goal salience[11], valence[12] and self-efficacy together with adaptive attributions[13]) play a role as *mediators* between attitudes towards the target language (language attitudes)[14] and motivation, consequently leading to achievement. They found all hypothesised relations to be positively and significantly linked. Among these findings, the following are relevant to present discussion: (a) *Self-efficacy* (expectancy), which was influenced by attitudes towards the target language and adaptive attributions[15], first directly affected students' *motivational behaviour*, and then the motivational behaviour had direct effects on their achievement; (b) Goal salience and valence, which were influenced by attitudes towards the target language, directly affected motivational behaviour.

In brief, in Tremblay and Gardner's study, *self-efficacy* (expectancy) was found to act, alongside other variables (goal salience and valence), to increase students' *motivation* which led to achievement. Thus, these findings suggest that

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[10] Goal setting theory assumes that individuals who have accepted specific and challenging goals outperform individuals with non-specific and easy goals (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

[11] Goal salience is a variable derived from goal setting theory, and it was assessed by two scales labelled *goal specificity* and *goal frequency*. The former is designed to measure "the extent to which students have specific goals in their French course" and the latter is designed to measure "the frequency of goal strategy use (e.g., making plans or schedules) to study French (ibid: 509, 512).

[12] Valence is generally defined as "the subjective value that an individual associates with a particular outcome", and it was assessed by two scales labelled *desire to learn French* and *attitudes toward learning French* (ibid: 508).

[13] Adaptive attributions refer to attributions which are associated with high self-efficacy, including attributions of success to ability, attributions of success to effort and of failure to lack of effort; conversely, mal-adaptive attributions involve attributions of failure to lack of ability, attributions to the context or to luck in cases of success and failure (ibid.). This variable was measured by questionnaires asking students whether they would attribute their success to ability, effort, context, or luck, and their failure to lack of ability, lack of effort, context, or bad luck (ibid.).

[14] Language attitudes consist of two classes of variable: integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situations. The former refers to "an open and positive regard for other groups and for groups that speak the language", and it is composed of three categories: attitudes toward the target language group, interest in foreign languages and integrative orientation (ibid: 506). The latter comprises two categories of attitudes: attitude toward the language course and attitudes toward the language teacher (ibid.).

[15] Among factors consisting of adaptive attributions, attributions of success to ability were significantly related to the variable, but not those of success to effort and of failure to lack of effort.

expectancy is one important motivational component in L2 learning.

Because Tremblay and Gardner's study was the first to look at self-efficacy and motivation in the L2 learning context, it is very important for my own work in this area. I feel it would therefore be useful to provide a more detailed account of the study, and look at the background of the participants and data collection procedures. Tremblay and Gardner conducted their study in Canada where they looked at francophone secondary school students (grades 11, 12 and 13) studying on French language courses. All participants used English and French in their everyday life (the language environment outside the school was mainly English); 24 % of them reported that English was their first language while 76 % reported that French was their first language. Self-reported questionnaires, which were mainly rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strong disagreement (−3) to strong agreement (+3), were the main instrument for the investigation. The overall grade in the course was used as an indicator of achievement and this was based on tests of grammar and textual comprehension, essay writing, and oral presentations. In addition, a one-page essay test was also administered to evaluate achievement, using five items assessing grammar, quality of vocabulary, complexity of sentence structure, content development and content originality. In this investigation, self-efficacy[16], regarded as the most important expectancy, consisted of three factors: performance expectancy, anxiety over the use of French (FUA) and anxiety in the French class (FCA). Performance expectancy was defined as "students' perceptions of their anticipated proficiency in French at the end of the course" (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995: 507) and was rated by items such as "Understand the meaning of most French proverbs" (ibid: 512). The scale for performance expectancy was created for this study. An Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was used to examine anxiety[17]. Samples of the items were "I would feel uncomfortable speaking French under any circumstances" for FUA and

[16] They define self-efficacy as "an individual's beliefs that he or she has the capability to reach a certain level of performance or achievement" (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995: 507).

[17] Anxiety is considered to be negatively related to expectancy (see Section 2.2 and below in this section for details); accordingly, a low score of anxiety (FUA and FCA) in the scale indicates, alongside a high score of performance expectancy in its measure, a high level of self-efficacy.

"I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in our French class" for FCA (ibid: 511). Motivational behaviour was also evaluated by three components: effort, persistence and attention. Effort was measured by the Motivational Intensity scale of the AMTB, and a sample of the items was "I really work hard to learn French" (ibid: 511). Attention and persistence were measured by the scales developed by Tremblay and Gardner, and the samples were "Nothing distracts me when I am studying French" for attention and "I work on my French homework very regularly" for persistence (ibid: 511).

Although the results of this study are significant and interesting, due to the fact that the research is empirical and concerns L2 learning, we still need an investigation which has at least a few more similarities to the Japanese environment. For one thing, the context of the above study was very different from that in Japan; the participants had an advantageous and somewhat favourable environment for language learning because they used both languages in everyday situations. In addition, the first language of the majority was French. In Japan, English is not normally used in students' everyday lives, even in English classrooms (see Chapter 1 for details). Furthermore, the vast majority use only the Japanese language, due to the ratio of the population whose first language is Japanese. According to official figures[18] in October 2006, 98.7% of the population is Japanese. This means that there are only limited chances of direct communication with native speakers of the target language, and this situation in turn is likely to influence students' expectancy and motivation. With respect to the language environment relating to Canadian contexts, Dörnyei (1990: 48) writes:

> This [Canadian] environment is an example of what can generally be termed a *second-language acquisition (SLA) context*, where the target language is mastered either through direct exposure to it or through formal instruction accompanied by frequent interaction with the target-language community in the host environment or in a multicultural setting … Although SLA contexts are varied, they are

[18] by the Statistics Bureau, Director-General for Policy Planning (Statistical Standards) & Statistical Research and Training Institute [Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications].

> clearly distinct from another type of language-learning milieu, generally termed a *foreign-language learning (FLL) context*, which involves a community in which one or two languages are taught in school for several years as an academic subject and many students develop proficiency in them.

One empirical study conducted in Hungary by Clément et al. (1994) is much closer to the Japanese case in terms of similarity of context: 97.8% of the population were Hungarians and less than 9% of the population could speak any foreign language. This means that in both countries students usually see English as an ordinary school subject. In other words, they normally use and/or study English only in school. Some characteristics of the language environment which they describe also exist in Japan (ibid: 419):

> …contact with English language and culture through the media and through the use of high-technology devices such as computers was significant and ...English was widely recognized as the *lingua franca* of international communication.

The following is an outline description of the study conducted by Clément et al. (1994). The participants were secondary school pupils (aged 17-18) who studied English as one of their official school subjects. Self-confidence was measured by self-reported questionnaires which used a 6-point Likert-type scale, ranging from *disagree strongly* to *agree strongly*. The related items are shown in three categories: English Use Anxiety (EUA), English Class Anxiety (ECA) and Self-evaluation of English Language Ability (ELA). Although the samples of the items are not presented in the article, summaries of each category are provided (ibid: 426, 428); EUA is anxiety "experienced while using the second language outside the classroom", ECA is "the extent to which the student felt anxious during English class" and ELA is "how well they [students] could use English, in terms of reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension".

The findings of their study are very interesting. They indicate that students' self-confidence influences L2 proficiency (achievement) through students' attitude

towards and effort expended on learning English (motivation). This suggests that expectancy has an impact on motivation because self-confidence is analogous in some ways to expectancy, although there are differences between self-efficacy (expectancy) and self-confidence, as Tremblay and Gardner (1995: 507) point out:

> Self-confidence differs from self-efficacy mainly in terms of the inclusion of an anxiety component…Self-confidence in the language learning context is usually assessed with measures of perceived proficiency at the time of testing, whereas self-efficacy is more closely tied to the level of performance that an individual believes he or she could achieve at some point in the future.

In short, there are two differences between self-confidence and self-efficacy: whether anxiety is included and whether 'perceived level of performance' concerns performance now or in the future.

However, these differences seem to emphasise, at the same time, crucial similarities which focus both on individuals' beliefs and their performance level. In respect of anxiety, although the inclusion of anxiety appears to be important, the beliefs might be important at least to some extent even if anxiety was excluded from the measures of research. This may be comprehended by looking more closely at the definition of anxiety. Clément et al. (1994) define it in their study in terms of low anxiety affect and high self-perceptions of L2 competence, which means that the perceived level of competence should be high when the level of anxiety is low. This suggests that we can predict that the level of the anxiety should be low when the beliefs are high, even if anxiety is not directly measured. From this, we may easily understand the importance of students' beliefs about their competence or level of performance, as well as that of anxiety.

Not only the research above, but other studies in the FLL context also confirm the effect of expectancy on motivation (e.g., Wu, 2003; Sun, 1995). These studies have been conducted in such varied countries, as Lebanon, Taiwan and the United States. The fact that they all found the relationship between the two factors is

significant, considering the many contextual differences between the nations.

As stated above, throughout this section, expectancy is considered to be an important element which influences motivation, according to the motivational theories which dominate the psychological literature; related studies, including those in the L2 field, also support this view. One central aim of this thesis is to explore how low-achieving EFL students in Japanese universities feel in the classroom. Up to now only limited numbers of comprehensive investigations of L2 motivation have been conducted in the Japanese school context, and those focusing on low-achieving EFL students which use qualitative research methods are rare. Considering the influence of the social and cultural context and the lack of qualitative research (see Section 2.1 for details of both), there is need for such investigations. Regarding the contextual influence and dominance of quantitative approaches in L2 motivation research, Dörnyei (2001: 65, 192) comments:

> ...human motivation is to a large extent socially shaped and this contextual dependence is particularly prominent when the target behaviour is the learning of a L2, due to the multifaceted nature and role of language itself.
>
> …most of the motivational data in the L2 field in the past have been gathered by means of questionnaires typically employing quantifiable rating scales without any open-ended items…

Motivated by this need for qualitative studies of L2 motivation, I will explore the relationship between expectancy and motivation in the Japanese context, involving low-achieving EFL students. Specifically, Set 2 of the research questions is:

**RQ2a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**

**RQ2b: Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of expectancy are related to changes in their perceived levels of motivation to learn EFL in class?**

**RQ2c: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

This chapter has largely concentrated on the two relationships: between levels of English and expectancy, and between expectancy and motivation. The next chapter will introduce cooperative learning approaches, proposing them as a remedy to improve Japanese students' expectancy and motivation and thus their achievements. It will mainly focus on a key component of cooperative learning (peer cooperation) and its effects on expectancy, motivation and levels of English.

# CHAPTER 3
# COOPERATIVE LEARNING IN JAPAN: RELATING THE JAPANESE EXPERIENCE TO THE CURRENT RESEARCH LITERATURE

## Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters, the non-supportive environment in their secondary schools seems to be one important cause of the poor English ability of Japanese students. Moreover, this low level of English appears to influence their expectancy, which leads, in turn, to their demotivation. Cooperative learning (hereafter, CL) approaches are one possible remedy for this situation, because they typically create a *supportive* classroom context. And this supportive environment is likely to have a direct impact on expectancy, as many studies have shown, improving students' motivation as well as their achievement. For the purpose of examining the effects of CL in order to improve the situation of Japanese students, this chapter focuses on CL and its related factors, such as peer cooperation, achievement (levels of English), expectancy (and motivation).

The organisation of this chapter is as follows. First, I define CL for the purposes of this thesis and summarise as an example a representative CL method (Student Teams-Achievement Divisions), which will be used in the present research. I then pose three sets of research questions (Sets 3, 4 and 6) and one single research question (Question 7) for qualitative exploration, together with one single research question for quantitative investigation (Question 5). Set 3 concerns the nature of changes of *peer cooperation* as one component in CL, and I discuss why peer cooperation is an appropriate focus for this thesis. Peer cooperation seems to have positive effects on students' achievements and their expectancy. Regarding the effects of peer cooperation, I propose two ways of influencing expectancy: *indirect* impacts through enhanced achievement and *direct* effects on expectancy.

To provide possible explanations for this, I examine the relationships between peer cooperation and levels of English and between peer cooperation and expectancy. Accordingly, Set 4 is about students' perceived relationships between peer cooperation and levels of English; thus, research question 5 deals with the *actual* relationships (between peer cooperation and students' actual levels of English). Set 6 concerns relationships between peer cooperation and expectancy from the students' point of view. Finally, research question 7 concerns other perceived possible relationships between all four variables (levels of English, expectancy, L2 classroom motivation and peer cooperation). Regarding this question, I suggest that there may be a relationship between peer cooperation and motivation, which suggests possible reasons for this relationship. These relationships and the appropriateness of peer cooperation as a focus for this thesis are discussed in the Japanese context with reference to the wider research literature.

The research questions underpinned by this chapter are shown below:
*All research questions concern *low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university*.

| |
|---|
| RQ3a: Looking at these students, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?<br>RQ3b: If so, what changes do they perceive? |
| RQ4a: Do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of English?<br>RQ4b: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship? |
| RQ5: Do their actual levels of peer cooperation relate to their actual levels of English? |
| RQ6a: Do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?<br>RQ6b: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship? |

**RQ7:** When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?

## 3.1 What is cooperative learning?

In this section, I define CL. Before moving into the main argument, I briefly introduce an overview of CL in order to define it more accurately. Learning situations in terms of student interaction patterns may be roughly divided into three types (Johnson, Johnson & Holubec, 1991): patterns in which students compete with each other (competitive[19]); patterns in which they work individually and independently (individualistic[20]); and patterns in which they work together cooperatively (cooperative). Patterns which involve CL are considered, on the basis of extensive research results, to produce higher achievement, greater motivation and higher levels in a number of other outcomes than competitive or individualistic modes (ibid.). In addition, CL has been used successfully to promote learning across a wide range of curriculum areas, such as reading, arithmetic, L2 learning and the study of the social and natural sciences (e.g., Gillies & Ashman, 1998; Shachar, 2003).

However, there is little universal agreement over what exactly is meant by CL, and numerous forms of CL are found in the educational literature, many of which come from different theoretical perspectives (Springer, Stanne & Donovan, 1999). Moreover, there are inconsistent findings concerning the achievement effects and affective outcomes of group learning methods, although results overall are positive (Slavin, 1995). Most importantly, simply putting students in groups does not necessarily lead to better learning. For example, the system of grouping

[19] In competitive learning situations, students work against one another to achieve goals which only one or a few can attain, and all the students perceive that they can reach their goals only if the other students do not (Deutsch, 1949a; Johnson & Johnson, 1992).

[20] In individualistic learning situations, students work by themselves to attain goals which are not related to those of others, and individuals perceive that they can reach their goals regardless of whether others attain theirs (Johnson & Johnson, 1992).

students has pitfalls. These include the possibility of 'free-riding' students, and the fact that less competent group members may be ignored. In other words, some group members may do all or most of the work while others go along without doing any work, and those students who are perceived to have poor ability to do the assigned tasks may be ignored by other group members (ibid.; Johnson & Johnson, 1992). These suggest that, in defining CL, it is important to identify its fundamental factors for better learning and crucial to ensure these factors by examining how the major theoretical perspectives on it interpret what has caused its effects. Therefore, in the following account, I will examine the major theoretical perspectives of its effects on achievement.

There are two conditions which are critical to ensuring successful CL: it should be based on carefully-constructed groups of students which generate *constant interaction among all group members*; and *individual accountability*. *Constant interaction* can be clearly seen in all of the primary theoretical perspectives. Slavin (1996) categorised the primary perspectives into four kinds: *motivational*, *social cohesion*, *developmental* and *cognitive elaboration*. The last two perspectives, *developmental* and *cognitive elaboration*, are the cognitive perspectives, which both have a cognitive basis. A summary of Slavin's descriptions of the perspectives is supplied below. Along with the summary, my comments are briefly added in brackets to indicate how the basic condition of constant interaction is related to each theory.

One perspective which can be called the *motivational* perspective focuses mainly on *group reward* structures, which create a situation in which success as a group is the only way that group members can attain their own personal goals. To produce this structure, it is crucial that groups be rewarded on the basis of the sum of each member's performance[21]. In addition to group rewards, *individual*

[21] It means, for example, giving certificates or extra points when a group exceeds preset criteria, such as a certain total score.

*accountability*[22], which means personal responsibility to contribute to group products and/or success, is also essential for creating the structure. In this structure, team-mates must do whatever helps their team to succeed and encourage their team-mates to exert maximum effort. (This means that in this theory *students need constant interaction,* for example, teaching one another and exchanging information.)

The second perspective is the *social cohesion* perspective, which stresses that the cohesiveness of group members is a vital source for generating the achievement. Although this perspective is similar to the motivational perspective (which means that both it and the previous one focus on students' motivation to help their own team-mates), its motivational basis lay different emphases on the way in which such motivation is created. Motivational theorists (e.g., Slavin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1992) stress that students want to help their group-mates at least partly to serve their own interests. In contrast, social cohesion theorists (e.g., Cohen, 1994; Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes & Snapp, 1978 cited in Slavin, 1996) emphasise that students give such help because they care about their team-mates. Therefore, the cohesion theorists tend to reject the view that group rewards are essential. They believe that *teambuilding* activities[23] in preparation and *group self-evaluation*[24] during and after group activities are enough to motivate students to help one another. (As we can see here, creating cohesion, which is the key component in this view, requires frequent interaction among students for a certain period of time because people usually need some time to get to know one another in order to establish some psychological connection or bonding. This means that *facilitating students' interaction* is one of the fundamental elements in this theory.)

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[22] In their Learning Together method, Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991: chapter 1, p.12) propose the following four conditions to produce *individual accountability*: (1) Assess how much effort each member is contributing to the group's work, (2) Provide feedback to groups and individual students, (3) Help groups avoid redundant efforts by members, (4) Ensure that every member is responsible for the final outcome.

[23] Teambuilding activities refer, for example, to activities to get to know one another better.

[24] Group self-evaluation refers, for example, to assessing whether every group member is working smoothly without problems.

The major alternative to the motivation-related perspective is the *cognitive* perspective. The cognitive viewpoint infers that interactions among students will in themselves heighten achievement, for reasons which are associated with the psychological processing of information rather than with the motivation. Cognitive theorists (e.g., Murray, 1982; Damon, 1984) do not accept the ideas of group rewards or cohesiveness, which characterise the motivation-oriented theories. The cognitive perspective can be divided into *two kinds* in terms of different notions of the mental processing which takes place through collaborative activities: *developmental* and *cognitive elaboration*. The *developmental* perspective assumes that interaction among children around appropriate activities increases their mastery of important concepts. In other words, children learn many things and grow cognitively through collaborative activities with their peers. There are several similar views within this perspective, and Damon (1984: 335) integrates them:

1. Through mutual feedback and debate, peers motivate one another to abandon misconceptions and search for better solutions.
2. The experience of peer communication can help a child master social processes, such as participation and argumentation, and cognitive processes, such as verification and criticism.
3. Collaboration between peers can provide a forum for discovery learning and can encourage creative thinking.
4. Peer interaction can introduce children to the process of generating ideas...

In short, proponents of this view believe that the opportunity for students to discuss, to argue, to present and to hear one another's views is the core element of CL for enhancing students' achievement. Another cognitive view, the *cognitive elaboration* perspective, assumes that if information is to be retained in memory and related to information already in memory, the learner must engage in cognitive restructuring (or elaboration) of both old and new information. In this view, one of the most effective ways of elaboration is to explain materials to someone else, and therefore students who explain something to others learn more than those who do not. (Regardless of the difference between the cognitive views,

proponents of both theories explicitly propose that the achievement effects result from interactions among students.)

Thus, the four perspectives above all hold the idea that *frequent/constant peer interaction* is fundamental for CL, although how and why it should be created varies according to the theory. In other words, CL should be socially and/or carefully structured to make students constantly interact with one another, and this is considered to be one important condition of CL.

Another fundamental condition in CL is *individual accountability*. The importance of this component may be easily comprehended when we think of lazy students in a familiar class situation, such as the free riders discussed above. In addition, individual accountability is implemented, as is *constant peer interaction*, in the most extensively researched CL methods[25], such as Student Team Learning Methods, Learning Together, Jigsaw, Group Investigation and Complex Instruction (Slavin, 1995).

Interestingly, the two conditions above are also included in a definition of CL by Olsen and Kagan[26] (1992: 8):

> Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning …

Hence, in this thesis, group- or pair-work approaches which meet the following conditions are considered to be CL: (a) based on carefully-constructed groups of students which generate constant interaction among group members; (b) have individual accountability.

[25] Slavin (1995) also mentions Structured Dyadic Methods among the most extensively researched CL methods. However, he treats them as highly structured 'pair learning' techniques *in general* (where pairs of students teach each other) and thus they are not one unified or standardized method and are therefore not be included here to avoid confusion.

[26] Other than these two conditions, Olsen and Kagan's definition involves another condition, *motivation to increase the learning of others*.

## 3.2 An example of CL

In this section, I summarise one of the most widely researched CL methods (Student Teams-Achievement Divisions: STAD) to introduce an example of CL, and also explain how *constant peer interaction/cooperation* and *individual accountability* are implemented in the method. This method will be used in the present thesis, and therefore a detailed description will be supplied in the next chapter.

### Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)

In STAD, students are assigned to four-member heterogeneous[27] teams (Slavin, 1994a). The whole cycle of the method usually takes three to five class periods and includes the following steps: (a) the teacher gives instruction; (b) students work together within their teams, making sure that all team members have mastered the content being taught; (c) all students take *individual quizzes* without any help from others; (d) their quiz scores are compared to their own past averages, and students get *points* based on the degree to which they meet or exceed their own earlier performance (individual improvement scores); (e) the points are summed as team scores, and the teams which meet certain criteria earn certificates or other rewards (team rewards) (ibid.). The central idea behind STAD is to motivate students to encourage and help one another master the skills presented by the teacher; that is, if the students want their team to get team rewards, they must help and encourage their team-mates to learn the materials being assigned (ibid.).

As we can see, the *constant peer interaction* is closely related to the system of *team rewards*. In this system, the only way for a team to succeed is for all its members to master what is being taught. In essence, students have to cooperate with one another and care about how their team-mates are doing in order to

[27] Heterogeneous groups mean that students are mixed in performance level, sex and ethnicity (Blaney et al., 1977; Slavin, 1994a). In this thesis, this definition will be used unless otherwise indicated.

receive *team rewards* which are based on *individual accountability*. *Individual accountability* is ensured by the *individual quizzes* above (students cannot get any help from others when taking the quiz).

### 3.3 Peer cooperation as one crucial factor of CL

In this section, I examine which elements of CL will be under scrutiny in this thesis. CL consists of many components (e.g., teachers' instruction, materials and group structure) and therefore one particular element should be identified in order to find the major causes of the focused effects of the method. Among many of the components in CL, this study will focus on *peer cooperation/interaction*, which means that team-mates help and encourage one another to complete assigned tasks successfully, discussing and exchanging ideas in the process of accomplishing the tasks.

There is an important reason for selecting peer cooperation for this study. This is that peer cooperation is likely to be a crucial factor in improving the deficient situation of Japanese students' demotivation, negative expectancy and poor English ability. As discussed in the previous chapters, the poor level of English among many Japanese students in colleges or universities seems to be related to the *non-supportive* learning environment in their secondary schools. This situation also seems to negatively influence their expectancy and motivation. In other words, a *supportive* classroom environment created by peer cooperation may help to improve the students' poor ability in English. When their level of English improves, their expectancy and motivation may also increase because of the positive relation between achievement (level of English) and expectancy and between expectancy and motivation (see Chapter 2 for details).

The importance of peer cooperation as a supportive setting may be understood when we see that one of the most critical differences between CL and other major

types of method, such as traditional whole-class [28] (hereafter, WC) and individualistic approaches [29], is the *constant interaction among students*. As mentioned in Section 3.1, classroom learning situations can be divided into three modes: the WC (competitive), individualistic and CL approaches. Although the WC and individualistic methods are typically or frequently used in many classrooms, they do not involve any supportive student interaction because the students usually work alone. In contrast, constant peer interaction/cooperation is fundamental to CL (see Section 3.1 for details). Although the interaction style can vary according to the theoretical perspective from which each CL approach is viewed, students in CL typically help/encourage or teach/explain to one another (see Section 3.2 for details). In other words, in CL, low-achieving students can ask for frequent assistance from their peers. In addition, higher-achieving students in CL may also have many more opportunities than they would in WC or individualistic methods to learn and/or become aware of their own weaknesses by teaching/explaining things to other students or through discussing with team-mates. In short, these students' behaviours (asking for help or teaching/explaining) create a supportive environment where all learners can raise their achievement.

CL is, then, likely to be profitable for achievers at any level. In particular, its supportive context may be advantageous for low-achievers. Ghaith (2001: 292) confirms the advantages, explaining that:

> The dynamics of many CL structures provide multiple opportunities for the low achievers to achieve better comprehension as they receive redundant, appropriate, and identity-congruent input as they discuss issues with peers of comparable linguistic and cognitive development through class presentations, team study, quizzes, and team recognition.

As for the high achievers, there are conflicting opinions in the literature about

[28] The traditional whole-class method refers to the competitive learning situation which is the typical teacher-centred technique (Hertz-Lazarowitz, et al., 1980; see Section 3.1 for details).
[29] These techniques are compared with CL in many studies (e.g., Humphreys, Johnson & Johnson, 1982; Johnson, Johnson & Taylor, 1993; Ryan & Wheeler, 1977).

whether their learning can be inhibited by having to explain materials to their low-achieving team-mates, or whether they benefit most from CL because they provide the most frequent elaborated explanations[30] (Ghaith & Yaghi, 1998). These discussions indicate that CL has great potential for benefiting high achievers as well as low achievers. In fact, there are noteworthy findings to support the idea that CL can create a favourable environment for any level of achiever, in contrast with what WC can do.

There is interesting evidence to indicate that although CL particularly benefits low- and middle-achieving students, high-achievers in CL also improve, at least, no less and sometimes more than their counterparts in WC instruction. Shachar (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of eight studies which compare WC and CL approaches in order to find which level of students gains the most from CL and what is gained by each group of students (high, middle and low achievers). Five of the eight studies which compared the three levels consider seven variables in total (mainly to do with academic enhancement): achievement in English[31], science, chemistry and social studies; mathematical reasoning and information processing; perceptions of classroom climate; and attitudes towards social studies. The other three studies compare two levels (high and low achievers), taking into account nine variables (primarily perceptions, attitudes and verbal behaviour): quantity of speech in discussions, number of turns taken to speak, use of high-order thinking categories in discussion, social interactions, quantity of writing in a test, perception of quality of life in school (liking for teachers, liking for home-room teacher, liking for school and social satisfaction). The data were gathered by pre-post design tests/scales[32]. These studies were based on 2,837 students learning in classrooms which ranged from fifth to eleventh grade and

[30] The latter argument is based on the cognitive elaboration theory, which is examined in Section 3.1.
[31] 'English' here means 'English language and literature'.
[32] Pre-post tests were not administered in one variable, achievement in social studies, but instead, on this variable, the differences between CL and WC approaches are indicated. To avoid confusion, these differences will be shown (in the present thesis) as follows: differences in favour of CL as advances in CL and differences in favour of WC instruction as declines in CL. Therefore, the description of variables in WC excludes this variable.

employed five CL methods (Group Investigation, STAD and three other unspecified kinds of CL) for various time durations (two to six months). Of these, seven studies were conducted in Israel and one in Singapore.

The results of Shachar's study can be outlined as follows. The results of the five studies showed, with regard to students in CL, that, on average, high achievers improved their academic scores by 1 %, middle achievers by 7.5 % and low achievers by 9.3 % (the average improvement in WC instruction was not shown in this article). In addition, low-achieving students from CL classes advanced significantly on all seven variables; middle achievers improved on four variables (achievement in English, science, chemistry and social studies; the other three variables showed no significant difference), and *high achievers* did on *two* variables (achievement in English and attitudes towards social studies; of the other five variables, three showed no difference and *two* declined). In contrast, the number of improved variables in the WC groups was noticeably fewer than in the CL groups at the low and middle levels, and among high achievers it was the same as in the CL groups but the number of the declined variables was greater in WC: the low achievers in WC improved significantly on two variables (achievement in English and chemistry; of the other four variables, two showed no difference and two declined), the middle achievers increased on two (achievement in English and science; of the other four, two showed no difference and two declined) and the *high achievers* on *two* variables (achievement in English and perceptions of classroom climate; of the other four, one showed no difference and *three* declined). Moreover, the other three studies yielded similar findings [33] : Compared with their counterparts in WC groups, low achievers in CL groups improved significantly better on all variables except 'social satisfaction' (no difference was shown on this variable), and *high achievers* in the CL class advanced better on *four* of nine variables (of the other five, two showed no difference and *three* indicated that the students improved less than their counterparts in WC).

[33] On these three studies, the results of pre-post tests for each approach are not shown, and only the differences between CL and WC instruction are shown.

Although the evidence above indicates fewer advantages for high achievers than for low or middle achievers, the marked progress among the low and middle achievers and the overall difference between CL and WC groups suggests the significance of peer cooperation in generating a supportive environment. In other words, low or middle achievers usually need more assistance than high achievers to increase their academic abilities and therefore peer assistance is considered to contribute, at least partly, to their academic and/or affective improvement. However, the 'peer cooperation effect' seems to have potential for progress for students of any academic level as observed above. The difference between the two instructional groups among high achievers above is likely to add some weight to the potential. Furthermore, Slavin (1995) confirms the potential, mentioning that most comparative studies found equal academic benefits for all levels of student in comparison to their counterparts in control groups. This seems to strengthen the idea of its potential.

Intriguingly, in the field of L2 learning, there are findings to support equal effects of CL on low and high achievers. Ghaith (2001) surveyed EFL learners' perceptions of CL experiences (STAD) with 61 seventh-grade students in Lebanon (30 low achievers and 31 high achievers), studying English rules and mechanics. The CL treatment lasted for 12 weeks and covered six instructional units from the regular language arts programme of the participants. At the end of the study, the pupils completed three Likert-type scales relative to: (a) the participants' perceptions of the amount of their own learning; (b) whether they would recommend CL for other classes or not; (c) their perception of the amount of their contribution to the learning of their group mates. Responses ranged from 1 to 6 to indicate their level of agreement[34]. The results show that 74% of high achievers felt that they had learned a lot; while 3% felt that they had not learned much. 63% of low achievers felt that they had learned a lot and *none* of them felt that they

[34] Among the six levels of agreement, Ghaith defines that only the first/last two levels on these scales mean 'agree or disagree' (e.g., that the students learned a lot or did not).

had learned nothing. As for recommending STAD as an instructional strategy, the high achievers were found to be nearly as willing to recommend it as their low achieving counterparts (57% of the high achievers and 60% of the low achievers). In respect of the contribution, 74% of the high-achievers indicated that they had contributed a lot to the learning of their team-mates, and none of them felt that their contribution had been small. In addition, 33% of the low achievers reported that they had made a great contribution to the learning of others, and only 3% of them felt that their contribution was small.

As we can see from the findings in this section, in both the fields of education and L2 learning, CL appears to benefit both levels of achievers because of its *supportive* character. The results of Ghaith's study, in particular, strengthen this idea by shedding light on the students' remarkable contribution to the learning of their group members (by peer cooperation). Noteworthy findings of the study are that not only high achievers, but also a noticeable portion of low achievers helped the learning of others: Around one third of the low achievers felt that they made *great* contributions and the *vast majority* of low achievers felt that they made some or a great contribution to the learning of others. In brief, considering that the possible cause of the Japanese students' poor English ability is the non-supportive learning situation and the relations of achievement/expectancy and expectancy/motivation, peer cooperation which creates a *supportive* environment is an appropriate component for this thesis to focus on.

One of the main aims of this thesis is to explore the qualitative side of perceptions among low achieving Japanese university students of English. However, given the importance of peer cooperation and the close attention paid to it, only a limited number of qualitative studies focus on the element. In addition, there are very few, if any, qualitative studies focusing comprehensively on both the students and peer cooperation[35].

[35] For the importance of qualitative investigation and cultural differences, please refer to Chapter 2.

This thesis will focus on the qualitative side of peer cooperation in CL, concentrating on the students. Thus, Set 3 of the third research question consist of the following:

**RQ3a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**

**RQ3b: If so, what changes do they perceive?**

## 3.4 Peer cooperation and achievement in L2 learning

In this section, the relationships between peer cooperation and achievement in L2 learning are discussed. In order to remind readers of the main relevant points of previous sections, what they have examined is briefly reviewed beforehand. The previous section focused on the importance of peer cooperation in order to examine its suitability for exploration in this thesis. However, along with the discussion, the relationships between peer cooperation and achievement were also discussed with reference to the fields of education and L2 learning. In other words, the discussion partly suggests positive relationships between peer cooperation and achievement: peer cooperation may improve students' learning. However, the main purpose of the discussion in the previous section was not to analyse the relation between peer cooperation and achievement; there appears to be a lack of argument concerning the relation and there are few specific findings on it in the field of L2 learning. The following account focuses on these findings.

In the field of L2 learning, findings from research which has focused on the achievement effects of group or pair work are similar to those in the education field as a whole. Long and Porter (1985) review such findings in the L2 field and important parts of their review are outlined in the following two paragraphs.

The fundamental findings in the earlier period (reviewed by Long and Porter) can

be summarised as follows: A good deal of research has been conducted on the special features of speech (input) addressed to L2 learners by native speakers (NSs) of the language or by non-native speakers (NNSs) who are more proficient than the learners are. The research found that this linguistic *input* to the learner is modified in a variety of ways to make it *comprehensible* (comprehensible input): it is like the speech which caretakers address to young children learning their mother tongue. Further, when making such linguistic or conversational adjustments, speakers are concentrating on *communicating* with the NNS; that is, their focus is on *what* they are saying, not on *how* they are saying it. In addition to the speech study, there is also a substantial amount of evidence consistent with the idea that the more language students hear and understand (or the more *comprehensible input* they receive), the faster and better they *learn*.

Regarding the findings about how L2 learners improve their proficiency through *interaction* with NSs/NNSs, the review by Long and Porter (1985) can be summarised as follows: Krashen has proposed an explanation for the relationship between learning and comprehensible input, which he calls the Input Hypothesis (IH)[36], claiming that learners improve their proficiency in L2 by *understanding* language which contains some target language forms (phonological, lexical, morphological, or syntactic), so long as it is a little ahead of their current knowledge and could not be understood without help. Ignorance of new forms is compensated for by hearing them used in a situation and embedded in other language which they do understand. Krashen also asserts that speaking is unnecessary and that it is useful only as a means of gaining comprehensible input. However, Swain has argued that learners must also be given an opportunity to *produce* the new forms, which Swain calls the "comprehensible *output* hypothesis"[37]. Many researchers agree with Swain's view, in particular, with the

[36] "…how do we move from stage *i*, where *i* represents current competence, to *i + 1*, the next level? The input hypothesis makes the following claim: a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to move from stage *i* to stage *i + 1* is that the acquirer understand input that contains *i + 1*, where "understand" means that the acquirer is focussed on the meaning and not the form of the message" (Krashen, 1982: 20-21).

[37] The output hypothesis proposes that "through producing language, either spoken or written, language acquisition/learning may occur" (Swain, 1993: 159), and there are four ways in which output might play a role

point that learners must be put in a position of being able to *negotiate* the new input[38], ensuring that the language in which it is heard is amended to exactly the level of comprehensibility that they can manage. Regarding this learning environment, the related research shows that this kind of negotiation is perfectly available, given two-way tasks[39], in NS/NNS dyads, but such individualised opportunities are usually very difficult to provide for all students in the class. However, adding to these research results, several researchers found that NNSs themselves can be good conversational partners for each other, creating the chances to negotiate.

Porter's study (1983 cited in Long & Porter, 1985), in particular, shows very interesting findings related to the potential of NNSs as good conversational partners for each other. She examined the language produced by adult learners (all native speakers of Spanish who were learning English) in task-centred discussions between pairs. The learners consisted of 12 NNSs and 6 NSs who represented three proficiency levels: intermediate, advanced and native speaker. Each participant joined in separate discussions with a participant from each of the three levels in order to compare inter-language talk (NNS/NNS) with talk between NS/NNS and also to look for differences across the proficiency levels.

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in the process of L2 learning: (1) Language production provides the opportunity for meaningful practice to develop 'automaticity in their use' (fluency); (2) It may force learners to recognise what they do not know or know only partially; (3) It provides the opportunity to test out hypotheses, such as trying out means of expression and checking if they work; (4) It may generate responses/feedback from speakers of the target language which can provide learners with information about the comprehensibility or well-formedness of their utterances. The responses may take the form of confirmation checks, clarification requests, or implicit and explicit corrections; that is, *feedback* can guide learners to modify or *reprocess* their output (Swain, 1993). Among the four ways of output roles, (3) and (4) may be particularly relevant to the importance of *negotiating the new input,* a point with which many researchers agree.

[38] This point, the importance of negotiating the new input, may be partly explained by the *negotiation for meaning* or Interaction Hypothesis by Long (1981), which proposes that, when interacting, learners and their interlocutors negotiate the meaning of messages by modifying and restructuring their interaction (e.g., in the forms of confirmation checks, clarification requests and repetition) in order to reach mutual understanding, leading to acquiring their target language. In this negotiation process, learners may have the chance to produce their new input. Long (1996 cited in Gass & Mackey, 2006: 4) defines *negotiation for meaning* as follows: "The process in which, in an effort to communicate, learners and competent speakers provide and interpret signals of their own and their interlocutor's perceived comprehension, thus provoking adjustment to linguistic form, conversational structure, message content, or all three, until an acceptable level of understanding is achieved".

[39] The two-way task means that two speakers (NS and NNS) both start a conversation with information which the other needs in order for the pair to complete some task successfully (as distinct from one-way tasks, in which only one speaker has information to communicate) (Long & Porter, 1985).

Among the many findings of Porter's study, the results relevant to the usefulness of inter-language talk are: (a) as regards quantity of speech, learners produced more talk with other learners than with NSs; (b) as regards quality of speech, measuring the number of grammatical and lexical errors and false starts, their speech showed no significant differences across contexts; (c) as regards the interactional features of the discussion, no significant differences were found in the amount of repair by NSs and learners. *Repair* was a composite variable, consisting of confirmation checks, clarification requests, comprehension checks and three communication strategies (verification of meaning, definition requests and indications of lexical uncertainty). Porter emphasises the importance of this finding, suggesting that it indicates that learners are capable of negotiating repair in a manner similar to NSs and that learners at the two proficiency levels are equally competent to carry out such repair; (d) closer examination of the communication strategies revealed very low frequencies of "appeals for assistance" (which meant using the three strategies above). In addition, learners made the appeals in similar numbers whether talking to NSs or to other learners. Porter suggests that these data contradict the notion that other NNSs are not good conversational partners because they cannot provide accurate input when it is solicited. However, learners rarely ask for help, no matter who their interlocutors may be; (e) low frequency was also seen in other corrections by both learners and NSs. Learners corrected 1.5% and NSs corrected 8% of their interlocutors' grammatical and lexical errors. Interestingly, learners mis-corrected only .3% of the errors made by their partners and this suggests that mis-corrections are not a serious threat in unmonitored group work; (f) another finding on repair, labelled *prompts* (which refers to words, phrases, or sentences added in the middle of the other speaker's utterance to continue or complete that utterance), was also consistent with those on the other interactive features. Learners and NSs provided similar numbers of prompts. One significant difference, however, was that learners prompted other learners five times more than they did NSs; therefore, learners had more practice with other learners than

they did with NSs. Overall, Porter concludes that although learners cannot give each other the accurate grammatical and sociolinguistic input that NSs can, they can offer each other genuine communicative practice, including the *negotiation for meaning* which is believed to contribute to L2 learning.

The idea that *negotiation for meaning* aids language learning has more research support. For example, Pica, Young and Doughty (1987) compare the comprehension of 16 NNSs of English on directions to perform a task presented by an NS under two input conditions: (1) subjects heard the *linguistically adjusted* script read by an NS, and the subject participated on a one-to-one basis with the NS who read each direction only once and then paused, giving the subject as much time as necessary to complete the task. There was basically no interaction between the NS and the subject; and (2) the same NS initially read each direction from the *un-modified* script, and subjects also participated on a one-to-one basis with the NS. However, the subjects in this condition were encouraged to seek verbal assistance from the NS if they had any difficulty in following the directions and no limit was placed on the amount of interaction. In addition, the NS also checked whether the directions were understood or needed repeating.

The remaining methodological description of Pica, Young and Doughty's study can be outlined as follows: the subject was selected from volunteers enrolled in pre-academic and low intermediate ESL classes and all subjects were adults and were about equally divided between European and Asian first language backgrounds. Half of them were assigned randomly to one of the conditions and the other half to the other condition. The task required NNSs to listen to an NS who gave directions for choosing and placing 15 items on a small board illustrated with an outdoor scene. Individual items were two-dimensional cut-outs representing a variety of plants, animals and human figures, and each direction given by the NS included a description of the item and references to the place on the board where it was to be positioned. Comprehension was measured by the number of items which the subject selected and placed correctly, and the

interactions were either video- or audio-taped and later transcribed from the recordings.

The findings of Pica, Young and Doughty's study can be summarised as follows: Condition 2, which included interaction between NS and NNS using an un-modified script, indicated a significantly higher number of input in terms of quantity and redundancy, but not of complexity. In addition, scores for selection, placement and overall comprehension were significantly higher for subjects in Condition 2 than the scores for those in Condition 1 which involved no interaction between NS and NNS using the modified script. Pica, Young and Doughty conclude that interactional modifications of input led to significantly greater comprehension than the pre-modified input did. In other words, negotiation for meaning, which is one key component in the Interaction Hypothesis, is supported by their results.

In short, Porter's study, alongside Pica, Young and Doughty's study, suggests that *interaction between students* facilitates L2 learning. In other words, peer cooperation in CL could be an effective way of L2 learning.

More recently, there have been additional changes or advances in the interaction-related perspectives in the L2 field. Among these advances, the following account focuses on some which are relevant to the present discussion. These advances also indicate the theoretical relationship between the two fields, revealing the further importance of *interaction* or the outcomes of feedback which stem from *interaction*. One advance is the awareness or emergence of overall viewpoints which encompass IH, Interaction Hypothesis, and Output Hypothesis. Gass and Mackey (2006) claim that the Interaction Hypothesis subsumes aspects of the IH and Output Hypothesis, focusing on the major constructs of the Interaction Hypothesis, namely, input, interaction, feedback and output. Gass and Mackey describe the basic tenet of the theory:

> …through input and interaction with interlocutors, language learners have opportunities to notice differences between their own formulations of the target language and the language of their conversational partners. They also receive feedback which both modifies the linguistic input they receive and pushes them to modify their output during conversation (p.3).

Considering the above tenet and the emphasis on *negotiation for meaning* in the approach, Gass and Mackey's inference of the all-inclusive perspective seems to be understandable. In other words, the main constructs of the Interaction Hypothesis include all the crucial factors which cover what the other two perspectives stress (input, output and feedback). More importantly, the process of *negotiation for meaning* results from *interaction*; that is, without interaction, both *comprehensible input* and *output*, which are respectively critical to the IH and the Output Hypothesis, might not work effectively, at least to some extent. Block (2003: 5) calls this line of overall perspectives, the 'Input-Interaction-Output (IIO) model' and considers it "the most ambitious, well-developed and productive area of research in SLA", referring to Gass's model[40] (one of several versions of this model). This may add some weight to the importance of *interaction* for understanding the mechanism of L2 learning.

Another advance in the L2 interaction-related perspectives can also be seen in the Interaction Hypothesis: the effects of feedback, which leads learners to *notice errors* in their output. In an updated version of the Interaction Hypothesis, Long suggests the importance of *implicit negative feedback* to L2 learning (Long, Inagaki & Ortega, 1998). The *implicit negative feedback* refers to roundabout responses made in order to alert learners to mistakes in their output and show correct forms without pointing out errors directly (e.g., by rephrasing learners' utterances and/or confirming their meaning) (Gass & Mackey, 2006). Many researchers claim that the learners' attentional processes through the feedback (noticing their speech errors) mediate the interaction-learning relationship (ibid.).

[40] Although Gass's approach is a more complete one, which involves much more detailed factors than the main constructs described by Gass and Mackey, the primary components in each are the same.

Although such sophisticated feedback might rarely be given in interactions between low achievers because they do not have enough knowledge or ability to provide it, when we take a broader view of feedback, low achievers seems to be partly capable of giving somewhat useful feedback. As Gass and Mackey comment:

> [Implicit negative feedback] can lead learners to notice errors in their own speech, but [it does] not necessarily provide information on how to correct the errors… interaction provides a forum for feedback, which serves to alert learners to problems providing them with opportunities to focus their attention on language. That is, interaction may prime learners to "search" for more information, to be more sensitive to future input…

In short, the main role of feedback is to make learners pay (more) attention to their output or knowledge about language with a view to improvement, and opportunities to do this result from *interaction*. In other words, interaction between learners of any level (e.g., between low achievers) may create this opportunity. Interestingly, the cognitive perspectives in the education field show a similar view, as stated in Section 3.1, emphasising the impact of *mutual feedback* through peer *interaction*. Thus, these advances in the understanding of L2 learning also suggest theoretical similarities between the two fields in terms of *interaction*.

When we look at the low achieving EFL students in a Japanese university who will be participants in the present study, this analogy is likely to be significant because the classes for such students have two contextual aspects: L2 learning and using their first language as the primary language (the same context as for other academic subjects). The primary language to be used depends on the students' levels of English. In large EFL classes, in particular those for the Japanese low achievers, it seems to be difficult to provide many chances to communicate in English. In such classes, students usually do not know elementary level grammar and vocabulary, and the primary language used in the

class is normally Japanese. This means that the perspectives on L2 learning above are not necessarily or totally applicable to such students, because the perspectives were fundamentally developed and researched in a context where learners interact in the target language. Nevertheless, the cognitive perspective in the education field is relatively free from 'subject matter', which means that it does not focus on the specific subject being learned[41]. Therefore, the cognitive perspective may be useful for understanding the relationships between the students' interaction and their achievement.

Another contextual aspect (L2 learning), however, should also be considered because the aim of the class is to learn English. For instance, in a pair activity, they might ask and answer simple questions in English, or make short sentences, following some grammar rules and referring to examples. These two somewhat contradictory features are likely to make the class context complicated to understand: the class aims at *learning L2* but the primary language used in the class is the students' first *language*.

In summary, in typical EFL classes for low achievers in Japanese universities, the relationships between peer interaction and achievement appear not to be explained only by the perspectives in the L2 learning field due to the contextual characteristics discussed above. However, the theoretical analogy between the fields of L2 learning and education suggests that even in such L2 classes, peer interaction/cooperation can also be regarded as an important element in raising students' achievement.

There are many empirical studies examining L2 interaction-learning relationships (e.g., Mackey & Philp, 1998) and also there is a growing body of *CL-related* research in the field of L2 learning (e.g., Ghaith & Yaghi, 1998; Ghaith, 2001). However, this thesis aims to explore the nature of 'peer cooperation effects'

[41] CL has been used successfully to promote achievement across a wide range of curriculum areas (see Section 3.1 for details), and this may support, at least in part, the cognitive perspective in the education field in terms of being 'subject free'.

among low achieving EFL students in a Japanese university. This being so, the relevant research to which I can refer seems to be limited in quantity. Compared with the amount of the CL- or interaction-related research, there are limited numbers of qualitative studies. Furthermore, there are no or very few qualitative studies which focus both on the students and the relation between peer cooperation and achievement in a comprehensive way[42]. Therefore, it would fill a gap to explore this relationship qualitatively. In addition, this thesis will investigate the (actual) effects of peer cooperation on achievement as well as exploring the nature of the effects (by using qualitative procedures), in order to ensure that the actual outcomes and the students' perception are consistent. If they are consistent, this would strengthen the idea of cooperation-achievement relationships. Thus, Set 4 of the research questions and research question 5 are as follows:

**RQ4a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of English?**
**RQ4b: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

**RQ5: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do their actual levels of peer cooperation relate to their actual levels of English?**

## 3.5 Relations between peer cooperation and expectancy

In this section, the relationships between peer cooperation and expectancy will be discussed. Before moving to the main discussion, I want to discuss why the relationships (from the students' point of view) should be investigated at all. In previous chapters and in sections of this chapter, the discussion of cooperation-expectancy relationships focused on ways of enhancing levels of expectancy by improving students' levels of English (or their achievements)

[42] For the importance of qualitative investigation and cultural differences, please refer to Chapter 2.

through peer cooperation. In other words, it implies an *indirect* relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy. However, peer cooperation is likely to have a *direct* impact on expectancy as well. Indeed, CL has been shown in many studies to improve students' motivation to learn and/or motivation-related variables (e.g., the internal locus of control and expectancy) (Slavin, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 2003) and such research also exists in the L2 field (e.g., Assinder, 1991; Winter, 1996). More importantly, the relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy is theoretically explained by several researchers in the fields both of education and L2 learning. This relationship will be discussed below in reference with research literature from both fields.

The theoretical views in both fields seem to be consistent in terms of the relationships between peer cooperation and expectancy. In the field of education, Johnson and Johnson (2003) propose a social interdependence theory to explain why the CL context increases students' motivation, pointing out the importance of students' expectancy of success, along with other motivational factors. The foundation of the theory is that "the way in which interdependence is structured determines how individuals interact, and the interaction pattern determines the outcomes of the situation" (ibid: 143). According to the theory, CL has *positive interdependence* which results in 'promotive interaction' among students (peer cooperation). *Positive interdependence* exists "when individuals perceive that they can reach their goals if and only if the other individuals with whom they are co-operatively linked also reach their goals, and therefore they promote each other's efforts to achieve the goals" (ibid: 143). Broadly speaking, social interdependence theory explains how 'mutual goal structure' created by *positive interdependence* increases learners' motivation. Regarding the role of expectancy in the CL context, Johnson and Johnson explain (ibid: 147):

> Motivation in co-operative efforts increases because co-operation empowers an individual to achieve goals that he or she could not achieve alone. Goals that would be hopeless for an individual… become quite possible when a co-operative system is established bringing together all

the necessary expertise and resources.

In short, peer cooperation created by *positive interdependence* enables students to use *more resources* than when working alone (because other group members have different expertise or resources) and consequently, students improve their expectancy, which leads to a motivational increase. *Positive interdependence* is indispensably implemented in well-recognised CL methods, such as Learning Together and STAD. Therefore, the cooperation-expectancy relation should not be ignored, and the positive interdependence theory also suggests, as an important possibility, that *peer cooperation* created in the CL context is a powerful influence on *expectancy*.

As in social interdependence theory, Rogers (1994) stresses the importance of peer relationships in CL for students' motivational enhancement, noting the significance of self-belief (e.g., expectancy), alongside other motivational factors. According to Rogers (ibid.), motivational and classroom processes should be seen as component parts of an interlocking system; the motivational style which individuals have (e.g., self-belief) is, therefore, the result of interaction between the learners and the classroom situation. The important implication of this concept is that changes in situation may greatly influence changes in the motivational style of individuals. Concerning the importance of self-belief (expectancy) as a motivational style, he forecasts (ibid: 155):

> The important differences…are likely to be between those who see themselves as having a sufficient level of ability to complete successfully the task in hand and those who do not.

Further, he points out that a key condition of the classroom situation to affect students' behaviour is supplied by the relationships between pupils.

> The group environment is essentially an environment of relationships. These relationships…can have either a positive or a negative effect upon the behaviour of an individual within the school context: an individual pupil will be affected…by the quality of that relationship (p.144).

In a nutshell, this suggests that peer cooperation created in CL structures has a positive impact on students' expectancy. In other words, in CL, students typically help and encourage each other due to the carefully structured system (e.g., positive interdependence). Such relationships between learners may improve their expectations to be able to complete assigned tasks successfully because they know they can use their peers' ability/information or they have more *supplies* (or resources) than they could have as individuals.

As we can see, social interdependence theory and Rogers's views have a similar concept of the positive effect of peer cooperation on expectancy due to the availability of *supplies* to students from other group members. This view is also likely to be seen in the field of L2 learning.

In his framework of CL-generated motivation in L2 classrooms, Dörnyei (1997) identifies expectancy as one of the crucial components. He puts expectancy in his framework at the learning situation level[43]which has the most important impact on learners' motivation, rather than at the learner level[44]. To his mind, expectancy is empowered by group support which can supply more ability/information, and this group support (or *supplies*) is greater than the *supplies* possessed by any single member of the group. This suggests that peer cooperation in CL positively influences expectancy because of the *supplies* available to the group.

Similarly, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) also point out the importance of students' self-evaluations of the likelihood of success (expectancy) in L2 classrooms as one motivational factor and propose using CL to improve expectancy. They contend that there are several reasons why CL may enhance expectancy. One is that all group members have to collaborate with one another because of *positive*

[43] The learning situation level refers to "situation-specific motives rooted in various aspects of language learning in a classroom setting" (Dörnyei, 1997: 487).
[44] The learner level means the "various fairly stable personality traits that the learner has developed in the past" (ibid: 487).

*interdependence* (as discussed above in this section). Another is that group rewards are often assigned on the basis of overall group performances, and this may lead to less or no social comparison with other students, unlike the competitive learning situation which is typical of most schools. In the competitive context, self-perceptions following success or failure are based on a student's performance relative to other students. Therefore, students in CL are more likely to have an internal locus of control or increased expectancy because the possibilities of failure may be less in a comparison-free system. *Equal opportunities of success* in STAD, which means that an individual is graded on the basis on his/her own past performance (see Section 3.2 for details), is another example of creating or emphasising the no-comparison context. Although the comparison-free context is not directly associated with peer cooperation, its influence on expectancy is an interesting aspect.

Regarding students' roles as *supplies* in the CL-oriented L2 learning classroom, McGroarty (1989: 138) also describes the benefits of this:

> Cooperative learning approaches encourage students to take an active role in acquisition of knowledge and language skills and encourage themselves and each other as they work on problems of mutual interest.
>
> Preparing the students to be resources for each other in accomplishing a shared goal, rather than competitors to best each other, is a cardinal point of cooperative instruction.

In summary, the perspectives in both fields assume that students in CL classrooms take an active role in learning as *supplies* for each other through *peer cooperation*, which in turn enhances their *expectancy*. Now, having examined theoretical views about the relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy, I turn to the research findings regarding this relationship.

In L2 learning, there are interesting findings regarding the relationships between peer cooperation and expectancy. An empirical study by Romney (1997) finds

positive self-perceptions from participants in CL who were university students in Canada on a translation course (both from English into French and from French into English). The findings were collected from students' diaries (written in French) as part of the course work. In the diary, the students were required to record what they had learned during each group discussion and were also expected to comment on the discussion itself as well as their own contributions and the attitudes of the participants, including their own (the diary was also graded in terms of language accuracy and comprehensibility). According to Romney (ibid: 61), "no scientific or statistical evaluation of the method was conducted"; however, comments made by students in their diaries seem to reveal something of their perceptions or the nature of their feelings. He summarises the comments and the findings; those which relate to the present discussion are as follows. The students expressed satisfaction with being able to share their difficulties with their peers. They felt that if the rest of their group could overcome translation problems and produce successful translations, there was no reason why they should not be able to do the same. Romney notes that this idea boosted their self-esteem, self-confidence and morale.

This phenomenon seems to be related to the cooperation-expectancy relationships, for two reasons. One is that the students, through sharing the difficulties with their peers, appeared to feel that they were all at the same level in terms of subject matter. Accordingly, one member's success in a group may improve the other members' expectancy, because the fact that one student can overcome the problem of assigned tasks means that others can do the same. Another reason is that self-confidence or self-esteem[45] has similarities to expectancy because they are related to perceptions concerning the individuals' estimations of her/his own ability. In particular, self-confidence and expectancy have analogous features both in their definitions and research results (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3 for details). Therefore, it seems possible, at least to some extent, that *expectancy*, as well as

[45] According to Lawrence (1996:2), self-esteem is "what the person feels about the discrepancy between what he/she is and what he/she would like to be".

self-confidence (or self-esteem), is also promoted by the idea that 'the other members could do it, why can't I do the same?' It is important to recognise that this sequence depends on *peer cooperation*.

On an academic level, there are also intriguing comments from the diaries in Romney's study. Students felt that CL certainly improved their translation skills, and the reason why they felt this is likely to have stemmed from 'peer cooperation effects' on expectancy. For example, students felt that they might have missed fine details of meaning, nuances and subtleties when working individually. In other words, they are more likely to find such details easily when working in CL, because they knew that they had to explain to each other the meaning of any unclear elements and hints of meaning in the assigned text. Further, they felt that peer discussion improved the outcomes of translation because group members were able to use other members' strengths or expertise as *supplies* (or resources).

The following is the methodological outline of Romney's study. The experiment was carried out twice at a Canadian university during a third-year, two-semester course in translation. The course was considered to be an advanced level French language course, and the language used in class was mainly French. The class consisted of a variety of students in terms of French and English proficiency, because they were from different countries, such as China, Spain, Poland, Germany, Holland and Italy. Moreover, many Canadian students had a Francophone background (but sometimes lacked grammatical skills) and a number of other students had attended a French immersion programme which meant that they had started French either in elementary or junior high school and therefore had a good command of it. The criteria for heterogeneous team formation included a balance of: gender[46], language proficiency and individual factors (e.g., personality traits, expertise in academic subjects and work

[46] Since the vast majority of students on the course were female (about 90%), equal gender distribution was not an aim (Romney, 1997).

experience). CL was used only once a week for one 50-minutes class, with more traditional methods (not specified) being applied during the other two classes of the week. The number of participants was not specified in this article but Romney mentions that the usual number enrolled was 30.

The CL method used in Romney's study can be summarised as follows. It involved team-building, assigning roles to students (e.g., chairperson, recorder/spokesperson) and teaching social skills. Students were given a text to translate a week in advance and were required to prepare the translation, including the necessary documentary and terminological research and were told, at the beginning of each class, how many minutes were allotted to the discussion of the translation of a specific passage in order to leave enough time for the plenary discussion. The length of the passage was determined by the instructor. One assignment per semester out of three was done collaboratively, and each student received the same mark as his/her team members on the cooperative assignment. The grading system for the group assignments was the same as for the individual ones (e.g., spelling mistakes, misunderstanding of the source text were counted negatively, and good translations of particular portions of the text were rewarded).

As discussed above in this section, peer cooperation seems to have positive effects on students' expectancy for two possible reasons: having a variety of resources within easy reach and seeing examples of their peers performing well, which inspires students to perform well themselves. However, there are limited numbers of empirical studies in the L2 field which investigate the relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy. In addition, although this thesis aims to explore the nature of 'peer cooperation effects' among low achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, it is hard to find qualitative research examining informants who have similar backgrounds to the undergraduates in this study. Therefore, it may be useful to qualitatively explore the relationships between peer cooperation and expectancy in the case of these students.

Thus, Set 6 of the research questions are as follows:

**RQ6a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?**

**RQ6b: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

## 3.6 Relations between peer cooperation and motivation

In this section, I discuss the relationship between peer cooperation and motivation in L2 classrooms. This relationship is considered to be mediated by many factors. The (perceived) relationship mediated by *expectancy* and/or *levels of English* is the main focus in this study, and I have already discussed it in previous sections of this chapter. Therefore, in this section I consider the relationship mediated by other possible factors which the participants might perceive.

Here, it may be useful to explain why these mediating factors are discussed, although they are not the main focus of the study. This study is primarily based on qualitative research procedures; like quantitative research, it also uses existing theories as its framework but it also looks for patterns in the findings without relying on the framework (see Chapter 4 for more details). For this reason, it is quite possible in this study that the students will be found to perceive the mediating factors between peer cooperation and motivation, as well as unforeseen relationships between all four key variables.

There are many reasons (or factors) to support the relationship between peer cooperation and L2 motivation. In his framework of CL-generated L2 learning motivation, Dörnyei (1997) examines many factors in order to explain how CL creates learners' motivation. He proposes nine factors, including expectancy,

namely, self-confidence, interest, satisfaction, autonomy[47], goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, group cohesion, and classroom goal structure.

Before discussing these factors, I should clarify two points about them. One is that all the factors are discussed with reference to the wider research literature. Another is that two of the factors are excluded in the following discussion. Concerning the first one, as I stated in Section 3.1, CL has been used successfully to promote learning across *a wide range of curriculum areas* and this means that typical CL methods, such as STAD, which will be used in this thesis, do not so much rely on the target subject matter (e.g., L2 learning or mathematics). Similarly, Dörnyei (ibid.) claims that although much of the research support for all the factors in his framework above is drawn from first language (L1) contexts, these factors should also be the motives for L2 learning contexts when we consider the typical feature of CL. In other words, fundamental components of the learning process in CL, such as the relationships and interactions between students and their related psychological processes, are not specifically related to the target subject matter itself (ibid.). Therefore, the references used in the following discussion or description will not be limited to the field of L2 learning.

In respect of the two factors which will be excluded from this study, as described in Chapter 2, self-confidence and expectancy are regarded as analogous in this thesis (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3 for details) because of their crucial similarities, which focus both on individuals' beliefs and their performance level. There will therefore be no separate study of 'self-confidence'. Another factor to exclude is *classroom goal structure*, because this factor is more relevant to competitive or individual classroom structures. Accordingly, I include the other six factors: interest, satisfaction, autonomy, goal-orientedness, norm and reward system, and group cohesion.

[47] *Autonomy* is shown as teachers' *authority type* in Dörnyei's (1997) framework, which means that they use their democratic leadership style to promote learners' *autonomy*.

Dörnyei (1997) defines these six factors as follows. *Interest* and *satisfaction* can be categorised as course-specific motives. *Interest* means students' intrinsic interest, which result from several factors; attractive task variety and dynamism, active involvement in class activities, enjoyment of working with team-mates, self-initiating nature of learning, and information from peer feedback. *Satisfaction* refers to the satisfaction which students feel after completing a task successfully through shared experience and celebration with peers in CL.

*Autonomy* can be categorised as the teacher-specific motive, because in CL teachers typically create a democratic classroom context which fosters students' autonomy. Autonomy is regarded by many researchers as the core of the intrinsic motivation[48] to learn. In particular, Deci and Ryan's view (1985: 255) supports Dörnyei's idea of seeing autonomy as a teacher-specific motive in CL: "Teachers oriented toward supporting autonomy seemed to promote intrinsic motivation and self-esteem". Furthermore, autonomy is also considered a significant component in L2 motivation. Ushioda (1996: 2) asserts that autonomy and motivation are inseparable from each other: "Autonomous language learners are by definition motivated learners".

The remaining three variables (*goal-orientedness*, *norm and reward system*, *group cohesion*) can be categorised as the group-specific motives. *Goal-orientedness* refers to the extent to which the group focuses on attaining its goal. Because of the *positive interdependence* in CL, which means that the success of the whole group depends on each member's efforts to reach the goals (see Section 3.5 for details), individual and group goals in CL may be more united than they are in other educational settings. The *norm and reward system* means that students in CL are motivated to improve their academic abilities because their efforts to achieve goals are always welcomed or encouraged by their peers and they wish to avoid complaints from their peers for not completing their

[48] Deci and Ryan (1985: 34) define *intrinsic motivation* as "an activity when a person does the activity in the absence of a reward contingency or control".

contribution to the group goals. *Group cohesion* is considered a crucial motivational element in CL and L2 motivation. This could be due to students' sense of responsibility to their groups; peer pressure to do their best in class activities has a strong impact on individuals. Accordingly, the likelihood of *selfish* behaviour, such as doing very little work while taking advantage of the other members' performance, decreases. Furthermore, positive relationships between group members make the learning process more pleasurable or fun.

As we can see from the above, it is likely that these six factors will be found in this study because typical CL contexts will be used in the investigation. However, this investigation mainly focuses on *expectancy* and/or *levels of English* to mediate the relationship between peer cooperation and motivation.

Up to this point, I have discussed CL-related motives/factors. However, the participants in this study may have been quite reluctant to study L2 in class and some of them may have continued to feel reluctant even during or after finishing the CL course. As briefly mentioned in Section 3.1, in his review of many CL studies, Slavin (1995) admits that positive effects on affective factors have not always been found, for example, self-esteem, internal locus of control (motivation), or peer support for achievement, although their overall effects are positive. Furthermore, according to Cohen (1994), even a group of students who have been well-trained for CL has a certain problem in their learning behaviour. It seems, therefore, to be appropriate to examine possible causes for such a problem. One of the possible causes, which appears to happen in CL classrooms in this study, is related to hierarchies among students which they themselves create naturally. Such hierarchies occur because they compare themselves with their peers in terms of their academic abilities. This problem could be also a (negative) mediating factor to connect peer cooperation with L2 motivation because it is generated in the process of peer cooperation and could help to cause for a decline in motivation. I discuss this mediating factor in more detail below.

Small student groups which are required to do tasks or activities tend to create hierarchies or *status ordering* because some members are seen as higher achievers and as having contributed more to reaching group goals than others (Cohen, 1994). Importantly, students who feel as if they are noticeably less competent within the group may show lazy attitudes, and therefore rarely learn from group learning experiences (ibid.). This status ordering problem appears to occur also in student groups in the present study context of Japanese university L2 classrooms due to an inherent problem in students' groups. Concerning group making, Cohen (1994: 29) claims:

> Even if you think you have picked group members of similar ability, the students are likely to make very fine distinctions about who is the best student in the small group.

In short, it is almost impossible to make groups where all members feel that they have the same or similar academic abilities, and students can be demotivated if they feel inferior to others. Furthermore, many Japanese students may have already experienced this feeling of inferiority because of their unpleasant experiences in secondary schools, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Since strong feelings are sometimes difficult to remove, theirs could have a negative influence in some way on their motivation, in addition to the impact of status ordering.

In view of the possible influences of status ordering and CL-generated motives discussed above, this investigation might find that students perceive relationships between peer cooperation and motivation through the influence of these factors. Such relationships are not included in the research questions posed earlier. In addition, the investigation in this study might find other unforeseen (perceived) relationships between all four key variables (peer cooperation, levels of English, expectancy and L2 classroom motivation); hence, we should consider other possible links between the variables. Thus, research question 7 is:

RQ7: When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four

variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?

In this chapter, I have focused on peer cooperation in CL and relationships between peer cooperation and other variables, such as levels of English and expectancy, posing all the other research questions not proposed in Chapter 2. Chapter 4 will describe and discuss the methodology for addressing these research questions.

# CHAPTER 4
# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods used to answer the research questions and satisfy the research aims. It consists of six sections. The first section provides a justification for the qualitative approach taken in the present study and defines the study as an exploratory case study. The second section describes the sampling and setting for the study. The third covers the teaching method adopted in this thesis. This is necessary because one of the key factors in this study is peer cooperation in CL, which closely relates to research questions in Sets 3, 4 and 6, and the single research question, no. 5 (see Section 4.3 for more details). The fourth and fifth sections focus on the data collection techniques employed in the study and on the analytical techniques used to treat the qualitative data. The final section discusses the trustworthiness of this investigation.

## 4.1 Qualitative research approach and the use of a case study

### 4.1.1 Why was a qualitative approach chosen for this investigation?

The design and implementation of this thesis were basically qualitative in nature. To provide a basis for justifying the appropriateness of the qualitative approach for the purposes and objectives of this study, I applied Glesne and Peshkin's (1992: 6-7) framework for a research design. This framework is based on four factors[49]: assumptions, purpose, approach and the researcher's role. The outline of these factors is: 1) *assumptions*. In qualitative inquiries, reality is assumed to be a set of "socially constructed" phenomena and therefore variables are "complex,

[49] Glesne and Peshkin (1992) propose these ideas as 'predispositions' of qualitative and quantitative inquiry. However, these ideas have many similarities to criteria/characteristics suggested by other researchers (e.g., Creswell, 1994; Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Robson, 2002). Therefore, Glesne and Peshkin's ideas are treated as framework for qualitative research designs in the present study.

interwoven and difficult to measure", while in quantitative inquiries, reality is regarded as "social facts" which are identifiable and measurable; 2) *purpose*. In qualitative modes, the purpose is to interpret how participants form their surroundings through understanding their views and considering their contexts and/or backgrounds, while the purpose in quantitative modes may be "Generalizability", "Prediction" and "Causal explanations"; 3) *approach*. In qualitative approaches, the investigation is often *concluded* by "hypotheses and grounded theory" (because it is exploratory in nature), whereas quantitative ones are *begun* with "hypotheses and theories" by using "formal instruments" for statistical results. In addition, the qualitative approach uses the "researcher as instrument" and natural settings (rather than laboratory settings). It also include other features, such as "searches for patterns", "minor use of numerical indices" and "descriptive write-up"; 4) *researcher's role*. With qualitative methods, the roles are "Personal involvement" and 'insightful and in-depth understanding', while quantitative methods concern "Detachment" from participants and "Objective portrayal".

Importantly, researcher's "objectivity" is the greatest concern due to the 'subjective' features of qualitative inquiries (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992: 6). However, this concern/disadvantage itself creates powerful advantages (e.g. the availability of descriptions and explication which is much more in-depth than quantitative investigations allow) because genuinely 'in-depth' exposition may require 'subjective' or empathic involvement with participants. Qualitative inquiries also employ procedures to improve their objectivity (see Section 4.6 for more details). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), recently more investigators in many fields (e.g., psychology, linguistics and business studies) have begun to use qualitative methods. This suggests the strengths of qualitative modes, at least to some extent.

In the following, I discuss the four above factors in relation to the research questions which were discussed in earlier chapters and in relation to the concerns

of this study. By this discussion, I hope to establish a foundation for the qualitative nature of the study.

First of all, one of the main *assumptions* of this study was that everything that happened in the classroom, such as fights or poor cooperation among students, was 'socially interconnected', which meant, for example, that multiple factors (or occurrences) inside and/or outside the classroom could be the cause of an incident within it. Moreover, each of the individual elements might be interconnected with others. In essence, the variables associated with EFL classrooms had complicated relationships and were difficult to evaluate. Therefore, it was important in this study to focus on the participants' points of view rather than my own. Thus, the *purpose* of the study was to offer an interpretation of the classroom phenomena through understanding the students' perspectives, not 'generalizability' and/or 'prediction', as could be done in quantitative research.

Although the purpose of this study was primarily qualitative, it had a small number of features which are also found in quantitative research, such as the fact that it began with 'theories'. Despite the use of theories, the *approach* of this study was small scale and 'exploratory in nature' because its aims were to find out what students actually felt about their class environment. Importantly, the use of theories was carefully considered in view of the need to maintain the 'exploratory' nature of the enquiry; the study employed 'flexible' data collecting procedures aiming at an inductive approach (see Section 4.1.4 for more details of this). The 'flexible' procedures included 'open-ended' interviews and self-written questionnaires, and the purpose of this 'open-ended' style was to avoid limiting the participants' responses (see Section 4.4 for more details); with quantitative methods, data collection by 'fixed' or structured questions tends to occur in order to 'measure' informants' answers on the basis of certain theories. By not restricting the participants' answers, the study might be able to 'explore' patterns from findings (which were not based on theories), because the participants' free comments have much more information than the data resulting from 'fixed'

questionnaires which have no flexibility, due to the need to choose from a predetermined set of possible answers.

In addition to these qualitative features concerning the *approach*, the present study was conducted in the 'natural settings' in which I usually taught, and this included another feature of a qualitative kind: it used the 'researcher as instrument'. Furthermore, this study had, in its *approach*, other qualitative characteristics: it 'searched for patterns' (as discussed above), it made 'minor use of numerical indices', and it was 'written up descriptively'.

As for the *researcher's role*, since I was the teacher of the informants, I was involved as 'part of the class' (personal involvement). Accordingly, it was natural for me to observe them without any undue awareness on their part of being watched. This generated good opportunities to observe their 'natural' attitudes in class, not their 'acting' or pretended attitudes, a common concern when 'outsiders' observe students. Moreover, when interviewing students, I could take advantage of being their teacher and observer, since I already knew some things about them, such as their personalities and their levels of English, through teaching and observing classes. These things enabled me to better understand what they said at the interviews. The present study also included another *researcher's role*, which was to capture data from the 'inside' with respect to students' perceptions ('insightful and in-depth understanding'). Thus, this study satisfies the four factors and therefore it seems appropriate to call it a 'qualitative study'. In addition to these factors, as stated above, certain procedures, such as reflective journals, have been used to check and control the researcher's subjectivity, with a view to improving the objectivity of the present study (see Section 4.6 for more details).

### 4.1.2 Why was a case study chosen as a qualitative approach for this investigation?

As a next step in designing this study, I needed to determine the design of the qualitative investigation to be used. Yin (1994: 4-9) proposes three useful criteria to consider when making this decision: "the type of research question posed", "the extent of control an investigator has over actual behavioural events" and "the degree of focus on contemporary as opposed to historical events". In the following, I discuss the appropriateness of this study for a case study, in the course of describing what makes these three aspects 'criteria'.

Regarding the *type of research question* posed, Yin (ibid: 6-7) points out that "how" and "why" questions are suitable for use in case studies, experiments or histories because such questions manage links with contexts and/or backgrounds rather than "frequencies or incidence" alone. The research questions in this study were mainly 'how' questions.

With regard to the *extent of control*, Yin suggests that in a case study, the investigator should have little control over the events because the advantage of a case study is its capacity to cope with a rich variety of information (e.g., documents, interviews and observations). This was indeed the case for this study as it was conducted in natural classroom settings and the behaviour of the participants was largely unpredictable.

This study satisfied the third of Yin's criteria by focusing on *contemporary events* rather than historical ones. It was therefore suitable for a case study. Yin (ibid: 8) comments as follows:

> The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, but when the relevant behaviours cannot be manipulated. The case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian's repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing… in some situations, such as participant-observation, informal manipulation can occur… experiments are done when an investigator can manipulate behaviour directly, precisely, and systematically. This can

> occur in a laboratory setting, in which an experiment may focus on one or two isolated variables…

The importance of these two conditions (the extent of control and the degree of focus on contemporary set of events) are also confirmed by other researchers (Burns, 2000; Denscombe, 2003).

From different perspectives, several writers have described the characteristics of a case study as follows:

- The purpose of a case study is to "seek to understand a larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case" (Rossman & Rallis, 1998: 70).
- A case study "involves the observation of one population or sample at one point in time." (Labovitz & Hagedorn, 1971: 41)
- A case study involves using a variety of data to produce an in-depth understanding of the entity being studied (Burns, 2000).

This study exhibited all of these characteristics. It involved the observation of one group (of students) for one semester, which was about three months, and its purpose was 'to understand a larger phenomenon through close examination of a specific case'. Extensive data collection procedures were used for a holistic and in-depth understanding of the class phenomena. The data collection methods encompassed in-depth interviews, questionnaires, class observation, standardized tests of English and participants' writings showing their opinions.

As discussed in the previous section, this study was *exploratory* in nature because its aims were to learn about students' perceptions of and perspectives on their class environment. The study was also a *descriptive* case study because it used theories as the overall framework; that is, in the aspect of testing the theories. According to Yin (1994) and Berg (2001), there are three main appropriate designs for case studies, namely exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. Even though their distinctive characteristics can to a large extent overlap (Yin, 1994), employment of a descriptive theory as the framework throughout a research

project is the central element of a descriptive case study.

In summary, this was a qualitative, descriptive, exploratory investigation which used a case study as a research strategy.

### 4.1.3 Why was a single case study approach chosen for this investigation?

The main decision for me to make when designing the case study was to determine whether to use 'single or multiple' cases. This was followed by choosing a unit scale for analysis: holistic (analyzing a single or multiple cases as a single unit) or embedded (analyzing a single or multiple cases as multiple [sub-]units). According to Yin's (1994) criteria for this decision, if the case study uses an existing theory, then a single case study should be appropriate. Thus, I chose to do a single case study of an English class for one semester at a non-language related faculty of a Japanese university.

The other characteristic of this case study was that particular attention was devoted to six students as a sample which was purposefully selected from the class (see Section 4.2 for the sampling procedure) in order to identify their opinions and perceptions about their peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, expectancy and level of English (see Chapter 2 for definitions of these terms). Therefore, this was an embedded case study design, and each individual student in the sample constituted the subunit for analysis.

### 4.1.4 A deductive and flexible approach

The traditional method in scientific research can conceivably be represented by a deductive approach, which means going from the theory to hypotheses and then to empirical testing. Because existing theories were used in this study, the approach could be described as being primarily deductive. Since this was qualitative investigation, however, the inductive approach, which implies drawing

generalizable theories or patterns from findings, was thought to be appropriate as an approach (as discussed in Section 4.1.1); an inductive approach is one of the characteristics of qualitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Bryman, 2001). Therefore, in this study I was flexibly prepared to some extent to accept "unexpected and striking things for us to gaze on" (Barton & Lazarsfeld, 1969: 166 cited in Bryman, 2001) as discussed in Section 4.1.1. Thus, this study tried to find (unforeseen) patterns from its findings, although the research questions were mainly based on existing theory. In particular, research question 7, which concerns possible perceived relationships between all four key variables, was devised to find such patterns.

## 4.2 Sampling decisions: The participants and settings

Qualitative research usually involves a small sample of key respondents nested in a certain context and studied in-depth. Thus, qualitative samples tend to be *purposive,* meaning that they are selected as representatives of a specific population rather than at random (Morse, 1989 cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994; Silverman, 2000; Denscombe, 2003). For the preparation of this study, I used a purposive sampling procedure.

Several researchers write about the sampling procedures used in qualitative studies. In purposive sampling, "researchers use their special knowledge or expertise about some group to select subjects who represent this population" (Berg, 2001: 32). Rubin and Rubin (1995: 66) suggest three requirements for such sampling: the samples should be "knowledgeable about the cultural arena or the situation or experience being studied"; should be "willing to talk"; and "when people in the arena have different perspectives", the samples should "represent the range of points of view".

It should be noted here that research ethics have been carefully considered in this study on the basis of the standards proposed by the British Association for

Applied Linguistics (http://www.baal.org.uk/about_goodpractice_full.pdf). The ethical considerations involve: confidentiality, to protect the privacy of the participants (e.g., keeping their names confidential); and gaining informed consent through providing sufficient information concerning the way in which their data/information will be used. The given information included: issues of the safety/confidentiality of the data, the informants' right to decline to participate in the investigation, and their right to comment on the final products, as well as their access to the products.

Following these recommendations, I used my own students, a whole class, as the participants for this study, including the pilot study (which covered a different class from the main class for this investigation). The six interviewees selected were also purposefully chosen from the class (see also Section 4.2.2). There were two main reasons for this decision. One was that the students were suitable for this study in terms of their low ability in English, low motivation in English classes when compared to their fellow students in the language related faculty and their cultural background. The second was that I was knowledgeable about the students and settings and also that the data had the necessary accessibility. More detailed information about the participants and settings is given in the following subsections.

### 4.2.1 The participants and settings for the pilot study

The participants for the pilot study were similar to those of the main study in terms of their background: belonging to a non-language related faculty, freshmen of the same university in EFL (their average scores in a standardized test of English were relatively low). They were first year students in the faculty of economics at a university in Japan. The university was of medium size serving around 4,500 students, located in Aichi prefecture, the central part of the country.

The pilot study was carried out at the university in the autumn semester, from

October 2002 to January 2003, including the winter vacation between late December and early January. There were eleven weeks of classes in the semester. Each 90-minute class was given once a week. In the sample class, thirty students had enrolled. However, some of the students were absent from the beginning of the class or for most of the classes. On average, there were twenty students in class at a time.

### 4.2.2 The participants and settings for the main study

The participants in the main study were in their first year in the faculty of commerce at the university where the pilot study took place.

The main study was carried out in the university in the autumn semester, from October 2003 to January 2004, including the winter vacation between late December and early January. There were thirteen weeks of classes in the semester, each of which lasted 90 minutes and was scheduled once a week. Fourteen students registered in the sample class. However, one of the students was absent from class at the beginning of the semester and some were occasionally absent. On average, twelve students attended each class.

## 4.3 The teaching method employed in this investigation

This section describes the teaching method adopted in this study. This is necessary, because one of the key factors in this study was peer cooperation in CL, which is closely related to the research questions Sets 3, 4 and 6, and a single research question no. 5 (for these research questions, see Chapter 3, Introduction). As stated earlier in Chapter 3, there are many types of CL and hence many unique systems for creating peer cooperation. In addition, even if teachers use a CL approach extensively and apply it to many types of class, they have to modify it for different students.

## Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD)

A modified version of the model called Student Teams-Achievement Divisions (STAD), one of the most extensively evaluated CL models (Slavin, 1995), was used in the present study.

There were three main reasons why I used STAD. The first was that this method provides a general approach to organising the classroom rather than a comprehensive teaching strategy for some particular subject. This means that teachers can use their own lessons and the materials they prefer (Slavin, 1994a). In other words, it can be implemented in any subject area and at any grade, level or age. Since the sample students had had sufficiently damaging experiences in secondary schools to make them reluctant to study English, I needed to make my own materials to avoid using similar contents and styles to those which are typical of the secondary school textbooks in Japan. In other words, the materials which I designed would have to be clearly explained and understandable for them, not focus on memorization and, not be too demanding. The second was that STAD has a system of group rewards which students must earn by cooperating in teams. In this system, the only way for a team to succeed is for all its members to master what is being taught. In essence, students have to cooperate with one another and care about how their team-mates are doing in order to receive the group reward which is based on *individual accountability*. The third reason was that STAD gives equal opportunities for students to be successful in class. It is *team scores* in quizzes which are used as the determinant for giving the team rewards, based on individual team members' improvement over their own past records in quizzes. Therefore, all students have a chance to be a *star* in their team by scoring well and contributing to get the team reward. In summary, students' expectations of succeeding should be enhanced. They can be enhanced partly because students can count on their team-mates and do not have to compete with any class-mates.

Therefore, STAD has an ideal combination of features to generate the two key

factors in this study: peer cooperation and students' expectancy, which is why I decided to use it in this study.

Most of the activities of STAD were conducted as described by Slavin (1994b). Any modifications, including the way in which each activity was conducted, are indicated within the following description of STAD.

There are five major components of the STAD model: class presentations, teams, quizzes, individual improvement scores and team recognition. An overview of Slavin's five components (1994b) is given below, followed by a more detailed description of STAD.

CLASS PRESENTATIONS: Materials [50] are first introduced in a class presentation, mostly through the teacher's direct instruction, which leads to discussion among students. This presentation must clearly and closely relate to the STAD unit which consists of the regular cycle of activities: teach, team study, test and team recognition (see below in this section for details). In other words, it is important that students understand what they have to do in the cycle of the unit. Accordingly, they realise that they must pay careful attention to the presentation because it may help to get better scores on the quizzes which determine their team scores.

TEAMS: Teams comprise four or five students and are mixed in academic performance, sex and race or ethnicity. The team mainly aims at preparing its members to perform well on the quizzes. After the class presentation above, the team works on worksheets or other materials, which can be teacher-made. The study most often involves students discussing problems together, comparing answers and correcting any misconceptions. The team, the vital feature of STAD, offers peer support, which is important for students' learning. When students help one another, they have more resources, academically and mentally, than when

[50] 'Materials' here mean only those for 'class presentation' or 'lesson sheets' (see below) in this study.

they work alone. In addition, help is readily available without waiting for the teacher who is usually the only one in class. This means that students have more chances of learning than when working alone. Students' mutual consideration and respect are also important for developing inter-personal relationships within the team.

QUIZZES: After one to two periods of the class presentation and 'team working' experiences, students take individual quizzes without any help from their team-mates. This ensures that each student is individually responsible for knowing the materials.

INDIVIDUAL IMPROVEMENT SCORES: The individual improvement scores refer to the performance goals with which individual students are provided. It is thought that each individual student can reach these goals but only if he/she works harder and does better than in the past. All students can contribute to their team score under this system. However, students cannot do so without showing some improvement compared with their own past performance. Individual students are given their own 'base scores' on the basis of their average scores on similar quizzes, and they can get points for their teams, depending on how much their scores exceed their base scores.

TEAM RECOGNITION: Teams can obtain some rewards if their average scores meet a certain criterion.

Some preparation from teachers is needed. According to Slavin (1994b), in addition to making their own materials (or 'lesson sheets') for 'class presentation', they should make 'worksheets', 'answer sheets' for the worksheet, and 'quizzes' for each unit (or the regular cycle of activities: see the sub-section on 'class presentation' above). After these preparations, the teacher needs to assign students to teams. A detailed description of these preparations and the procedure to make teams is given below.

MATERIALS: Following Slavin's description (ibid.), in the present study I made my own 'lesson sheets' as well as the 'worksheets', the 'answer sheets' and 'quizzes' (see Appendix 1 for examples of these sheets and quizzes; all these examples are shown with the permission of the publisher). These materials were related to the video-aided English listening/conversation textbook for Japanese learners, as follows (all materials for classroom use were made on the basis of permission from the publisher):

The Berlitz Schools of Languages (Japan) Inc. and ITOCHU & Co. Ltd. (1987). *First step abroad: Tabi—kotoba to shūkan* [Travelling—language and customs]. Tokyo: Kinseido.

ASSIGNING STUDENTS TO TEAMS: Students were assigned to teams on the basis of the major features of 'teams' described above. To make every team mixed in academic performance, I followed the steps below (taken from Slavin, 1994b: 15-17):

1. *Make copies of teams summary sheets*. Before you begin to assign students to teams, you will need to make one copy of a Team Summary Sheet…[see Appendix 2] for every four students in your class.

2. *Rank students*. On a sheet of paper, rank the students in your class from highest to lowest based on their past performance. Use whatever information you have to do this—test scores are best, grades are good, but your own judgment is fine. It is not necessary to be exact in your ranking, but do the best you can.

3. *Decide on the number of teams*. Each team should have four members if possible. To decide how many teams you will have, divide the number of students in the class by four. If the number is divisible by four, the quotient will be the number of four-member teams you should have. For example, if there are 32 students in the class, you would have eight teams with four members each.

4. *Assign students to teams*. When you are assigning students to teams, balance the teams so that (a) each team is composed of students whose performance levels range from low to average to high, and (b) the average

performance level of all the teams in the class is about equal. To assign students to teams, use your list of students ranked by performance. Assign team letters to each student. For example, in an eight-team class you would use the letters A through H. Start at the top of your list with the letter "A;" continue lettering toward the middle. When you get to the last team letter, continue lettering in the opposite order. For example if you were using the letters A-H (as in Figure…[see Figure 1 below]), the eighth and ninth students would be assigned to Team H, the tenth to Team G, the next to Team F, and so on. When you get back to letter "A," stop and repeat the process from the bottom up, again starting and ending with the letter "A."

Notice that two of the students (17 and 18) in…[Figure 4.1] are not assigned at this point. They will be added to teams as fifth members, but first the teams should be checked for race or ethnicity and sex balance. If, for example, one-fourth of the class is black, approximately one student on each team should be black. If the teams you have made based on performance ranking are not evenly divided on both ethnicity and sex…, you should change team assignments by trading students of the same approximate performance level, but of different ethnicity or sex, between teams until a balance is achieved.

Figure 4.1 Assigning Students to Teams (ibid: 16)

| | Rank Order | Team Name |
|---|---|---|
| High-Performing Students | 1 | A |
| | 2 | B |
| | 3 | C |
| | 4 | D |
| | 5 | E |
| | 6 | F |
| | 7 | G |
| | 8 | H |
| Average-Performing Students | 9 | H |
| | 10 | G |
| | 11 | F |
| | 12 | E |
| | 13 | D |
| | 14 | C |
| | 15 | B |
| | 16 | A |
| | 17 | |
| | 18 | |
| | 19 | A |
| | 20 | B |
| | 21 | C |
| | 22 | D |
| | 23 | E |
| | 24 | F |
| | 25 | G |
| | 26 | H |
| Students | 27 | H |
| | 28 | G |
| | 29 | F |
| | 30 | E |
| | 31 | D |
| | 32 | C |
| | 33 | B |
| | 34 | A |

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5. *Fill out Team Summary Sheets*. After you have finished assigning all students to teams, fill in the names of the students on each team on your Team Summary Sheets …, leaving the team name blank.

6. *Determining initial base scores*. Base scores represent students' average scores on past quizzes. (However, in the present study there were no quizzes given previously. Therefore, I used my best guess by considering the results of the English proficiency test at the beginning of STAD and information on how well the students did during the lesson before taking the first quiz. The first quiz scores were used as the base scores for the second quiz, and the averages of these scores were used as the base scores for the third quiz.)

In this study, the normal routine of activities of STAD for the most part closely followed Slavin's description (1994b: 18-25). In the following description of STAD, each set of activities or description is indicated by adding a description of the way in which it was conducted in a typical lesson in the present study, following Slavin's description. When activities were modified, I briefly show how and explain why (please note that these explanations focus only on the fundamental elements and therefore further details and/or supplementary activities are not included in the following description[51]). This holds good throughout the section on the teaching method used in the study.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES:

The regular cycle of the activities consists of:

TEACH – Presented the lesson.

TEAM STUDY – Students worked on worksheets in their teams to master the material.

TEST – Students took individual quizzes.

TEAM RECOGNITION – Team scores were calculated on the basis of team members' improvement scores and I recognized high-scoring teams in class.

These activities are described in further detail:

[51] Please see Appendix 3 for further details and/or additional drills.

TEACH:
Time: 1 class period
Main Idea: Presented the lesson
Materials needed: My lesson plan, lesson sheets, video tape, and worksheets for dictation exercises

Each lesson began with a class presentation. This class presentation covered three components of the lesson: Opening, Development, Guided Practice. The main things included in each component were the following:

*Opening.* I told students what they were going to learn and why it was important, trying to arouse their curiosity. I also briefly reviewed prerequisite skills or information.

*Development.* I stuck to the objectives which would be tested, focusing on meaning, not memorization. I demonstrated concepts or skills, using visual aids, examples and so on. In addition, I frequently assessed student comprehension by asking questions and tried to explain why an answer was correct or incorrect, unless it was obvious.

*Guided Practice*. I allowed students to discuss the answers to the questions with their team-mates, and then called on team members at random to represent their team's consensus. At this stage, I asked students to prepare answers to one or two questions.

Although the activities in Development and Guided Practice are described as separate processes, in the present study they were often combined, because both activities involve asking students questions to assess their comprehension of the presented lesson. Such questions in Guided Practice were a little more comprehensive than those in Development.

TEAM STUDY:
Time: 1 class period
Main idea: Students studied worksheets in their teams

Materials needed: two worksheets for every team
two answer sheets for every team

In team study, students had to study the material which I had presented in the lesson, helping their team-mates master the material. They had worksheets and answer sheets to practise the skill being taught and to test themselves and their team-mates. Only two copies of the worksheets and answer sheets were provided to each team, to oblige students to work together, unless they preferred to work alone or wanted more copies.

On the first day of team working, I explained to the students what it meant to work in teams, discussing the following team rules in particular (taken from Slavin, 1994b: 19):

Team Rules

1. Students have a responsibility to make sure that their team-mates have learned the material.
2. No one has finished studying until all *team-mates* have mastered the subject.
3. Ask all team-mates for help before asking the teacher.
4. Team-mates may talk to each other *softly* [quietly and not negatively].

After discussing the team rules, I proceeded with the introduction of team working as follows (Slavin, 1994b):

- Make students move their desks and/or chairs to work together with their team-mates.
- Give worksheets and answer sheets (two of each per team).
- Instruct students to work together in pairs [As students were working on short-answer questions, they quizzed each other, with partners taking turns to hold the answer sheet or answer the questions].

I emphasized to the students (Slavin, 1994b: 20) that:

- They have to continue studying until they are sure that all their team-mates will achieve "100% on the quiz".
- The worksheets are for mastering the materials—not "for filling out and handing in".
- They should "explain answers to one another instead of just checking each other against the answer sheet".

In addition, while students were working, I circulated through the class, praising teams when they were working well, sitting in with each team to hear how they were doing, and so on.

In the study, the 'Teach' and 'Team Study' parts of the activities were conducted typically in one class period (90 minutes) although Slavin recommends two to four class periods for the two separated activities. Ninety minutes for one class seems to be relatively long (Slavin does not specify the actual length of one class period). In addition, the class objectives of this class were to enhance students' listening and some basic grammar skills of EFL, including some basic vocabulary skills. To foster such skills, it appeared to be inappropriate to give a long class presentation or lecture, unlike some other academic subjects such as mathematics, science and history.

TEST:

Time: 10 minutes
Main idea: individual quiz
Material needed: one quiz per student

I distributed the quiz[52] and gave students adequate time to complete it. Students took the quiz individually without any help from others. I collected the quizzes for scoring. The team scores were calculated in time for the next class (please note

[52] Please note that this quiz is part of the regular cycle of activities ('teach', 'team study', 'test 'and 'team recognition'). See Appendix 1 for an example of the quiz.

that, although the quiz took no more than fifteen minutes, the rest of the class time was used for the other activities, such as 'teach', for the second cycle).

In the study, each quiz took ten to fifteen minutes although Slavin recommends one to one and a half class periods. The educational objectives of the class were primarily to enhance students' listening and some basic grammar skills of EFL, including some basic vocabulary skills. In addition, each lesson consisted of relatively few vocabulary items and key sentences to learn. Because of the limited input, the quiz was fairly short.

TEAM RECOGNITION:

Main idea: To figure individual improvement scores and team scores, and reward teams

As soon as possible after each quiz, I calculated individual improvement scores and team scores, and gave rewards to high-scoring teams. Team scores were announced in the first period after the quiz. The purpose of this was to make students realise that they had received recognition when performing well and to increase their motivation to do their best.

*Improvement Points:* Students received points for their teams based on the degree to which their quiz score (as a percentage) exceeded their base scores. I used the improvement point criteria described by Slavin (1994b: 21) as follows:

| If a quiz score is… | a students earns… |
|---|---|
| a perfect paper regardless of base scores | 30 improvement points |
| more than ten points above base score | 30 improvement points |
| base score to ten points above base score | 20 improvement points |
| ten points below to one point below base score | 10 improvement points |
| more than ten points below base score | 5 improvement points |

Before beginning to work out improvement points, as Slavin recommends, I

needed a copy of a Quiz Score Sheet (see Appendix 2). The purpose of base scores and improvement points was to make it possible for all students to contribute maximum points to their teams, whatever their levels of past performance.

*Team Scores:* To work out the team scores, I wrote each set of improvement points on the appropriate Team Summary Sheet and divided its total team points by the number of team members who were present, rounding off any fractions (Team Scores = Total Team points ÷ Number of Team Members). Team scores depended on improvement scores rather than on raw scores.

*Criteria for Awards:* Three levels of awards were given based on average team scores as follows:

Figure 4.2 Criteria for Awards (Adopted from Slavin, 1994b: 24)

| Criterion (Team Average) | Award |
|---|---|
| 15 | GOOD TEAM |
| 20 | GREAT TEAM |
| 25 | SUPER TEAM |

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To be a Great team, most team members had to score above their base score, and to be a Super team, most team members must score at least ten points above their base scores.

I announced in class the team awards for achieving any of the award levels above. For team rewards, I gave five bonus points to members of Super teams, three to members of Great teams and one to members of Good teams (on a 100-point scale).

This was slightly different from the procedure proposed by Slavin (Slavin, 1994b). He proposes giving bonus points only to 'Great' or 'Super' teams, not to 'Good' teams. His book suggests that recognition for team awards is given to 'Great' or 'Super' teams only. The reason for this difference was that most of the students in the present study were low achievers in English, who needed more encouragement than high or normal achievers.

In addition, Slavin (ibid.) proposes that the team reward system should be kept separate from individual grades to avoid complaints from high achievers. However, as regards the students in the present study, actual rewards appeared to work but not recognition alone. Otherwise, there might have been the risk of some students being reluctant to cooperate with each other in groups, because helping team-mates or contributing to teams in any way did not make any difference to their grades.

There are several more key points of STAD which Slavin (ibid.) emphasizes. These key points were not modified except in the case of 'Changing Teams' (see below).

RETURNING THE FIRST SET OF QUIZZES:

When returning the first set of quizzes (with the base scores, quiz scores and improvement points) to students, I explained the improvement points system. In this explanation, I emphasized the following (ibid: 25):

1. The main purpose of the improvement points system is to give everyone a minimum score to try to beat and to set that minimum score on the basis of past performance so that all students will have an equal chance to be successful if they do their best academically.
2. The second purpose of the improvement points system is to make students realize that the scores of everyone on their team are important—that all members of the team can earn maximum improvement points if they do their best.
3. The improvement points system is fair because everyone is competing only with himself or herself-trying to improve his or her own performance-regardless of what the rest of the class does.

RE-CALCULATING BASE SCORES:

At every marking period, I re-calculated students' average scores on all quizzes and assigned new base scores to the students.

CHANGING TEAMS:

Slavin (ibid.) recommends reassigning students to new teams after five or six

weeks of STAD. This is because he believes that it gives students who were in low-scoring teams a new chance, allowing them to work with other classmates and keep the programme fresh.

In the present study, however, the first assigned teams stayed together throughout the course. Johnson, Johnson and Holubec (1991) suggest that teams should remain stable long enough for them to be successful. In this study, the class continued for thirteen weeks and met only once a week, with the first and last classes being occupied by the English proficiency test and questionnaires. In this situation, some groups might still be in the process of constructing their group cohesion or improving the function of group work by the middle of the programme (after five or six weeks of STAD). To avoid the risk of disturbing this process, the groups remained the same throughout the programme in this study.

GRADING:
In the study, the students' final grades were based on their actual quiz scores and the bonus points were added to their final grades as described above.

The typical lesson plan of these activities in this study—Teach, Team Study, Test and Team Recognition—is outlined in Appendix 3. This cycle of activities occupied three to four periods of teaching.

## 4.4. Data collection techniques employed in this investigation

### 4.4.1 An overview of data collection techniques employed in this investigation: Data triangulation

Multiple data collection procedures have been extensively used in qualitative studies, since these can confirm emerging findings (Creswell, 1994; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Multiple sources of data in a study are better than a single one, because they lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena of the study. One of

the most important principles or characteristics of data collection for case studies is to use multiple, rather than single, sources of evidence (Yin, 1994; Denscombe, 2003). For this investigation, I employed a number of data collection methods (data triangulation), to strengthen credibility. The data collection procedures involved in-depth interviews, 'opinions on the diagram' (see below in this chapter), cooperation questionnaires (structured and self-completed, which I devised), class observation, a standardized achievement test of English (CELT), and background questionnaires (self-completed) to get additional background information on the participants. My reflective journal was included in the form of field notes for interviews, class observations, and data analysis.

Most of the data collection techniques were piloted, except for the background questionnaire and 'opinions on the diagram'. These two techniques were added in the main study to collect more information about the informants and their opinions.

### 4.4.2 In-depth interviews

#### 4.4.2.a Sampling procedure for the interviews

Both the pilot and main studies in this investigation essentially employed the same sampling technique. A purposive sampling procedure was used (see Section 4.2 for more details), following different writers' recommendations. These include using the researcher's in-depth knowledge about the groups to select subjects who represented the population, maximizing the opportunities for comparing concepts derived from the evolving theory, choosing samples who were willing to talk and were knowledgeable about the cultural situation or experience being studied.

#### The pilot study

In the pilot study, the participants comprised one whole class, with an average

attendance of 20 students (see Section 4.2.1 for more details). Twenty students, including 3 female students, completed the cooperation questionnaire (see Section 4.4.4 more for details) at the beginning of the class (initial stage of CL). Of the participants, 6 interviewees were selected, according to the results of the questionnaire; this was devised by me in order to assess students' peer cooperation levels, which are considered to be related to their L2 classroom motivation through expectancy or a combination of levels of English and expectancy (see Chapters 2 and 3 for more details). A high score on the questionnaire indicates a high peer cooperation level and a low score indicates the reverse. The 20 students who completed the questionnaire were divided into 3 groups, representing high, middle and low levels of peer cooperation. In the next session of this class, when the questionnaire was administered, I asked for the students' help to conduct the interviews, telling them that at least two from each group were needed. I asked them individually because most of the students seemed at first to hesitate to cooperate when asked. One of the students refused to cooperate and some students were absent at the time. As a result, I chose 3 students from the high-level group, 1 from the middle and 2 from the low-level group, including 2 females from the high-level group.

After talking to the students about their schedules, I understood that they were busy on part-time jobs, club activities and so on, and decided to pay all interviewees, to motivate the students to cooperate.

<u>The main study</u>

In the main study, 12 students, including 1 female student[53], completed the cooperation questionnaire at the beginning of the class. Of the participants, 6 interviewees were selected, according to the results of the questionnaire. The 12

[53] The non-language related faculty to which the participants belonged tends not to be very popular among female university applicants, compared with their male counterparts in Japan. Accordingly, there were few female students in any classes in the faculty and there was only one female student in the class which the participants attended.

students who answered the questionnaire were divided into 2 groups, representing higher and lower levels of peer cooperation. This was because the number of the students in the class was too small to divide into 3 groups as in the pilot study. I told the participants about being paid to cooperate by giving an interview before asking them if they would agree to be interviewed. Some students were willing to cooperate but some were not. I had planned to have 3 from each group (6 in total), but in the end chose 2 from the higher group and 4 from the lower (including 1 female student).

#### 4.4.2.b Administration of the interviews

The interview is one of the most common and significant procedures for collecting information in qualitative investigations. Its purpose is to obtain data about the perceptions, understandings and meanings built by people in relation to the events and experiences in their life (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). There are three main types of interview: unstructured, semi-structured and structured, although the terminology tends to differ from one researcher to another (see Patton, 1980; Berg, 2001). The unstructured interview "relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction" (Patton, 1980: 198). The semi-structured interview is "guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of questions is determined ahead of time" (Merriam, 1988: 74). The structured interview involves (Patton, 1980: 198):

> A set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of asking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words.

Since the aim of the interviews in this investigation was to find out and/or understand informants' perceptions and opinions about the classroom phenomena in focus, it was felt that spontaneous interactions would not be suitable for the

purpose. Consequently, the unstructured interview was eliminated as a method for this study. Equally, the structured interview may restrict interviewees because of the prepared questions and their sequence. I had to gather 'deeper' information to try to attain the purpose of this study by "encouraging people to elaborate, provide incidents and clarifications, and discuss events" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995: 8). Thus, this investigation employed the semi-structured interview.

The individual interviews were conducted following the technical recommendations given by different writers, such as Yin (1993), Stake (1995), Berg (2001) and Robson (2002). These recommendations are related to: (a) *preparation*, which involves the design of the interview guide, agreeing a convenient appointment with the interviewees, selecting an appropriate place and necessary equipment; (b) *the development of the interview*, introduction (purpose of the investigation and the interview, use of the information provided, confirmation of personal consent), sequence of questions, the essentials of the interview, tactics to maintain the focus of the conversation and get insights on sensitive issues, clarification of concepts; (c) *the end of the interview*, where additional information may be given.

This study involved individual semi-structured interviews with 6 low achieving students of EFL in a non-language related faculty of a university in Japan. The average length of each interview was 55 minutes (initial interview: 50 minutes; final interview one hour). I conducted twelve interviews in total (6 initial and 6 final interviews). Before analysis, the interviews were taped and then transcribed, using a word processor. I also wrote field notes of all the interviews, including a reflective journal as soon as possible after each, partly to improve future interviews and partly to acknowledge and control the interviewer's effect, recognising that qualitative investigation is a subjective process (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998; see Section 4.4.5 for more details).

In order to evaluate the interview guide, 6 students were interviewed in the pilot

study, as stated earlier. These interviews were intended to identify problems in wording, layout, the sequence of questions, and extension of the interviews. The interview guide was revised throughout the pilot study and the final version is shown in Appendix 4.

The schedule involved only open-ended questions. Special care was paid to the wording so that each interviewee could understand clearly what was asked. At the beginning of each interview I explained the key notions, such as expectancy and peer cooperation, to make sure that the interviewees understood them or to remind them. Questions were sometimes formulated in different ways, but I kept to 'the core of the question' as far as possible. In some cases, a single question was formulated from different perspectives with the same interviewee. This happened when I noticed signs of misunderstanding. When things were not clear to me, I asked interviewees for further explanation. To avoid confusion for both sides, a diagram which represents the essence of the questions (see Appendix 5 or Chapter 7, Figure 7.1) was shown to the interviewees. The sequence of the question was often rearranged in response to the flow of conversation during interviews. Overall, the interviewees seemed to be quite honest about their opinions at the interviews although I had been concerned, before the interviews, that the interviewees would say what they thought I wanted to hear because I was their teacher.

### 4.4.3 Opinions on the diagram

This questionnaire was of the open-ended or unstructured type. The main aim of the questionnaire was to collect additional information to further understand the respondents' opinions about the relations between the four main elements of this study (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, expectancy, and students' own perceptions of their levels of English).

I gave this questionnaire to the interviewees immediately after each interview

(both initial and final) and asked them to return it at the next class. The initial questionnaire was returned by 5 interviewees and the final one was returned by 2 interviewees. A copy of this questionnaire is given in Appendix 5. The actual questionnaire was written and conducted in Japanese, as were all the other questionnaires in this study, but I have translated it into English.

### 4.4.4 The Cooperation Questionnaire

The Cooperation Questionnaire was administered to the respondents (the whole class of students), including the interviewees, at the beginning and the end of STAD. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect data on the respondents' opinions and/or feelings about their cooperation with classmates and the changes at the beginning and the end of STAD. This information was also collected for triangulation purposes.

The Cooperation Questionnaire is a self-completed structured questionnaire, which I devised. Any questionnaires should be pre-tested before application (Converse & Presser, 1986; Oppenheim, 1992). Hoinville et al. (1978) point out the main purpose of pilot-testing questionnaires is as follows: (a) to improve the wording, ordering and layout; (b) to shape the questionnaire to a manageable length by ascertaining how long the respondents take to complete the questionnaire; (c) to identify questions which may cause respondents difficulty and/or any other problems related to completing the questionnaires. Therefore, in order to evaluate and improve the questionnaires, pilot-tests were conducted (twice), which allowed the final version to be adjusted.

The next four sub-sections are all closely related to the Cooperation Questionnaire. The first of them describes how the pilot tests were conducted and gives its findings in terms of methodology. The sub-section after this is devoted to Japanese culture, as I was concerned that it might affect the respondents' answers with respect to the wording. The last two sub-sections are about the administration

and data processing techniques used in the main study.

## Pilot-test of the Cooperation Questionnaire

As noted above, the pilot-tests were conducted twice. The first pilot-test involved three 3rd year Japanese students who were studying in the faculty of commerce in the university where the main study took place. In the first test, the students completed the questionnaire only once to allow an evaluation in particular of the wording and layout, including the sequence. The second pilot-test involved 24 Japanese students, who were, like the respondents in the main study, freshmen of the non-language related faculty (Economics) at the university where the main study was based. In the second test, 17 students completed the questionnaire at both the beginning and the end of STAD.

The main findings from the pilot study in terms of methodology were as follows:

- that it was important to give additional explanations: about which English classes they had to remember in order to complete the questionnaires; at the beginning of STAD, they should recall typical English classes which they had experienced in the past, including junior high, high school and university (spring semester in the freshman year); at the end of STAD, they should recall the English classes which I had taught. If students still claim, in particular, at the beginning of STAD, that they find it difficult to specify any class, then they should be asked to think back to the English class which they liked best.
- that it was necessary to give the respondents their initial answers when giving the final questionnaire (at the end of STAD) because students tend to forget what they have answered earlier (at the beginning of STAD).
- that it was necessary to give a comment sheet when giving out the final questionnaire to see why they changed or did not change their initial answers and to assure the collection of considered and/or appropriate answers. Some students answered the questionnaire very quickly.
- that it was necessary to eliminate the word *willingly* in some items (items 2, 4,

5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12). I had added the word to assure the collection of appropriate answers from the respondents. This is because I was concerned about the vagueness of Japanese people in general (see the next subsection for details). However, many of the pilot respondents did not think that their answers would change, whether the word *willingly* was included or not. I therefore decided to eliminate the word to make the questions as simple as possible.

Socialisation and vagueness in Japanese society

This section relates to my use of the word *willingly* in the last entry of the methodological findings. I was concerned that the tendency for Japanese people to give vague answers might affect the informants' answers in the questionnaire (The explanation for this is provided below). In other words, I thought that their answers would probably be too reticent, modest, or (most importantly) *neutral*, which means that they would not show the students' actual or real feelings and they would not represent the full scale of possible responses.

Such vagueness frequently happens in chat or small talk. In particular, in conversations between students in a university, we can see that they tend to avoid 'definite expressions' of almost anything; accordingly, they usually use *tabun* or *kamo* (which mean 'probably' or 'maybe') even for things which will undoubtedly happen. For example, one student asks his/her friend 'Are you going to attend the psychology class today?' [*kyō no shinrigaku no kurasu deru*], and the friend answers, 'Maybe [*tabun*]. (Because) I received a warning mail (about my attendance rate) from the professor last week.'

Equally, in the questionnaire, it was thought that the respondents' answers would be understated, which means, for example, that they might try to avoid selecting options at the extremes of the continuum (e.g., *Strongly agree or Strongly disagree*) from the 6 choices (other choices being *[Dis]Agree*, *Slightly disagree*, *Partly agree*), even though their actual feelings may have been extreme. I needed

a way to avoid this sort of central tendency error. For instance, in item 2, I wanted to know if, when a participant did not understand something, he/she would ask classmates for help. I doubted whether respondents would select the strong agree/disagree options, for the reasons mentioned above. I therefore added the word *willingly*, to produce the item: 'When I don't understand something, I (*willingly*) ask classmates". By adding the word *willingly*, I was increasing the level of certainty and strength in the sentence, thus, hopefully, forcing the respondent to respond positively or negatively to it. I added the word *willingly* to a number of sentences in this way, in an effort to avoid the central tendency error mentioned above.

The following few paragraphs describe the elements in Japanese culture which cause vagueness of expression. Once the cultural uniqueness is appreciated, it becomes easier to understand my concern, although it was not necessary to refer to this in the questionnaire.

One of the common and/or key features in Japanese society lies in its style of socialisation. Socialisation is "the means by which an essentially biological being is converted into a social one, able to communicate with other members of the particular society to which it belongs" (Hendry, 1987: 38).

The most important feature of socialisation or interpersonal relationships in Japanese society originates from the dichotomy of *uchi* and *soto* which can be roughly translated as 'inside' and 'outside', respectively (Libra, 1976 cited in Takemura, 1993). Libra discusses the fact that this distinction is a feature of human culture in general, but it is at the same time crucial for determining how Japanese people interact with others. According to Hendry (1987), the distinction in behaviour is equivalent to the difference between *tatemae* (public behaviour) and *honne* (one's real feelings). Japanese language has clear speech levels which are chosen to represent the relationship between the people involved in a conversation and/or their context. The ability to distinguish between public and

real behaviour is also considered as a measure of maturity. Cook (1996: 193) describes the concept of *uchi* and *soto* as follows:

> *In the uchi context the Japanese behave intimately, privately, and in a relaxed manner revealing their true feelings, whereas in the soto context they are public, concerned with surface appearance (i.e., omote) and with social obligations (i.e., giri, tatemae).*

She also confirms that Japanese people distinguish the two contexts by changing their speech mode about the self, having acquired the concept from childhood. Thus, Japanese people in general protect their 'inner feelings' from the probings of outsiders (such as teachers) by using vague speech and neutral responses.

## Administration of the Cooperation Questionnaire

The final version of the Cooperation Questionnaire (see Appendix 6), following the findings from the pilot tests, was given to the respondents at the beginning (initial) and the end (final) classes using STAD in the main study. Twelve respondents, including one female student, completed both the initial and final Cooperation Questionnaire.

## Data processing techniques of the Cooperation Questionnaire

Before analysing the data of the Cooperation Questionnaire, the raw data – the students' responses to the questionnaire – were processed so as to calculate the data (from 0 to 5) in the following way: 'Strongly disagree' was regarded as 0, 'Disagree' as 1, 'Slightly disagree' as 2, 'Partly agree' as 3, 'Agree' as 4 and 'Strongly agree' as 5. Negative cases or items (e.g., 'When I don't understand something, I don't ask my classmates.') were treated in the opposite way (e.g., 'Strongly disagree' as 5 and 'Strongly agree' as 0). In addition, the changes to the responses from the initial to the final classes were calculated by subtracting the initial score from the final score. For processing the data, the following software

programs were used: Excel, SPSS, ATLAS.ti and Word.

The analysis of this information involved three main stages: reliability analysis (internal consistency), correlation analysis and qualitative coding analysis on the comment sheets (see Section 4.5 below for details of the qualitative analysis). Internal consistency reliability was measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient using SPSS 13.0J. Correlation analysis was carried out to identify the associations between the results of the Cooperation Questionnaire and CELT (English proficiency test: see Section 4.4.6 for more details): concerning peer cooperation and level of English. The written data on the comment sheets, which came from the final Cooperation Questionnaire, by the respondents were typed and coded for qualitative analysis by using Word and ATLAS.ti 5.0.

### 4.4.5 Class observation

The main aim of class observation was to collect additional information (data triangulation) about the students' peer cooperation and motivation in the classroom. Therefore, this observation was "issue-oriented", focusing on "a particular aspect of … teaching or classroom behaviour and constitute an ongoing record" (Hopkins, 1993: 116). Class observation was pilot-tested to explore the best way to conduct the observation and to check what could feasibly be included, particularly in terms of taking notes on the spot for observation.

Since I was the teacher of the respondents, there were three other main features of the observation besides its being issue-oriented. The first one was that it was participant observation, which means that the respondents were seen from the standpoint of insiders. Patton (1980: 127) describes this as follows:

> …the participant observer is fully engaged in experiencing the setting under study while at the same time trying to understand that setting through personal experience, observations, and talking with other participants about what is happening.

According to Jorgensen (1989: 14), it is impossible for outsiders "to acquire more than a very crude notion of the insiders' world". The second feature was that field notes were mostly written directly after each lesson. This is because I had to teach and observe the respondents at the same time. In the pilot study, I felt it difficult, as predicted, to take notes in class. Thus, I jotted down only key words during a lesson to remind me of important observations and wrote field notes as soon as possible after each lesson, making them as descriptive and/or concrete as possible. The third feature was that the field notes included my reflective journal which contained a personal account of the course of the study. Elliott (1991: 77) comments that a teacher's diary should involve "observations, feelings, reactions, interpretations, reflections, hunches, hypotheses, and explanations" and that it is a useful tool for qualitative investigation. The purpose of the reflective journal is to improve the field notes and to acknowledge and control the observer's effect because observation is a subjective process.

All the field notes included date, time, number (in the set of notes in the total study), title (to grasp what the notes are about). The overall data of class observation were mainly used to supplement the interview data.

### 4.4.6 A Comprehensive English Language Test for Learners of English (CELT)

A standardized English proficiency test, the Comprehensive English Language Test for Learners of English (CELT) (Harris & Palmer, 1986), was conducted to evaluate the respondents' actual level of English both the beginning and the end of the study. This test includes Form A for the beginning of the class and Form B for the end. Although the entire test consists of listening (50 items), structure (75 items) and vocabulary (75 items) for each form, 20 items each from the listening and structure sections were applied to the respondents for both the pilot and main study. The purpose of this item reduction was to reduce the burden on the respondents of completing a long, time-consuming test and to make the test

period as short as possible in order to avoid using too much class time.

I used Japanese to introduce the CELT, including the examples of the items in each section, in view of the respondents' level of English and their needs, although it was all originally written and tape-recorded in English.

### 4.4.7 The Background Questionnaire

In the main study, this questionnaire was administered at the beginning of STAD. Its main aim was to collect background information about the respondents' previous English education. This information was thought to be useful or helpful for understanding why they felt as they did about English classes at the beginning of the STAD. Appendix 7 shows a sample of the background questionnaire.

## 4.5 Analytical techniques of qualitative data (interview & participants' written data)

Qualitative data analysis and the data collection processes are not completely separate, but are interrelated. The analysis begins when the first data are gathered. In other words, the analysis is a continual process through the study. In order to present the analytical framework, this section describes the overall methodological framework used for analyzing the qualitative data. All interviews were taped and transcribed in order to carry out the analysis. Also, field notes and/or memos[54] were written throughout the fieldwork, including during and after each interview, lesson, questionnaire and English proficiency test. Word, ATLAS.ti and Excel were used as software for the analysis.

Several writers, such as Miles and Huberman (1994), Yin (1994), Strauss and

[54] A memo can be anything that occurs during the project and its analysis. It offers ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike you while coding. They are attempts either to link data together, or to suggest that a particular piece of data falls within a more general category. Memoing is a useful means of capturing ideas, views and intuitions at all stages of the data analysis process (Robson, 2002: 478).

Corbin (1998), Rossman and Rallis (1998), Silverman (2000), Robson (2002) and Berg (2001) have developed techniques and models to analyse qualitative data. The qualitative analytical procedure in this study included two features: (a) the analysis model of 'coding and categories' developed by Miles and Huberman (1994); (b) a set of 'theoretical propositions' which guide the case study analysis and display of findings. Regarding the latter feature, Yin (1994) suggests two general strategies to conduct the data analysis: *relying on theoretical propositions* and *developing a case description*.[55] In this study, the analysis was based on the theoretical propositions because this study applied an existing theory.

Focusing on the research questions, the scheme of analysis included the coding or reduction process suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994). According to these two writers, analysis involves *first-level coding* (this is a device for summarising a segment of data) and *pattern coding* (this is a way of grouping the summaries from the first-level coding into a smaller number of sets, themes or constructs). Strauss and Corbin (1998) propose a similar procedure which they refer to as open coding, pattern coding and axial coding.

According to Strauss and Corbin (ibid.), the coding process involves the following stages:

- *Open coding* is the first step of the analysis which corresponds to labelling and categorising the phenomena by close examination of the data. This process is the equivalent of the first-level coding described by Miles and Huberman (ibid.). During open or first-level coding the data are broken down into small parts, carefully examined and compared for similarities and differences. Questions such as who, when, why, where, what, and how are continuously asked about the phenomena to stimulate thinking and make us more sensitive to what to look for in the phenomena and future data. The procedure of asking questions and making

[55] The first strategy relies on the theoretical propositions which lead the entire case study. The original objectives and design of the case study were presumably based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions, review of the literature and new insights. The second is based on developing a case description, which develops a descriptive framework for organising the case study (Yin, 1994: 103-104).

comparisons are the essential operations during all coding processes.

- *Axial coding* produces descriptive categories by relating categories to subcategories, based on open codes, to form more precise and complete explanations for phenomena. This coding process enables us to create groups of categories because the categories belong to a specific aspect of the phenomena under scrutiny. This is equivalent to the pattern coding described by Miles and Huberman (1994). Pattern coding is a way of grouping the first-level codes into a smaller number of sets, themes, constructs or categories. It is analogous to the methods of cluster-analysis and factor-analysis used in statistical analysis.

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 69), pattern coding has four important functions:

- It reduces large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units.
- It gets the researcher into analysis during data collection, so that later fieldwork can be more focused.
- It helps the researcher to elaborate a cognitive map, an evolving, more integrated schema for understanding local incidents and interactions.
- For multi-case studies, it lays the groundwork for cross-case analysis by surfacing common themes and directional processes.

In the present study, the coding technique used corresponds closely to what Miles and Huberman propose. The reason why I used the procedure is that it has a simpler and clearer process and/or concepts than have other coding strategies such as Strauss and Corbin's, although the coding procedure suggested by many researchers involve the same or similar notions or ideas.

Coffey and Atkinson (1996) believe that coding links different data fragments to a particular idea or concept, which in turn are related to one another. The essential analytical work lies in establishing and thinking about such linkages so as to

identify relevant concepts.

Having coded the data, it was important to work out how it might be displayed. One way of doing so is in the form of a clustered matrix. A conceptual cluster matrix allows a comparative analysis of the initial and final data which were collected at the beginning (initial) and the end (final) of STAD. Miles and Huberman (1994: 127) suggest using a conceptually clustered matrix to display the data from case analysis. The arrangement of this matrix is intended to bring together items which belong together. This outcome can occur in two ways: "*conceptual* – the analyst may have some priori ideas about items deriving from the same theory or relating to the same overarching theme; *empirical* – during early analysis [researchers] may find that informants answering different questions are tying them together or are giving similar responses." The basic principle is conceptual coherence.

In the study, a conceptual cluster matrix was used, the outcome of which was mainly *conceptual* rather than empirical. The main reason for using it was that it helped me to compare the initial and final data to analyse the difference or similarities between the two sets. The matrix also enabled me to find subcategories which I had missed in the coding process. In addition, the clear and visible display meant that it was easier and clearer to think about it.

## 4.6 Research trustworthiness

There is no single stance or consensus on addressing research trustworthiness in qualitative studies; that is, their validity and reliability. However, there are several tactics to increase such trustworthiness.

The word triangulation has been used widely in discussions of qualitative studies. This is because triangulation is a valuable way of enhancing validity in qualitative research. According to Holloway (1997: 157), triangulation is "a

process by which the same problem or phenomenon is investigated from different perspectives". In essence, different 'sources' can provide additional information to strengthen the validity of data. Such 'sources' can be different data sources, data collection methods, investigators and theories (Denzin, 1984 cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study used data triangulation, meaning that multiple methods of data collection were applied.

Member checks, also called *respondent validation* by Silverman (2000), are used in many qualitative studies. This procedure is very simple: researchers verify their findings and interpretations through feedback from the informants. This strategy seems to be a powerful way to enhance validity because all the vital data and information come from the informants, not the researchers. The informants can act as judges, evaluating the major findings of a study (Denzin, 1978 cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Reliability is concerned with "whether the process of the study is consistent [and] reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 278). In summary, reliability increases if the process of the investigation is described clearly. This is quite understandable because if a process in the investigation is poorly explained or roughly outlined, it is very difficult to understand how and why a certain phenomenon happened or why informants feel, for example, depressed or motivated. This procedure also strengthens the objectivity of the study because describing a process of the study clearly increases researchers' awareness of its possible flaws.

Objectivity can be defined as a stance "of relative neutrality and reasonable freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases" (Miles & Huberman, 1994: 278). In essence, reducing researchers' biases enhances their objectivity. This can be appreciated when writing a reflective journal, particularly during data analysis (Denscombe, 2003). It is difficult to be aware of one's own biases, but writing a reflective account, notably of their personal thoughts and observations,

strengthens researchers' ability to see themselves objectively.

In order to develop validity, reliability and objectivity in this study, several aspects were taken into account: (a) Most data collecting procedures in this study were piloted; (b) A case study protocol was prepared, which included the design of all instruments to gather data, such as guides for interviews, guides to introduce questionnaires and English proficiency tests and necessary equipment such as a tape-recorder; (c) A protocol for doing the interviews was made following technical recommendations for its preparation and execution; a plan for analysing the case study data was also outlined; (d) Data triangulation, called *methodological triangulation* by Denzin (1984 cited in Stake, 1995), was implemented by using multiple data collection methods; (e) I kept a reflective journal throughout the study, including class observations, interviews, the administration of questionnaires and English proficiency tests, and data analysis; (f) Consistencies between categories and codes as well as between codes and quotations were checked by a colleague who teaches English in a university in Japan; and (g) A respondent validation process was carried out.

In the above list, there are two things to enhance research trustworthiness, the process of which I have not so far described: respondent validation; and consistency checks between categories and codes. The following paragraphs describe them.

I held two meetings with the respondents to the questionnaires and interviews, at which we could discuss the first draft of the findings of the case study and the perspective of the respondents. Moreover, at the final interviews I confirmed whether I had correctly interpreted what informants had said at the initial interviews and their responses to the questionnaires. The participants who discussed the findings with me agreed that the findings were consistent with the perception that they had about the key elements and their relationships in the English class in STAD.

Regarding the consistencies between categories and codes (categories and codes are indicated as *Reasons* and *Reason types* respectively in the tables for code families), my colleague and I had almost 100 % of consensus for the code family on research questions 6a and 6b (see Table 6.7 in Chapter 6 and Appendices). This consensus also included consistencies between codes and quotations. My colleague asked only one question, about the meaning of 'expectancy' shown in the categories, in order to make sure that her understanding of its meaning was correct. After our brief discussion, she felt that she was interpreting the meaning accurately and agreed that there were consistencies between the category and the code and also between the code and the quotation.

The results and discussion of the research questions in Sets 1 and 2 in this study are shown in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 5
# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 1:
# LEVELS OF EXPECTANCY, ENGLISH AND MOTIVATION; RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEVELS OF ENGLISH AND EXPECTANCY; AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEVELS OF EXPECTANCY AND MOTIVATION

## Introduction

Chapter 4 has outlined the methodology used in this study and has established the trustworthiness of the qualitative research procedures used. In this chapter I would like to address the research questions (RQs) in Sets 1 and 2 (the details of these RQs are shown below).

Before proceeding, we should recall the main theme of this study: the perceived effectiveness of peer cooperation in CL in improving Japanese EFL students' levels of expectancy, which is believed to influence their levels of motivation to learn English in class. As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, many Japanese students seem to suffer in secondary school from a non-supportive EFL classroom environment, and the low level of their English which is probably (at least in part) due to this environment appears to create low levels of expectancy and motivation to learn EFL in class. CL seems to be an appropriate remedy to improve this situation, because CL is considered to lead to higher levels of motivation as well as improving students' levels of English (see Chapter 3 for details). In short, there seem to be indirect relationships between CL and motivation through increased levels of *expectancy* or through a combination of *levels of English* and *expectancy*. Here, taking into account that peer cooperation is one crucial component of CL and that expectancy is a motivational component (see Chapters 2 & 3 for details), we may notice that peer cooperation appears to have two different routes in enhancing motivation. One is its direct influence on expectancy. The other is its indirect influence on expectancy through changes in the level of English.

To understand what will be presented and discussed in this chapter, we now revert to the main theme in order to revisit the whole picture of this study. Roughly speaking, the main theme is to explore the perceived effectiveness of peer cooperation in improving students' expectancy as one motivational component. In other words, the central aim is to explore, from the students' point of view, the two different routes above, as well as exploring the perceived relationships between expectancy and motivation. In addition, other possible perceived relationships between the four key variables (L2 classroom motivation, expectancy, peer cooperation and levels of English) are also investigated in addition to exploring the perceived changes in the key variables over the CL course.

In this chapter, I discuss findings about the perceived changes in levels of expectancy, English and motivation over the CL course, and the findings about the perceived relationships between levels of English and expectancy, and between levels of expectancy and motivation. These findings are intended to answer RQs Set 1 (1a, 1b, 1c & 1d) and Set 2 (2a, 2b & 2c) (see Sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 & 5.6).

## 5.1 Findings from the qualitative analysis designed to answer the research questions Set 1 and Set 2

I conducted qualitative analyses of the data from interviews and written comments from questionnaires, using the coding techniques proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) and focusing on all the research questions except question 5 (which needs quantitative analysis). The other information sources, such as field notes from observation and interviews, comment sheets on the cooperation questionnaire and opinions on the diagram and the background questionnaire, were used to supplement the qualitative findings throughout the coding process. The conceptually clustered matrix proposed by Miles and Huberman (ibid.) was used to display the findings because it was helpful to compare the initial and final

comments. These comments were collected at the beginning (initial) and the end (final) of CL to clarify the participants' perceptions about relationships between variables or changes in variables over the CL course. In the following sections, I examine the findings relating to the Set 1 RQs. The findings relevant to the Set 2 RQs are discussed in later sections in the same way as those from Set 1.

RQ Set 1 is as follows:

**RQ1a:** Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?

**RQ1b:** Do they perceive any changes in their levels of English between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?

**RQ1c:** Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of English are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?

**RQ1d:** If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

Before moving to the main discussion, it is useful to review the overall construction and intention of Set 1 questions. The key questions of Set 1 are 1c and 1d, which concern the *relationships* between changes in *levels of English* and changes in *levels of expectancy*. RQs 1a and 1b respectively cover *changes* in the level of expectancy and in the level of English as necessary prerequisites for RQs 1c and 1d because without knowing the students' perceptions of the changes in the two key variables, it would be difficult to understand the reasons for and/or the background to their answers to RQs 1c and 1d.

Table 5.1[56] (see next page) indicates a comparison between the initial and final findings from the qualitative analyses, focusing on question 1a. These findings will be examined in order to answer question 1a.

[56] See Appendix 8 for the initial and final findings in more detail (with quotations).

**Table 5.1: Comparison of reasons given by participants for the changes they perceived in their levels of *expectancy* during the cooperative learning stage (data collected at the beginning and the end of this stage)**

Research question 1a: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?*

| Beginning of CL | End of CL |
|---|---|
| **Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy were low** (1/5/4)**<br>• Participants felt that their levels of expectancy were low because they couldn't understand elementary level English (Ichiro 2, Ken 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy were moderate** (1/2/2)**<br>• Participants felt that their levels of expectancy were moderate because they could understand English moderately (Hiroshi 1, Tatsuya 1)* | **Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had increased** (5/24/6)**<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English (Taro 1, Tatsuya 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they could do the work more reliably and/or faster through working with their peers (Ayumi 2, Taro 4, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 2, Hiroshi 3, Yuji 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt they had developed confidence about doing the work through working with their peers (Taro 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt superior to their team (Hiroshi 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had remained low** (2/3/1)**<br>• Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt that their level of English remained low (Ken 2)*<br>• Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt inferior to their team (Ken 1)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).

**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.

***Please note that some reasons in this table overlap with reasons in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.

## 5.2 Research question 1a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?

As we can see from Table 5.1, most of the key participants (5 of 6)[57] felt that they had become more able to cope with class work at the end of CL (STAD: Student Teams-Achievement Divisions - see Chapter 4 for details). Namely, the level of expectancy in most of the key participants increased over the CL course. In comparison, more than half (4 out of 6) of the key participants felt at the beginning of CL that they had not been at all confident about doing class work well, so this is a great improvement.

Insight into how they perceived their improvement can also be obtained by looking at the increase in the number of reasons and quotations provided between the initial and the final findings. Participants used many more words to express their levels of expectancy at the end of CL than at the beginning. Thus, their low (or moderate) levels of expectancy may have discouraged them from talking much about it at the beginning of CL (during the interviews).

Interestingly, at the beginning of CL, there was only one reason for their low or moderate levels of expectancy: their low (or moderate) levels of English. In addition, there were only 5 quotations for low levels of expectancy (by 4 participants), and 2 quotations for moderate levels of expectancy (by 2 participants). Typical quotations expressing the participants' low or moderate levels of expectancy at the beginning of CL are as follows:

> (low)
> … When I study in (English) class… I feel 'how stupid I am' because I don't understand anything… I don't even know elementary level English… So, it (my level of expectancy) is low… In class… it is very

[57] The names of the key participants are Ayumi, Taro, Ichiro, Tatsuya, Hiroshi and Ken. The other participants shown in tables (e.g., Yuji in Table 5.1) are not key participants (they took the same CL course and answered many other questionnaires and tests, but they were not specifically interviewed for this study).

rare that I understand something. (Ichiro)

(moderate)
My level of expectancy is not so low but not so high… Probably because I didn't study elementary level English so well… or I don't remember it so well… But I wouldn't say I can't understand anything about English…(Hiroshi)

In contrast, at the end of CL, most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their expectancy had improved and they provided many longer answers with more reasons for the improvement, producing 5 reasons and 23 quotations[58]. Moreover, they looked very happy when they talked at the interview about the improvement and we can see their psychological changes in their words. One typical quotation from a participant whose level of expectancy was low at the beginning of CL and improved at the end of CL is as follows (See Appendix 8 for more quotations):

… Now, I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before… (For example) when a teacher called on me in class, I couldn't answer anything before. But now I feel I can answer a question from the teacher somehow… (Ichiro; The other part of this quotation is shown in Table 5.3, Section 5.4)

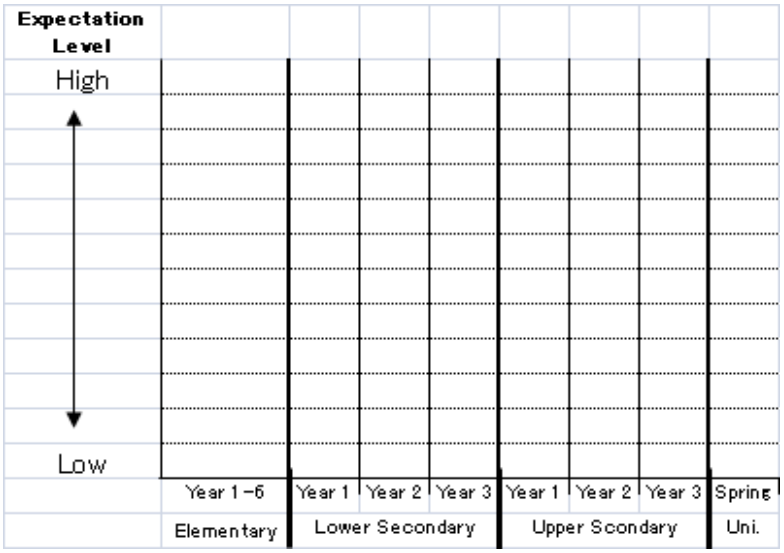
So far, I have discussed the participants' perceptions specifically concerning their improved levels of expectancy over the CL course. Now, I would like to review their backgrounds, to clarify the reason why more than half of the key participants felt low levels of expectancy at the beginning of CL. At the same time, it might also help us to understand in more depth the importance of the participants' improved levels of expectancy when we see how strong the influence of their past educational experiences tends to be. The educational background of the key participants is similar in many ways, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, and therefore the importance of their improvements may also be similar. Thus, in the following, I would like briefly to review their backgrounds on the basis of information from the background questionnaire.

[58] Although the number of quotations in Table 5.1 which are related to increased levels of expectancy is 24, one of the quotations is not from the key participant who was interviewed (but took the same STAD course and answered many other questionnaires and tests).

Considering the psychological obstacles produced by their experiences in English classes in their secondary schools (discussed in Chapters 1 and 2), it is understandable that more than half the key participants felt that their levels of expectancy were low at the beginning of CL and that one of them felt his level of expectancy to have remained low even at the end of CL. In other words, they suffered from *learned helplessness* (Miller and Seligman, 1974 cited in Seligman, 1975; see Chapter 2, Section 2.1 for details), which means that they were negatively influenced by their experiences of having little or no control over successful task fulfilment in English classes while at secondary school. In fact, all the key participants felt that their levels of expectancy had been lowered by their experiences in secondary school, according to their comments from the background questionnaire which was administered at the beginning of CL. The following is part of the form of the questionnaire which relates to their levels of expectancy:

- Please draw your 'expectation level' on how well you have been able to do class work in English classes in the past (from elementary school to university) by using the following graph:
  - ✱ Please note that 'expectation level' means how well you expect you can do class work in English classes.
  - ✱ Please note that 'class work' means all the exercises, activities and assignments you have to do in the class.

**Figure 5.1 Graph of expectation level**




- Please explain the turning points when your 'expectation level' was getting higher and/or lower.

On their expectancy level graphs, which were included in the background questionnaire, they all drew lines to indicate that their levels of expectancy went down distinctively from their first year at lower secondary school, when they started to study English for the first time in school. In addition, all their comments on changes in their expectancy levels before taking the CL course (written on the background questionnaire) were similar to each other. One of the typical comments about changes in their levels of expectancy was:

> …when I was a freshman in lower secondary school, studying English in class was fun and I could get good scores. But from the second year, I gradually became unable to understand the content of English lessons… In higher secondary school, the situation got worse because I didn't quite understand much of what I was supposed to understand in lower secondary school and I still don't know elementary level of English… My image of English lessons is that they were 'too fast to catch up with' because of the very selfish teachers I had… (Hiroshi)

In a nutshell, this participant (Hiroshi) felt helpless and believed that he had no control over understanding English because of unhelpful teachers and the fast progress towards the content of the next lesson, which lowered his level of expectancy; this distressful experience had lowered the level of expectancy in the mind of this participant. Importantly, this perception exemplifies the strong influence of past experience on the participants' levels of expectancy. It is interesting that it is also consistent with what I discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 concerning possible causes of the low levels of expectancy among many Japanese university students. Considering this negative impact, the fact that most key participants felt that their levels of expectancy had risen over the CL course seems to be a great improvement for them; although they appear to have suffered the distressful situation for a long time (at least more than one semester), their levels of expectancy had heightened in only one semester.

Interestingly, too, the student's comments above, including other students' similar comments, suggest an important point which relates to their levels of expectancy:

their *low levels of English* reduced their levels of expectancy. In other words, the students' past experiences, described above, tended to lower their levels of English and this reduced level of English could have directly influenced their levels of expectancy. In short, we already know that their levels of expectancy were low at the beginning of CL; accordingly, we can surmise that their perceptions about their levels of English at the beginning of CL were low or at least not very high.

In relation to this point, later sections discuss why the participants felt that their levels of expectancy had increased or remained low over the CL course; the reasons for this relate to other RQs which concern relationships between expectancy and other key variables, such as peer cooperation and levels of English. In the next section, I focus on research question 1b, which concerns perceived changes in their levels of English. Please refer to Table 5.2[59] to look over the changes (Typical quotations relevant to this table are shown in the next section).

**Table 5.2: Comparison of reasons given by participants for the changes they perceived in their *levels of English* during the cooperative learning stage (data collected at the beginning and the end of this stage)**

Research question 1b: *Do they perceive any changes in their levels of English between the beginning and the end of CL?*

| Beginning of CL | End of CL |
|---|---|
| **Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) were low** (1/5/4)**<br>• Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) were low because they didn't even know elementary level English (Ichiro 2, Ken 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) were moderate** (1/2/2)**<br>• Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) were moderate because they could understand English moderately (Hiroshi 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (grammar) were** | **Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) had increased** (4/28/8)**<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English because they worked with their peers (Ichiro 4, Hiroshi 5, Ayumi 2, Taro 2, Tatsuya 1, Jiro 1, Eiji 1, Yuji 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English through cooperating with their peers (Hiroshi 2, Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1)* |

[59] See Appendix 9 for the initial and final findings in more detail (with quotations).

low (1/6/6)**
- Participants felt that their levels of English (grammar) were low because they didn't know elementary level English grammar (Ichiro 1, Ken 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (reading) were low (1/2/2)**
- Participants felt that their levels of English (reading) were low because they couldn't even read short sentences in English (Ichiro 1, Ken 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (reading) were moderate (1/4/4)**
- Participants felt that their levels of English (reading) were moderate because they could understand the overall meaning of English passages even if they couldn't understand them in detail (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) were low (1/2/2)**
- Participants felt that their levels of English (listening) were low because they couldn't understand what people said in English at all (Ichiro 1, Ken 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) were moderate (1/4/4)**
- Participants felt that their levels of English (listening) were moderate because they could understand the general meaning of what people said in English (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (speaking) were low (1/6/6)**
- Participants felt that their levels of English (speaking) were low because they couldn't speak English at all (Ichiro 1, Ken 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*

- Participants felt that their level of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) had remained low (1/2/1)**
- Participants felt that their level of English (overall) had remained low because they became less motivated (Ken 2)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (grammar) had increased (2/4/4)**
- Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (grammar) because they had done the work somehow (Ken 1)*
- Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (grammar) because they listened to the teacher's lecture more carefully and worked with their peers (Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Taro 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (grammar) had remained low (1/2/2)**
- Participants felt that their level of English (grammar) had remained low because they still felt hopeless about understanding grammar (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (reading) had remained low or moderate (1/6/6)**
- Participants felt that their level of English (reading) had remained low or moderate only because they hadn't studied to read better (Ken 1, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*

Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) had increased (2/5/5)**
- Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (listening) because they worked with their peers (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1)*
- Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (listening) because they had done the work somehow

| | |
|---|---|
| | (Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Taro 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) had remained low** (1/1/1)**<br>• Participants felt that their level of English (listening) had remained low but they didn't know why (Ken 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (speaking) had remained low** (1/6/6)**<br>• Participants felt that their level of English (speaking) had remained low because they didn't have any chance to speak English in real situations outside the class (Ken 1, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that some reasons in this table overlap with reasons in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.

## 5.3 Research question 1b: Do they perceive any changes in their *levels of English* between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?

Table 5.2 shows a comparison between the initial and final findings from the qualitative analyses, focusing on question 1b. In this table the participants' perceptions about their levels of English were divided into four kinds of ability (grammar, reading, listening and speaking) together with overall ability. These divisions are shown in parentheses. As mentioned above, the participants' comments (relevant to the reasons presented in Table 5.2) are indicated in the following account. However, before giving the comments I discuss the tendencies and/or backgrounds to their comments in order to clarify these comments. This is done throughout this section.

In the previous section it was assumed that the participants felt that their levels of English were 'not high', at least at the beginning of CL, according to the comments from the background questionnaire. As we expected, no key

participants felt that their overall levels of English were high at the beginning of CL. More specifically, more than half (4 out of 6) of the key participants felt that their overall levels of English were low and the other two key participants felt that their levels of expectancy were moderate. Further, at a more detailed level of English, namely, in all four areas of ability there were also no key participants who felt that their levels of English were high at the beginning of CL. In particular, in the areas of grammar and speaking, all the key participants (6 out of 6) felt that their levels of English were low. Concerning the other areas, in both reading and listening, two felt that their levels of English were low and the rest felt that their levels of English were moderate. In short, these low or moderate levels of English were probably caused by their past experiences in English classes at secondary school. In other words, these perceptions about their levels of English are consistent not only with what the earlier chapters (Chapters 1 and 2) discussed but also with the assumptions based on the comments from the background questionnaire (see Section 5.2 for details). Thus, these findings suggest that their past experiences had a negative influence on their levels of English.

The participants' example quotations for their overall levels of English at the beginning of CL were as follows (see Appendix 9 for more quotations):

(Low level)

> "… I didn't study English very much at secondary school. Particularly, at upper secondary school... My school was a commercial school and it focuses on commercial related subjects rather than other (academic) subjects, such as English... I also didn't like (studying) English at all. So, now I don't even know elementary level English..." (Ayumi)

(Moderate level)

> "… I can understand English to a certain level but I'm not so confident…Probably because… I didn't study elementary level English so well… or I don't remember it so well…" (Hiroshi)

Compared with these perceived initial low (or moderate) levels of English due to

their past experiences, at the end of CL, there was a great improvement in their perceived levels of English. Most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their overall levels of English had risen at the end of CL, while only one key participant did not feel any change in his level of English. Their typical comments at the end of CL were (see Appendix 9 for more quotations):

*Please note that example quotations throughout this thesis may overlap with those shown in other sections/chapters or tables because key variables are closely related to each other.

(Increased overall levels of English: most participants)

> "Working with my team-mates was really useful for me. Our team became much more cooperative than at the beginning (of this semester). So, I became more able to understand English than before, I think. And I could also correct my misunderstandings by teaching and helping my team-mates…" (Yuji; this quotation is also shown in Table 6.2 in Chapter 6)

(No improvement in his overall level of English: one participant)

> "My (overall) level of English has not changed at all, I think... Because I'm not motivated to study (English) at all... I can say that my motivation is less than before..." (Ken)

Although in the areas of *reading* and *speaking* all the key participants perceived that their levels of English had remained the same as before, the CL course focused on the areas of *grammar* and *listening*, so this finding is understandable. In fact, in the focused areas, participants perceived a considerable improvement. Concerning grammar, more than half the key participants (4 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had risen while two key participants did not feel any change in their levels of English. As for listening, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had improved and only one did not feel any change. Example comments on each area (at the end of CL) were as follows (see Appendix 9 for more quotations):

(Reading)

> "It (my level of English reading) has not changed at all… I just

concentrated on studying grammar and I didn't have enough energy to study reading… And there wasn't any class work for reading in class…" (Ichiro)

(Speaking)

"It (my ability to speak English) didn't change at all. Because I've never talked with a foreigner in English outside the class. And there is no such chance." (Ken)

(Grammar: the participants felt an improvement)

"… It (my level of English in grammar) improved! I can write English sentences unlike before…" (Ichiro; the rest of this quotation is shown in Table 6.2 in Chapter 6 and/or Appendix 9)

(Grammar: the participants felt no improvement)

"I think it (my level of English in grammar) is still the same as before… (Because) I had been poor at doing grammatical problems from secondary school… I had felt hopeless about understanding grammar. And the feeling didn't go away…" (Hiroshi)

(Listening: the participants felt an improvement)

"I feel it (my level of listening in English) improved more than before… (In dictation exercises) I could clearly write the 'key sentences' I heard which I had learned earlier in this class… I think that all the class work I did helped to improve my listening ability." (Tatsuya)

(Listening: the participants felt no improvement)

"It (my level of listening in English) didn't change at all. (What do you think was the reason it didn't change?) I don't know why." (Ken)

There are interesting changes when we look into each of the four areas above in more detail. Although one participant (Ken) did not feel any change in three of these (listening, reading and speaking) nor in his overall level (his comments on his overall level of English are shown above), he perceived that his level of grammar had improved. His comments on his level of grammar (at the end of CL) were:

"I know how to use verbs a bit, unlike before… Because I attended this class and did class work somehow." (Ken)

Similarly, although two participants (Hiroshi and Ayumi) felt that their levels of grammar had remained low, they perceived that their overall levels of English had improved. In this case, as they perceived an improvement in the area of listening, the overall improvement probably resulted from their improvements in this area. In sum, all the key participants felt that their levels of English had risen at least in a certain area and most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their overall levels of English had improved. The data showing whether or not their levels of English *actually* had improved can be found in Chapter 6, Section 6.5.

Intriguingly, when we look at the difference between the perceived changes in the focused areas (grammar and listening) and those in the other areas (reading and speaking), it seems to imply cause-and-effect relationships between what they had actually learned/worked at in the CL lessons and their perceived levels of English. In other words, the overall improvement appears mainly to have resulted from their perceived improvements in grammar and listening ability, which the CL lessons focused on. Further, as stated earlier in this section, in the areas of *reading* and *speaking* in particular which were not focused on in the CL lessons, all the key participants perceived that their levels of English had remained the same as before. In short, the learning experience in CL could have led to students' perceived achievements. Importantly, this possible relation (between CL and perceived achievements) may imply a relationship between peer cooperation in CL and their perceived levels of English. Since this assumed relationship is associated with another RQ, this point will not be discussed further here, but it will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

Now, we have observed a tendency toward improvements both in their levels of English and expectancy in the context of CL (e.g. most of the key participants perceived improvements both in their levels of English and their expectancy). Let us see how they felt about the relationship between the level of their English and of their expectancy. In the next section, I discuss their perceptions of the

relationship, which is the subject of RQ 1c and 1d.

## 5.4 Research questions 1c and 1d: Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of English are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

In Section 5.2, by examining the background questionnaire, we found that all the participants (n = 13) perceived that their low levels of English due to their experiences in secondary school were one of the main causes for their low levels of expectancy. In other words, they felt that their levels of English were positively related to their levels of expectancy. These perceptions were collected at the beginning of CL to obtain information about their past experiences in English classes. Therefore, they are not related to CL or RQs at all. However, they imply at least to some extent a tendency towards positive relationships between levels of English and expectancy. For this reason, for better or worse, it is assumed that the participants may also identify positive relationships between the two variables over the CL course. Now, let us look at Table 5.3 below (next page) to answer RQ 1c and 1d, which concern the relationships between the level of English and the level of expectancy.

Table 5.3 shows the participants' perceptions about the relationships between their levels of English and expectancy at the end of CL. As we expected, most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their enhanced levels of English had led to higher levels of expectancy. This positive relation can be seen in their quotations, which are shown in Table 5.3.

Further, although one key participant felt that his level of expectancy had remained low because his level of English remained low, his perception also indicates positive relationships between levels of English and expectancy. His quotation is also shown in Table 5.3.

**Table 5.3: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in their *levels of English* and changes in their levels of *expectancy* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research questions 1c & 1d: *Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of English are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had increased because their levels of English was enhanced (2/7/5)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I understand English much better than before because my team-mates taught me many things. I couldn't even understand elementary level English at the beginning of this class. But I could ask my peers very basic things (about English) because we belonged to the same team. I couldn't ask such things before… Now, I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before… (For example) when a teacher called on me in class, I couldn't answer anything before. But now I feel I can answer a question from the teacher somehow…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English (Taro 1, Tatsuya 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… level of English is definitely related to expectancy… Because I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before. I think it's because I feel I can understand English more than before…" (Taro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had remained low because their levels of English remained low (1/2/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt their levels of English remained low (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "My expectancy remains low. It's not changed at all (compared with the beginning of this semester). Because I know I can't understand English. I still don't know elementary level English. So, it's impossible for me to expect to be able to do class work well." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other. Also, there are cases in which some quotations are related to two or more different reasons.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

As we can see from participants' comments above, it seems that they thought the relationship were almost automatic or natural, because their comments were always consistent and very clear. Furthermore, at the interview all the key

participants responded very quickly to questions about the relationship, without hesitation or taking time to think.

In sum, in the context of CL lessons, all the key participants felt that their levels of English were positively related to their levels of expectancy, and their perceived levels of expectancy tended to improve when their perceived levels of English rose. In the next section, I discuss the findings about perceived changes in the students' levels of motivation over the CL course and the findings about a perceived relationship between levels of expectancy and motivation, which are related to RQ 2a, 2b and 2c.

## 5.5 Research question 2a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?

Before moving to the main discussion, I would like to review the overall structure or intention of RQ Set 2 (2a, 2b and 2c). The Set 2 questions are as follows:

**RQ 2a:** Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?
**RQ 2b:** Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of expectancy are related to changes in their perceived levels of motivation to learn EFL in class?
**RQ 2c:** If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

The key questions of Set 2 are 2b and 2c, which concern the *relationship* between changes in the level of *expectancy* and changes in the level of *motivation* to learn EFL in class. RQ 2a is about changes in the level of motivation as necessary prerequisites for RQ 2b and 2c, because without knowing the students' perceptions of changes in the variable, it would be difficult to understand the reasons and/or the background to their answers for RQ 2b and 2c (or the

relationships between the level of expectancy and motivation).

Now, let us look at Table 5.4[60] below. This table presents a comparison between the initial and final findings, focusing on RQ 2a, which is about perceived changes in students' levels of motivation to learn EFL in class during the CL course (Example quotations relevant to this table are indicated in the following account in this section).

**Table 5.4: Comparison of reasons given by participants for the changes they perceived in their levels of L2 classroom *motivation* during the cooperative learning stage (data collected at the beginning and the end of this stage)**

Research question 2a: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of CL?*

| Beginning of CL | End of CL |
|---|---|
| **Reasons expressed by participants who felt that they were not motivated** (2/4/3)**<br>• Participants felt that they were not motivated because they didn't need to use English (Ayumi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they were not motivated because of their low levels of expectancy (or of English) (Ichiro 2, Ken 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that they were moderately motivated** (3/4/3)**<br>• Participants felt that they were moderately motivated because they wanted to speak to foreigners (Hiroshi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they were moderately motivated because they felt that the class was useful and the teacher was interesting (Tatsuya 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they were moderately motivated because of a sense of responsibility to their parents (Taro 2)* | **Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had increased** (7/35/6)**<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt that they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers (Ayumi 5, Ichiro 2, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 2, Ayumi 2, Tatsuya 4, Ichiro 1, Yuji 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English (Ichiro 1, Taro 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to cope with the work (Tatsuya 2, Hiroshi 1, Taro 1, Ichiro 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt that their listening ability improved (Ichiro 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English through cooperating with their peers (Hiroshi 2, Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1)*<br>• Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become |

[60] See Appendix 10 for the initial and final findings in more detail (with quotations).

| | |
|---|---|
| | more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation fluctuated** (1/1/1)**<br>• Participants felt that they became less motivated when they couldn't understand the work but became more motivated when they could (Ken 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased** (3/4/1)**<br>• Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt inferior to their team (Ken 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they couldn't understand many things in class (Ken 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt that their levels of expectancy remained low (Ken 2)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that some reasons in this table overlap with reasons in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.

As we can see in Table 5.4, compared with their perception at the beginning of CL, the key participants tended to perceive improvements in their levels of motivation at the end of CL. At the beginning of CL, half of the key participants (3 out of 6) felt that they were not motivated at all and the other half felt that they were moderately motivated. Their example quotations (at the beginning of CL) were as follows (see Appendix 10 for more quotations):

(Not motivated at all)

> "…I'm not motivated… Because I don't have any purpose to study English…I don't need to use English, at least for now." (Ayumi)

> "…I don't like studying English because I know I can't understand or do

anything in English class." (Ichiro)

(Moderately motivated)

> "…I'm motivated to some extent now…Because I'd like to speak to foreigners…I have a part time job and many foreigners come to the work place…But they don't understand what I say in English at all. So, if I could speak English a bit more, it would make a big difference (at work), I guess." (Hiroshi)

> "…as I said earlier, my parents pay my tuition fees… So, I'm motivated (by a sense of responsibility to my parents) at least to some extent…" (Taro)

At the end of CL, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of motivation had risen. Considering that two of them were not motivated at all at the beginning of CL, this seems to be a great improvement. Their example comments were as follows:

> "... I became able to understand what people said (in English) unlike before… I've improved a bit… Before this semester I hadn't even tried to listen to English because I couldn't understand anything. But now I haven't given up listening to English… At the beginning of this semester, I wasn't motivated at all but my motivation is definitely changed… I'm motivated, unlike before…" (Ichiro; this quotation is also shown in Table 7.2 in Chapter 7)

> "I'm definitely more motivated than before... (Because) In my team, we get on well with each other, so we have much more fun in class (than at the beginning of CL). 'Having fun' made me more motivated, I think." (Tatsuya)

Yet there was one participant who made unique statements about his level of motivation. At the beginning of CL, he said that he was not motivated at all (see the next section for his quotation), and at the end of CL he described two different impressions. One was that his level of motivation fluctuated, depending on whether or not he could understand class work during the CL lesson. His comments were:

> "…When I didn't understand something in a row (in class), my

> motivation went down… But when I could complete some class work myself, my motivation went up…" (Ken; this quotation is also shown in Table 7.2 in Chapter 7)

However, he also said that his overall level of motivation fell, for three different reasons, which were related to the other key variables: peer cooperation, expectancy and levels of English (see the next section, Table 5.5 for his quotation). Here, we may notice a contradiction in what he said: at the beginning of CL he said that he was *not motivated* at all, while at the end of CL he said that his overall level of motivation *declined*. In other words, since there is no lower level of motivation than *not motivated at all*, it seems that he wanted to say that his level of motivation remained low or that at the end of CL he was still not motivated at all (see the next section for more detail). These contradictory statements and the reasons why he felt that his level of motivation declined and/or fluctuated are associated with other RQs; therefore, these will be discussed in more depth later sections and chapters.

In summary, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) perceived that their levels of motivation had risen at the end of CL and one key participant perceived that his overall level of motivation had declined over the CL course, although he felt that his level of motivation occasionally fluctuated. In the next section, I discuss a perceived relationship between the level of expectancy and motivation; it is connected with one of the reasons why the students felt that their levels of motivation had risen.

## 5.6 Research question 2b and 2c: Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of expectancy are related to changes in their perceived levels of motivation to learn EFL in class? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

Here we discuss the findings about the key questions of RQ Set 2. Please refer to Table 5.5 below. This table shows the participants' perceptions about the relationship between the level of expectancy and motivation (to learn EFL in

class), focusing on RQ 2b and 2c.

**Table 5.5: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in their levels of *expectancy* and changes in their levels of L2 classroom *motivation* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research questions 2b & 2c: *Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of expectancy are related to changes in their perceived levels of motivation to learn EFL in class? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had increased because their levels of expectancy were enhanced (1/6/5)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to cope with the work (Tatsuya 2, Hiroshi 1, Taro 1, Ichiro 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I feel I'm much more able to do class work than before. That's definitely one of the reasons why I'm more motivated than before…" (Tatsuya)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased because their levels of expectancy remained low (1/2/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become less motivated because their levels of expectancy remained low (Participants felt that motivation, levels of English and expectancy had a circular connection: their low levels of expectancy decreased their levels of motivation, and these decreased levels of motivation led their levels of English to remain low, and these low levels of English had a negative influence on their levels of expectancy) (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "I think that motivation, level of English and expectancy have a circular connection. My case is the negative circular connection. My level of expectancy remains low… I know I can't do class work anyway. So, I became less motivated than before…And then my level of English is also low because I'm not motivated to study. And my expectancy can't go up because my level of English remains low. This circular connection goes on and on, I think." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other. Also, there are cases in which some quotations are related to two or more different reasons.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

As we can see in this table, all the key participants perceived positive relationships between the level of expectancy and motivation and they tended to

feel more motivated when they felt that their levels of expectancy had been enhanced. Let us look at their perception in more detail. At the end of CL, most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to cope with class work. A typical quotation is as follows:

> … I feel I'm much more able to do class work than before. That's definitely one of the reasons why I'm more motivated than before…" (Tatsuya; this quotation is also shown in Table 5.5)

However, one key participant felt that he had become less motivated because he still felt unable to do class work (or because his level of expectancy remained low). His quotation is as follows:

> …My level of expectancy remains low… I know I can't do class work anyway. So, I became less motivated than before… (Ken)

In other words, his level of motivation had declined because his level of expectancy remained low. However, as discussed in the previous section, what he said about the changes in his level of motivation is a little inconsistent; because at the beginning of CL he said that he was "not motivated at all" and at the end of CL he said that he had become less motivated than before[61]. One quotation from him at the beginning of CL is as follows:

> I'm not motivated at all. It's not fun to be in any English class. Because I don't even know what is going on in class… (Ken)

Since there is no lower level of motivation than "not motivated at all", it is assumed that he probably meant to say that he was still not motivated at all because he thought he still could not do class work well even at the end of CL. That is, he felt that his level of motivation had remained low because his level of expectancy remained low. Or if there had been lower levels of expectancy and

[61] When interviewing at the end of CL, I explained what he said at the beginning of CL.

motivation, it is also assumed that he meant to say that his level of motivation had *declined* because his level of expectancy had *declined*. This suggests positive relationships between the level of expectancy and motivation.

To summarise this section, all the key participants perceived that their levels of expectancy were positively related to their levels of motivation. In addition, most of them perceived that their levels of motivation had risen when their levels of expectancy improved over the CL course.

The purpose of this chapter has been to discuss part of the findings in this investigation with the aim of answering the research questions Set 1 and Set 2. Table 5.6 below presents a summary of answers to these research questions. These findings/answers have partly covered one of the routes mainly focused on in this study: the more indirect route to linking peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation (through a combination of levels of English and expectancy). The part of this route yet to cover is about the relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English, from the students' point of view.

In the next chapter, I will address the other route focused on (the link between peer cooperation and motivation through expectancy) as well as the uncovered part of the more indirect route. More specifically, I examine the findings about perceived changes in the nature of *peer cooperation* over the CL course, and about the relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English, in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Further, findings about a perceived relationship between peer cooperation and levels of expectancy will be also addressed.

Table 5.6 Summary of answers to RQs Set 1 and Set 2

RQs Set 1

**1a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**

**Answers to 1a:**

- Most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of expectancy had risen (At the beginning of CL, three of them felt that their levels of expectancy were low and the other two felt that their levels of expectancy were modest).
- One key participant felt that his level of expectancy had remained low.

**1b: Do they perceive any changes in their levels of English between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**

**Answers to 1b:**

Overall levels of English

- Most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their overall levels of English had risen. (At the beginning of CL, three of them felt that their overall levels of English were low and the other two felt that their overall levels of English were modest).
- One key participant felt that his overall level of English had remained low; however, he felt that his level of English *grammar* had progressed.

About 4 areas of English learning (grammar, reading, listening, speaking)

Grammar:

- More than half of the key participants (4 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had progressed (All the key participants felt that their levels of English were low at the beginning of CL).
- Two felt that their levels of English had remained low.

Reading:

- All key participants (6 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had remained low or modest. (At the beginning of CL, two of them felt that their levels of English were low and the other four felt that their levels of English were modest).

Listening:

- Most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had progressed (At the beginning of CL, two of them felt that their levels of English were low and the other four felt that their levels of English were modest).
- One key participant felt that his level of English had remained low.

Speaking:

- All the key participants felt that their levels of English had remained low.

**1c & 1d: Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of English are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

**Answers to 1c & 1d:**

- All key participants (6 out of 6) felt that their levels of English positively pertained to their levels of expectancy.
- Most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of expectancy had risen due to the improvement in their levels of English.
- One key participant felt that his level of expectancy had remained low due to his maintained low level of English.

**RQs Set 2**

**2a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?**

**Answers to 2a:**

- Most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of motivation had risen. (At the beginning of CL, two of them felt that they were demotivated and the other three felt that their levels of motivation were modest).
- One key participant felt that his overall level of motivation had lessened (or had remained low?) although he felt that his level of motivation went up and down during the CL course. (At the beginning of CL, he felt that he was demotivated).

**2b & 2c: Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of expectancy are related to changes in their perceived levels of motivation to learn EFL in class? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

**Answers to 2b & 2c:**

- All the key participants felt that their levels of expectancy positively pertained to their levels of motivation.
- Most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of motivation had risen due to their progressed levels of expectancy.
- One key participant felt that his level of motivation had lessened (or had remained low?) due to his maintained low level of expectancy.

# CHAPTER 6
# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 2:
# THE NATURE OF PEER COOPERATION; RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEER COOPERATION AND LEVELS OF ENGLISH; AND RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PEER COOPERATION AND LEVELS OF EXPECTANCY

## Introduction

As previously stated in the introduction to Chapter 5, peer cooperation is thought to enhance motivation in two ways: through its direct influence on expectancy and through its indirect influence on expectancy via an enhanced level of English. These two routes are central to the investigation in this study. Chapter 5 partly covers the indirect route (a perceived relationship between levels of English and expectancy). However, in order to fully understand the two routes from peer cooperation to increased motivation, it is necessary to investigate two other perceived relationships between key variables: the relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy, and the relationship between peer cooperation and level of English.

In this chapter, I discuss these two relationships which the students identified themselves, as well as discussing the nature of peer cooperation from their standpoint. Specifically, I would like to address the following: perceived changes in the nature of peer cooperation over the CL course, the perceived relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English, and that between peer cooperation and expectancy. This investigation mainly involves a qualitative analysis of participants' perceptions. However, the relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English is also quantitatively investigated and analysed to obtain supplementary information. All these findings are intended to answer RQ Set 3 (3a & 3b), Set 4 (4a & 4b), RQ 5 (single question) and RQ Set 6 (6a & 6b).

## 6.1 Findings from the qualitative analysis designed to answer research questions Set 3, Set 4, 5 and Set 6

Qualitative analyses were conducted in the same way as indicated in the previous chapter. The resulting information is also shown in the way described in that chapter. In the following sections, I discuss first the findings relating to RQs Set 3 and then those relating to Set 4. Next, I turn to the findings and discussion related to RQ 5. Unlike the other RQs, RQ 5 is quantitative and therefore the relevant findings and discussion are based on statistical analyses (see Sections 6.4 & 6.5 for details). Finally, the findings related to RQs Set 6 are addressed. The next section addresses RQs Set 3.

RQs Set 3 is as follows:

RQ 3a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?

RQ 3b: If so, what changes do they perceive?

## 6.2 Research questions 3a and 3b: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of CL? If so, what changes do they perceive?

Table 6.1[62] shows a comparison between the views of the students on peer cooperation at the beginning and at the end of the study. These findings aim at answering questions 3a and 3b. Please note that example quotations relevant to Table 6.1 are shown alongside the discussion in this section.

[62] See Appendix 11 for the initial and final findings in more detail (with quotations).

**Table 6.1: Comparison of reasons given by participants for the changes they perceived in the nature of their *peer cooperation* during the cooperative learning stage (data collected at the beginning and the end of this stage)**

Research questions 3a & 3b: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of CL? If so, what changes do they perceive?*

| Beginning of CL | End of CL |
|---|---|
| **Reasons expressed by participants whose impression of peer cooperation was negative** (5/19/6)**<br>• Participants felt that they asked their peers few questions because they were not used to their peers (Hiroshi 2, Taro 2, Tatsuya 2, Ayumi 2, Ken 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they didn't teach their peers because their levels of English were too low to teach (Ayumi 1, Ichiro 1, Taro 1, Ken 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they asked their peers for answers because they were concerned about their marks (Ichiro 1, Taro 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they occasionally asked their peers questions because they couldn't do the work despite all their efforts (Hiroshi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they occasionally taught their peers because they were asked (Hiroshi 1, Tatsuya 1)* | **Reasons expressed by participants whose impression of peer cooperation had become more positive** (7/46/10)**<br>• Participants felt that they had become more cooperative because of a developing sense of belonging to their team (Ichiro 1, Taro 2, Tatsuya 4, Hiroshi 1, Jiro 3, Yuji 1, Eiji 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because they had good relationships with them (Ayumi 2, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1, Jiro 2, Takashi 2, Naoki 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of belonging to their team (Ichiro 1, Taro 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Hiroshi 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more bonded with their peers because they got on well with them (Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1, Taro 3, Ayumi 1, Jiro 3, Yuji 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had had more fun in class by joining discussions in their team (Ichiro 1, Yuji 1)*<br>• Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers (Ayumi 5, Ichiro 2, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1)*<br><br>**Reasons expressed by participants whose impression of peer cooperation had remained negative** (1/2/1)**<br>• Participants felt that they had remained reluctant to ask their peers questions because they felt that peer cooperation was still individual work in reality (Ken 2)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).

**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.

***Please note that some reasons in this table overlap with reasons in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.

As we can see from Table 6.1, overall, most key participants (5 out of 6)[63] felt that their impression of peer cooperation had become more positive at the end of CL. Considering that at the beginning of CL all the key participants had a negative impression of peer cooperation, this final positivity can be considered a great improvement. The content of changes perceived by the students can be seen in the lists under *End of CL* (Table 6.1).

A closer examination of their perceptions at the beginning of CL, in comparison to their perceptions at the end, gives us a clearer picture of their improvements. Their negative impression of peer cooperation at the beginning of CL can be seen in their reluctance to communicate with other team-mates. For example, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that they rarely put questions to their peers, and some of them felt that even when they asked questions, they asked only for specific answers, but neither to understand the content of the lesson nor to improve their levels of English. A typical quotation expressing their negative or passive attitude towards asking questions at the beginning of CL is as follows (see Appendix 11 for other quotations):

> I asked my peers for answers, particularly when the teacher called on me in class. Because I'm not comfortable with not being able to answer the teacher…I'm afraid that my marks will be affected (by not answering)… I asked someone around me for an answer and responded to the teacher with the answer… (Ichiro)

> "… In secondary schools, classmates were always the same in any classes and we became friends easily. But in university, classmates are different in each class… So, I don't feel comfortable to ask (my peers) questions yet…" (Hiroshi)

In addition, from the students' point of view, they seldom taught their peers at the beginning of CL. As we can see in Table 6.1, more than half the key participants (4 out of 6) at the beginning of CL never taught their peers. Further, although two

[63] As mentioned in Chapter 5, the names of the key participants are Ayumi, Taro, Ichiro, Tatsuya, Hiroshi and Ken. The other participants shown in tables are not key participants (they took the same CL course and answered many other questionnaires and tests, but they were not specifically interviewed for this study).

key participants felt that they occasionally taught their peers, their attitude seems to have been very passive. Typical quotations expressing their negative or passive attitude are as follows:

> I occasionally taught my peers. But I taught them only when I was asked. (Hiroshi)
>
> "… I've never taught anyone in English class. Because I know I can't… I don't even know elementary level of English. So, it's just impossible for me to teach…" (Ichiro)

In contrast, at the end of CL, most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that they had developed a more positive attitude towards peer cooperation. This perceived improvement in their attitude can be seen more clearly in changes in the numbers of reasons and quotations between the beginning and the end of CL. At the beginning of CL, all the key participants (6 out of 6) reported *negative* feelings about peer cooperation; the total number of their reasons was 5 and of quotations was 19. In comparison, at the end of CL, only one key participant expressed negative feelings. As a result, the numbers of *negative* reasons and quotations were reduced to one and two respectively. At the same time, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) had improved their attitude towards peer cooperation. This resulted in higher numbers of *positive* reasons (7) and quotations (31) in comparison to the totals for the *negative* ones (5 and 19 respectively). Although this comparison is between *negative* feelings at the *beginning* of CL and *positive* feelings at the *end* of CL, we can see how eager the key participants were to express their happy or positive feelings when they were interviewed at the end of CL. In fact, they mostly responded with longer answers and happier faces at the interview than they had shown at the beginning of CL. Moreover, at the beginning of CL there were no key participants who expressed positive feelings towards peer cooperation.

So far, I have largely discussed the changes in the numbers of reasons and quotations in order to explicate the perceived improvement. Now it is useful to

address the content of their quotations in more detail in order to introduce and clarify the nature of the improvement. As stated earlier, we can see participants' perceived changes in the lists of Table 6.1. However, we may understand them better if we examine the reason types and/or the quotations more closely, looking for consistency, and we may be able to find some consistency between reason types.

There is a certain consistency among all the quotations which indicated positive impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL. These consistent responses underline something essential for creating desirable peer cooperation among participants, which is also part of the perceived changes in the nature of peer cooperation. What is consistent is that all the positive impressions were related to better relationships between peers. In Table 6.1, we can see that there were seven reasons why participants had positive impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL. The first and third reasons are consistent with their feelings about relationships with their peers; the participants had become more cooperative or asked more questions because of *a developing sense of belonging to their team*. This sense of belonging suggests better relationships between peers because it created an environment in which communication between peers (team-mates) became much easier. More importantly, it generated good relationships between team-mates, unlike their relationships at the beginning of CL. These desirable relationships are acknowledged in the participants' quotations. The following are typical quotations for the reason types 1 and 3 respectively:

> (Reason type 1: *Participants felt that they had become more cooperative because of a developing sense of belonging to their team*)
>
> It (how I cooperate with my peers) changed! …it was much easier to communicate with peers around because we belonged to the same team… When I asked them questions, they answered me respectfully… There were no high achieving students in our team who could understand English very well. So, we sometimes had to ask the teacher (questions) or think together by using dictionaries… I had team-mates who could teach me. And I sometimes taught them unlike before…

> Because we had such an (class) environment…I was a lot more cooperative (to my peers than at the beginning of this semester)… (Ichiro)

(Reason type 3: *Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of belonging to their team*)

> I definitely asked my peers more questions than before. Because we belonged to the same team and then I could ask elementary level questions without any hesitation… (Taro)

Further, the second, fifth, sixth and seventh reason types also expressed similar feelings. That is, all these reason types are related to closer relationships between peers, such as *had good relationships with [their] peers*, *had more bonding with [their] peers*, *had more fun in class* and *got on well with [their] peers*. Although the words, *had more fun in class*, in the sixth reason type do not directly indicate a closer relationship, we can safely infer that having more fun in class resulted from better communication or relationships between peers. Similarly, closer or better relationships can be clearly seen in quotations belonging to the other reason types. The following are typical quotations for these reason types in turn:

(Reason type 2: *Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because they had good relationships with them*)

> … I had hesitated to ask my peers questions before because my level of English was lower than others. But I could ask many more questions to my peers than before. Because we belonged to the same team and had good relationships each other… (Ayumi)

(Reason type 5: *Participants felt that they had become more bonded with their peers because they got on well with them*)

> I felt a sense of unity with my peers because we got on very well with each other. (Taro)

(Reason type 6: *Participants felt that they had had more fun in class by joining discussions in their team*)

> … I told my opinions when we discussed something in my team… It was really fun to join the discussion. I've never had such experience before… I felt I took part in the class myself… So, I had much more fun in class than before (the beginning of this semester)… (Ichiro)

(Reason type 7: *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers*)

> … my team-mates praised me (for what I did in class)… saying things like 'You made it!'… Such words (from team-mates) generated… 'cohesion' (within our team) and we got closer to each other within our team and then the class got more fun. Having more fun in class made me motivated. 'Having fun'… never ends. I've been motivated more and more by having fun… (Ayumi; this quotation is also shown in Table 7.3 in Chapter 7)

Finally, only the fourth reason type seems, on the surface, not to be related to closer/better relationships between peers: Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of *a developing sense of responsibility for their peers*. However, it may be associated with the improved relationships. Only one participant (Hiroshi) responded with this reason type, commenting as follows:

> There was the team point system in this class. So, I asked my peers many more questions than before… I tried to ask (questions) more actively because I felt a sense of responsibility for my team … (Hiroshi)

In a nutshell, this participant regarded the team point system as the cause of his asking more questions. From this, we can see that his sense of responsibility was based on this point system. However, better relationships with his peers may have helped, at least in part, to foster this sense of responsibility for his peers. In other words, he felt a sense of responsibility for his peers partly because he cared about his peers, unlike his attitude at the beginning of CL. According to Dörnyei (1997), this sense of responsibility is a factor contingent to group cohesion (see Chapter 7 for more details). Namely, more caring relationships between peers may foster this sense of responsibility. In fact, the participant (Hiroshi) also said

that he had more fun in class because he got on well with his peers, and he also felt a sense of belonging to his team. It will be recalled that at the beginning of CL no participants felt a sense of responsibility for their peers.

Thus, considering all the reason types and quotations by the participants who had positive impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL, we may see that there is some consistency in these reason types and quotations. In other words, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) were positively impressed at the end of CL, and all (or most of) the reason types are related to better/closer relationships between peers, in contrast to their relationships at the beginning of CL. This suggests that some *bonding* between peers was essential to create desirable peer cooperation. In short, a certain level of bonding between peers could have gone hand in hand with their positive impression of peer cooperation.

So far, I have mainly discussed improvements in something that the students identified themselves: peer cooperation. Now it may be useful to consider the participant who had continued to have negative impressions of peer cooperation over the CL course. There was only one such participant (Ken). A quotation expressing his negative impression at the end of CL was as follows:

> I asked my peers questions a little… But I still felt reluctant to ask them questions… Because I thought that working with team-mates was meaningless. Although my team-mates worked together, it was only on the surface. I mean that 'in reality' they worked 'individually', not together. I saw that they memorised English words or key sentences outside the class. That's individual work, I think… (Ken)

To sum up, from his point of view, he had remained reluctant to ask his peers questions because he felt that peer cooperation was individual work in reality. Needless to say, learning itself is individual work (although one can get help from others). Therefore, it is natural that his team-mates worked individually at times. In fact, all the other members of his team (Hiroshi, Ichiro, Taro & Tatsuya) had positive impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL. In view of this, his

negative impressions seem to have come from something else.

Examining the following quotations by him at the end of CL, we may notice two points which seem to relate to reasons why he had continued to have a negative impression of peer cooperation (although the reasons were partly different from those at the beginning of CL). One is that he appears to have developed a feeling of inferiority towards his team-mates, due to his level of English. Another is that he was disappointed in peer help because he could not understand what his team-mates explained to him.

> My motivation at present is lower than before… because… I felt like all other team-mates understood English (except me)… I felt this on many occasions… (For example,) when there was a discussion (about class work) in our team, all the other team-mates discussed it a lot with each other. But I didn't even understand what was going on… I think that all the team members should be at the same achievement level. Otherwise, low achievers like me become less motivated… (Ken; this quotation is also shown in Table 7.3 in Chapter 7)

> I don't think that peer cooperation was related to my level of English. Because I asked my team-mates, particularly Hiroshi, when I couldn't understand something about class work. But I couldn't even understand what they tried to explain to me. So, peer cooperation didn't mean anything to me. (Ken; this quotation is also shown in Table 6.2 in the next section)

In short, these feelings of disappointment and inferiority seem to have led to his negative impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL. More importantly, these feelings may also have prevented him from developing better relationships with his team-mates. People who hold such negative beliefs about communicating with their peers are more likely to have difficulty in communicating with them.

To summarise the answers to RQs 3a and 3b, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) had positive impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL although all the key participants (6 out of 6) had had negative impressions at the beginning of CL. In addition, all the positive impressions were related to closer/better relationships

between team-mates. In contrast, only one key participant continued to have negative impressions of peer cooperation at the end of CL. This may be because he probably could not improve his relationships with his team-mates due to his feelings of inferiority and disappointment.

Now, we have observed a tendency toward perceived improvements in the nature of peer cooperation over the CL course. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter there was a tendency toward perceived improvements in students' levels of English in the context of CL (e.g. most of the key participants perceived improvements in their levels of English at the end of CL). When we look at these results alone, they appear to be consistent with the assumption discussed in Chapter 3. In other words, we assumed that peer cooperation helped to enhance the participants' levels of English and the perceived improvement in both variables showed some support for the assumption. To examine this assumption, we need to look at the feelings of the participants about the relationship between peer cooperation and their levels of English. In the next section, I discuss their perceptions of the relationship, which is the subject of RQs 4a and 4b. The following are the RQs:

RQ4a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in CL are related to changes in their perceived levels of English?

RQ4b: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

## 6.3 Research questions 4a and 4b: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in CL are related to changes in their perceived levels of English? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

The answer to RQs 4a and 4b is summarised in Table 6.2, which shows the participants' perceptions of the relationship between peer cooperation and their levels of English at the end of CL.

**Table 6.2: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in the nature of their *peer cooperation* and changes in their *levels of English* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research questions 4a & 4b: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in CL are related to changes in their perceived levels of English? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English had increased because of peer cooperation (5/31/8)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English because they worked with their peers (Ichiro 4, Hiroshi 5, Ayumi 2, Taro 2, Tatsuya 1, Jiro 1, Eiji 1, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "Working with my team-mates was really useful for me. Our team became much more cooperative than at the beginning (of this semester). So, I became more able to understand English than before, I think. And I could also correct my misunderstandings by teaching and helping my team-mates…" (Yuji)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (grammar) because they listened to the teacher's lecture more carefully and worked with their peers (Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… It (my level of English in grammar) improved! I can write English sentences, unlike before… I carefully listened to the teacher's description of grammar, unlike before. And I asked my peers when I didn't understand something. I asked them until I could understand… I mean my attitude in class totally changed… These processes helped me to understand English, I think. So, I feel I understand English now…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I understand English much better than before because my team-mates taught me many things. I couldn't even understand elementary level English at the beginning of this class. But I could ask my peers very basic things (about English) because we belonged to the same team. I couldn't ask such things before… Now, I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before… (For example) when a teacher called on me in class, I couldn't answer anything before. But now I feel I can answer a question from the teacher somehow…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English by cooperating with their peers (Hiroshi 2, Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "In the last semester I mostly worked alone in (English) class, so there were many things I didn't understand (in class). I used to think 'I'm in an awkward situation'… But throughout this semester I've realised I can understand many things (about English unlike before) through discussing them with team-mates… So, I think I'm more motivated than before… " (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 5: Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *Example quotation: "… I've been working with my team-mates in this semester, so… I'm much more motivated than before… There was only one time when I got extremely low points on a quiz… At that time… I felt guilty towards my team-mates because it was only me who got low points. Then, I got higher points on the next quiz… I think it was because I studied more than before." (Taro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that peer cooperation had not been related to their levels of English (1/2/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that peer cooperation had not been related to their levels of English because they couldn't understand what their peers explained when they asked questions (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "I don't think that peer cooperation was related to my level of English. Because I asked my team-mates, particularly Hiroshi, when I couldn't understand something about class work. But I couldn't even understand what they tried to explain to me. So, peer cooperation didn't mean anything to me." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.
****Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

As expected, most key participants (5 out of 6)[64] felt that their levels of English increased because of peer cooperation[65]. In other words, they felt that peer cooperation was positively related to levels of English. In addition, when we look at the numbers of reason types or quotations, there are noticeable differences between the numbers for the positive relationships and the numbers for the non-relationships: five reason types and 28 quotations (by 5 *key* participants; 31 quotations by 8 participants) and one reason type and two quotations (by 1 key participant) respectively. Judging by the long answers and happy faces during the interviews, this difference seems to indicate that the five key participants were happy in exercising peer cooperation and with its positive effects on their levels of English. In fact, when we look at the quotations in Table 6.2, we can clearly see how their attitudes in class had improved.

[64] The names of the key participants are Ayumi, Taro, Ichiro, Tatsuya, Hiroshi and Ken. The other participants shown in the tables (e.g., Yuji in Table 6.2) are not key participants; they were not interviewed, but they took the same CL course and answered many other questionnaires and tests.
[65] Those who felt this positive relation are consistent also with those who felt improvement both in peer cooperation and overall level of English at the end of CL.

So far, I have mainly addressed differences between two categories of the numbers of reason types and quotations in order to clarify the effects of peer cooperation on levels of English. Now I would like to examine the quotations (along with the reason types) more closely, in order to analyse how and/or why peer cooperation improved the level of English in the minds of the students.

Close analysis of the quotations shows that the five reason types (which show a perceived positive relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English) can be divided into two kinds: *direct* and *indirect* relationships. The content of quotations for the *direct* relationship can be summarised in the following three sentences:

- Students felt that they had been able to correct their misunderstandings by teaching and helping their team-mates.
- Students felt that they had learned because they could ask their peers questions without any hesitation.
- Students felt that they had been able to understand many things by discussing them with team-mates.

There are two noteworthy points here. One is that those who were teaching other students felt improvements, as well as those who were being taught. The other is that some had learned through discussions with peers. These are understandable (or expected) effects of peer cooperation. Concerning the former point, as discussed in Chapter 3, CL is considered to be effective at all levels of achievement, which means that students on both sides, those teaching and those being taught, can improve their levels of English in the process of peer cooperation. Regarding the latter point (as discussed in Chapter 3), in CL mutual feedback through peer cooperation is considered to be quite strong, which means that this feedback may promote learning, or that students may learn something from the feedback (*feedback effects*). Considering this, the latter point is also understandable. In other words, students felt that they had enhanced their levels of English because of the *feedback effects* in the process of discussion. In Chapter 8, I will discuss further the relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English, including

its implications.

Up to now, I have addressed perceptions (included in the first four reason types) which indicate *direct* relationships between peer cooperation and levels of English. Now I would like to examine quotations which indicate *indirect* relationships. Concerning the reason types indicating perceived positive relationships between peer cooperation and levels of English, most reason types (4 out of 5) show *direct* relationships between the two variables. However, of the five reason types for the positive relations, only the fifth reason type indicated (perceived) *indirect* relationships: *Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers*. This reason type means, in other words, that peer cooperation had raised levels of English *through enhanced levels of motivation* in the minds of the students. Considering that this motivation could not exist without peer cooperation, the perceived positive relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English is inescapable. An interesting point here is that this reason type also showed a positive relationship between *peer cooperation* and *motivation* in the eyes of the students. This perceived relationship was neither mainly focused on in this study nor included in the primary research questions. However, it is related to research question 7, which concerns any possible links between four key variables that the participants perceive. Therefore, this relationship is not examined in this section but will be addressed in the next chapter.

Up to this point, I have discussed perceptions indicating a positive relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English. Now, I would like to consider perceptions which indicate no relationship between the two variables. There was only one key participant (Ken) who had this view. His quotations suggest that he felt this because he could not understand what his peers explained when he asked questions. In other words, he felt that peer cooperation was not useful for improving his level of English because he did not have a high enough level of English to understand his peers' explanations in reply to his questions. As

discussed in the previous section, he also felt inferior to his team-mates because of his level of English. Bearing this in mind, his perceived level of English appeared somehow to influence his view that there was no relationship.

To summarise this section, most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had risen because of peer cooperation over the CL course. In other words, they felt that peer cooperation was positively related to their levels of English. These perceived positive relationships can be divided into two kinds, *direct* and *indirect*. The indirect relationship means that peer cooperation had raised levels of English *through enhanced levels of motivation*. The direct relationship, in particular, indicated two kinds of effects of peer cooperation. One is that those who were teaching other students felt improvements as well as those who were being taught. The other is that mutual feedback through peer cooperation helped students' learning. Only one key participant felt that peer cooperation had not been related to his level of English from start to finish of the CL course because he could not understand what his peers explained when he asked questions. Needless to say, this summary is also the outline of the answers to RQs 4a and 4b.

Now, we have observed on the basis of qualitative analysis a tendency towards positive relationships between peer cooperation and levels of English in the context of CL. In the next section, I address findings from *quantitative* analyses about the relationship between the two variables in order to obtain supplementary information. This is the subject of RQ 5, which is as follows:

RQ 5: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do their actual levels of peer cooperation relate to their actual levels of English?

## 6.4 Findings from the quantitative analysis

Quantitative data analyses were conducted only for RQ 5 (which is about an actual relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English) because the

research design of this study is mainly qualitative and therefore the sample size used in this study was very small. Accordingly, the findings from the quantitative data analyses are fundamentally presented for descriptive purposes only. However, to check the tendency of the relationship in more detail, I used statistical procedures. For all the statistical analyses below, I used SPSS (Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences, Version 13.0J).

Before moving to the main discussion of these findings, I should discuss the reliability of the Cooperation Questionnaire (CQ) which I created for this study. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to determine the reliability of consistency between the items (12 in number) in CQ. The reliability was calculated at the beginning (n=13) and the end of CL (n=12), and the results were .720 for the former and .845 for the latter. Concerning the level of the reliability coefficients, Dörnyei (2001: 204) states:

> Internal consistency estimates for well-developed attitude scales containing as few as ten items ought to approach 0.80… even with short scales of three or four items should aim at reliability coefficients in excess of 0.70, and if the Cronbach alpha of a scale does not reach 0.60, this should sound warning bells.

Considering Dörnyei's statement above and that the sample size was very small (13 at the beginning of CL and 12 at the end of CL), the reliability coefficient of CQ is relatively high. In sum, CQ indicates a high enough level of reliability.

## 6.5 Research question 5: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do their actual levels of peer cooperation relate to their actual levels of English?

In this section, I would like to discuss the findings related to the answers given to RQ 5. Before the discussion, however, it is useful to observe the actual improvement of the students in terms of their levels of English and peer cooperation. A Wilcoxon non-parametric comparison of means was conducted in

order to verify whether they did indeed improve in this respect. The results of this comparison are as follows:

**Table 6.3: Descriptive statistics showing the mean scores on the language level test and the peer cooperation questionnaire at the beginning and the end of cooperative learning**

| | N | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Listening Test Initial Score | 12 | 15 | 55 | 35.42 | 12.332 |
| Listening Test Final Score | 12 | 25 | 65 | 42.50 | 12.154 |
| Structure Test Initial Score | 12 | 10 | 50 | 29.58 | 11.958 |
| Structure Test Final Score | 12 | 20 | 55 | 37.92 | 12.515 |
| Overall Language Test Initial Score | 12 | 25 | 95 | 65.00 | 18.950 |
| Overall Language Test Final Score | 12 | 55 | 120 | 80.42 | 19.360 |
| Peer Cooperation Initial Score | 13 | 16 | 39 | 31.31 | 6.102 |
| Peer Cooperation Final Score | 12 | 27 | 52 | 38.58 | 8.152 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 11 | | | | |

**Table 6.4 Significance levels of differences in scores on the language level test and the peer cooperation questionnaire**

| | Listening Test (Final - Initial) | Structure Test (Final - Initial) | Overall Language Test (Final - Initial) | Peer Cooperation (Final - Initial) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Z | -1.493(a) | -2.353(a) | -2.409(a) | -2.803(a) |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | .136 | .019* | .016* | .005* |

Before discussing these results, I would like to briefly give some necessary information about the language level test (CELT) and the peer cooperation questionnaire (CQ) in order to clarify the results (see Chapter 4 for more details). The language test consists of two sections: listening and structure. In Tables 6.3 and 6.4, the results of each section, as well as the overall results, are shown separately. The maximum possible total score for each section is 100, and therefore it is 200 for the overall test. The maximum possible total score for the

peer cooperation questionnaires is 60.

One additional item of knowledge should be noted here. The results of the 'Overall Language Test Initial Score' in Table 6.3 seem to show a broad range of students' test scores (min. 25; max. 95; standard deviation 18.95) and the maximum score looks at first sight as though it represents high achiever's. However, even this score is below 50 % of the highest score possible for the test. This suggests that all the participants were low achieving EFL students.

Now, let us examine the changes in levels of English and peer cooperation from the beginning (initial) to the end (final) of cooperative learning. Table 6.4 above shows a significant improvement in the students' scores on the structure section ($p<0.05$), the overall language test ($p<0.05$) and the peer cooperation questionnaire ($p<0.01$). There was, however, no significant improvement on the listening section. These results need to be treated with caution because of the small number of participants in the study.

Having seen that the participants made significant improvements in the language test and questionnaires, we now verify whether in fact there was a correlation between improvements in their levels of peer cooperation and their levels of English. To find this, I calculated non-parametric correlation coefficients. Since the sample size is very small (n = approx.11.5)[66], using the non-parametric correlation seems to be appropriate. Spearman rank-order correlation (Rho) was used for this purpose. However, no significant correlation was found (–0.276).

It is interesting to note that, although participants perceived a relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English (see Section 6.3 for more details), in statistical terms, no relationship actually existed. In other words, the difference between these findings seems to indicate the significance of qualitative studies, at

[66] The sample size is not the same for CQ (n=12) as for CELT (n=11) because some participants were absent at the time of administering CQ or CELT at the beginning and the end of CL (e.g., Some students took CELT at the beginning of CL but did not take it at the end of CL).

least to some extent. There are several possible reasons for this statistical (or quantitative) finding. One reason could be the small number of participants in the study. Another reason may be that the content of the CL lessons did not focus on the language test in particular. That is to say, if the lesson content directly related to the test, the students might be more likely to gain better scores in the language test. However, even if these two conditions were fulfilled, there is no guarantee that in statistical terms a relationship between the two variables could be found. In other words, the difference between the qualitative and quantitative findings suggests that qualitative studies have some strengths and/or capacity to find certain aspects of students which quantitative studies or statistical calculation cannot find. Moreover, students' perceptions are more important, in some cases, than statistical results, in particular, for teachers in the field, because they have to deal with their students on a daily basis.

In the next section, I address the relationships between peer cooperation and expectancy to answer RQs Set 6, on the basis of qualitative analyses. The questions of Set 6 are as follows:

RQ 6a: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?

RQ 6b: If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

## 6.6 Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?

In Section 6.2 we have observed a tendency toward (perceived) improvements in the nature of *peer cooperation* over the CL course. In addition, as discussed in the previous chapter, there was a tendency toward improvement in the levels of

*expectancy* from the students' point of view. When we look at these results alone, they indicate some probability of the assumption discussed in Chapter 3. We assumed that improved/proper peer cooperation would help to enhance the participants' levels of expectancy, and therefore the perceived improvement in both variables above showed that there was some probability of this assumption. To examine this probability, we need to look at the perceptions of the participants about the relationship between peer cooperation and their levels of expectancy. In this section, I consider their perceptions about this relationship, which is the subject of RQs 6a and 6b.

Referring to Table 6.5 below to answer RQs 6a and 6b, Table 6.5 shows the participants' perceptions about the relationship between peer cooperation and their levels of expectancy at the end of CL.

**Table 6.5: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in the nature of their *peer cooperation* and changes in their levels of *expectancy* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research questions 6a & 6b: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in CL are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had increased because of peer cooperation (4/19/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they could do the work more reliably and/or faster through working with their peers (Ayumi 2, Taro 4, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 2, Hiroshi 3, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…I could expect that I could do class work better than before. Because I could do the work faster and avoid misunderstanding it through working together with my team-mates." (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they had developed confidence about doing the work through working with their peers (Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "My expectancy is higher than before. Because when I worked with my team-mates, particularly when we did dictation exercises, I felt a sense of relief by seeing how much others could do or knowing that others had the same answers as mine. There were low achievers like me in my team… And when I saw that others had the same answer as mine, I felt confident of my answer… So, I became more confident about doing class work than before." (Taro)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope |

| | |
|---|---|
| | with the work because they felt superior to their team (Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…My expectancy is higher than before. (Because) I could recognise how well I could do class work by working with my team-mates… (For example,) When doing dictation exercises, I could write more than others in my group. (Through such experiences)… I became more confident (of doing class work) than before… I mean I couldn't recognise that I could do better than others if I worked alone… So, the 'team working system' worked for me in a way…" (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I understand English much better than before because my team-mates taught me many things. I couldn't even understand elementary level English at the beginning of this class. But I could ask my peers very basic things (about English) because we belonged to the same team. I couldn't ask such things before… Now, I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before… (For example) when a teacher called on me in class, I couldn't answer anything before. But now I feel I can answer a question from the teacher somehow…" (Ichiro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had remained low because of peer cooperation (1/1/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt inferior to their team (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I felt inferior to others because I had to work in a team… Hiroshi was sitting next to me and I felt his level of English was much higher than mine. And his listening ability was incredible to me. Also, when the other team-mates were discussing something together, I couldn't join them because I couldn't understand what they were talking about. So, I'm still not at all confident about doing class work and my expectancy remains low." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

As expected, most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that peer cooperation had increased their levels of expectancy at the end of CL. In other words, they felt that peer cooperation was positively related to their levels of expectancy. Examining their reason types in more detail reveals that they can be roughly divided into two kinds: students' perceptions of the *direct* and *indirect* relationships between peer cooperation and levels of expectancy. Of their four reason types, three showed the *direct* relationship and the remaining one showed the *indirect* relationship.

Of the three reason types which concern the *direct* relationship, a large majority of their quotations (13 out of 15 quotations) indicated the first reason type. In addition, the comments of all the five key participants who perceived this direct relationship showed the first reason type: *Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they could do the work more reliably and/or faster through working with their peers*. In other words, they perceived that peer cooperation increased their levels of efficiency and reliability at fulfilling class tasks, and this had improved their levels of expectancy. We can see a typical quotation to this effect in Table 6.5 above.

The other two reason types which concern the *direct* relationship share the point that participants recognised how well they could do class tasks by comparing themselves to peers doing the tasks (see also Chapter 7 about this point). As we can see in Table 6.5, the second reason type indicates that participants felt that they had developed confidence and levels of expectancy through this recognition. In the third reason type, one participant felt that this recognition generated a sense of his superiority to his team-mates and that this sense of superiority had increased his level of expectancy. In short, both reason types stress the importance of the confidence generated by this recognition. Needless to say, this confidence led to higher levels of expectancy. We can see typical quotations illustrating these reason types in Table 6.5 above.

The fourth reason type indicates a perceived *indirect* relationship in which peer cooperation increased levels of expectancy through enhanced levels of English: *Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers*. This reason type was given by only two key participants. However, considering the findings we have observed so far, we can see that this indirect relationship is supported by many more perceptions and/or quotations than the direct one is. As discussed earlier in this chapter (Section 6.3), there was a

tendency for participants to perceive that peer cooperation had increased their levels of English over the CL course. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 5, there were also tendencies in their perceptions for their enhanced levels of English to increase their levels of expectancy and that their enhanced levels of expectancy had heightened their levels of motivation. In short, these tendencies suggest that the indirect relationship was perceived by most key participants (5 out of 6).

So far, I have discussed the first category or reason types (in Table 6.5), which indicate that levels of expectancy had increased because of peer cooperation. Now, I would like to consider the other category, which shows that levels of expectancy remained low because of peer cooperation. As can be seen in Table 6.5, there is one reason type in this category: *Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt inferior to their team*. One key participant (Ken) felt this and there was only one quotation illustrating this reason type. As he put it, he felt inferior to his team-mates when working with them to complete class tasks. This experience prevented him from improving his level of expectancy. In other words, in the mind of this student, peer cooperation negatively influenced his level of expectancy. Importantly, although his perception indicates a negative effect of peer cooperation, it also suggests a positive relationship between peer cooperation and levels of expectancy in the same way as the first category does.

To summarise this section, most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of expectancy had risen because of peer cooperation. All these participants indicated two types of perceived relationship between peer cooperation and levels of expectancy, namely, *direct* and *indirect* relationships. The indirect relationship means that peer cooperation had raised their levels of expectancy through their enhanced levels of English. Needless to say, both perceived relationships are the central subjects in this study. In addition, although one key participant felt that his level of expectancy had remained low because of peer cooperation, this also meant a *direct* and *positive* relationship between the two variables, as he saw it.

In short, all the key participants felt that peer cooperation was positively related to their levels of expectancy, and they all perceived the direct relationship.

Roughly speaking, the purpose of this chapter has been to discuss the findings respecting the two focused routes to linking peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation; one route was through a combination of levels of English and expectancy, and the other was only through expectancy. The findings suggest that the participants tended to feel that the two routes had existed; most of the key participants felt that peer cooperation had increased their levels of motivation through their enhanced levels of English and expectancy and also through their enhanced levels of expectancy (Part of one route, through a combination of levels of English and expectancy, has been already discussed in Chapter 5; the findings suggest that the students tended to feel that their higher levels of English had raised their levels of motivation through their enhanced levels of expectancy).

Now, we have observed the existence of the two routes in the eyes of the students. These two routes have been the main focus of this study, and most of the research questions (RQs Sets 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and RQ 5) are associated with these two routes. In the next chapter, I consider the findings so as to answer RQ 7, which is the final research question. This question concerns other possible relationships between the four key variables. Table 6.6 below presents a summary of answers to RQs Sets 3, 4, 6 and RQ 5, which have been focused on in this chapter.

**Table 6.6 Summary of answers to RQs Set 3, Set 4, 5 and Set 6**

| |
|---|
| **RQs Set 3** |
| **3a & 3b: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning? If so, what changes do they perceive?** |
| **Answers to 3a & 3b:**<br>◆ Most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their impressions of peer cooperation had become more positive although all the key participants (6 out of 6) had negative impressions at the beginning of CL. |

- Actual changes which these participants perceived (reason types):
  - *Participants felt that they had become more cooperative because of a developing sense of belonging to their team*
  - *Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because they had good relationships with them*
  - *Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of belonging to their team*
  - *Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more bonded with their peers because they got on well with them*
  - *Participants felt that they had had more fun in class by joining discussions in their team*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers*
- All of the positive impressions pertained to closer/better relationships between team-mates, from the students' point of view.
- One key participant felt that his impression of peer cooperation had remained negative. His actual impression (reason type) was as follows:
  - *Participants felt that they had remained reluctant to ask their peers questions because they felt that peer cooperation was still individual work in reality*

  (*According to his other comments focusing on other key variables, he could not improve his interpersonal relationships in his group due to his feelings of inferiority to his team-mates and disappointment in seeking help from them. This suggests that his negative impression of peer cooperation also pertained to his interpersonal relationship with his peers, as well as the positive impressions above.)

<u>RQs Set 4</u>

**4a & 4b: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of English? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

**Answers to 4a & 4b:**

- Most key participants (5 out of 6) felt that their levels of English had risen due to peer cooperation (in other words, they felt that peer cooperation was positively linked with their levels of English).
- These perceived positive links can be divided into two areas, namely, *direct* and *indirect* links. The *direct* link indicated two types of *peer cooperation effects* in addition to better relationships between peers (see answers to 3a & 3b). One is that those who were engaged in teaching felt their levels of English had progressed, as well as those who were being taught. The other is that students felt that mutual feedback through peer cooperation promoted students' learning. Quotations supporting the perceived *direct* relationship can be summarised as follows:
  - *Participants felt that they had been able to correct their misunderstandings by teaching and helping their team-mates* (Those engaged in teaching also felt

there had been some progress in their levels of English).
    - *Participants felt that they had been able to understand many things by discussing them with team-mates* (They felt that mutual feedback through peer cooperation had promoted their learning).
    - *Participants felt that they had learned because they could ask their peers questions without any hesitation* (This may pertain to better relationships between peers).
- The *indirect* link means that, from the students' point of view, peer cooperation had raised their levels of English *through their enhanced levels of motivation*. The reason type which indicated this perception was:
    - *Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers* (*This perceived indirect relationship will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter.)
- Only one key participant felt that peer cooperation had not affected his level of English. The reason type he indicated was:
    - *Participants felt that peer cooperation had not been related to their levels of English because they couldn't understand what their peers explained when they asked questions*

RQ 5

**RQ 5: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do their actual levels of peer cooperation relate to their actual levels of English?**

**Answers to RQ 5:**

- A Wilcoxon non-parametric comparison of means was used to verify whether or not the students actually improved in terms of their levels of English and peer cooperation. A significant rise was seen in the students' scores on the structure section ($p<0.05$), the overall language test ($p<0.05$) and the peer cooperation questionnaire ($p<0.01$). However, no significant progress was found on the listening section.
- Concerning correlation coefficients, no correlation was found.

RQs Set 6

**6a & 6b: Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy? If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship?**

**Answers to 6a & 6b:**

- Most of the key participants (5 out of 6) felt that peer cooperation had raised their levels of expectancy.
- According to their perceptions, this relationship could be divided into two types, namely, *direct* and *indirect* relationships. Both kinds of relationship were perceived by most key participants (5 out of 6).

- The reason types pertaining to the perceived *direct* relationship were as follows:
  - *Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they could do the work more reliably and/or faster through working with their peers*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they had developed confidence about doing the work through working with their peers*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt superior to their team*
- The perceived *indirect* relationship denotes that peer cooperation had raised their levels of expectancy *through their enhanced levels of English*. The reason type of this relationship was:
  - *Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers*
- One key participant felt that peer cooperation had kept his level of expectancy low. This perception suggests a *direct* link between peer cooperation and levels of expectancy as well as a *positive* link between the two variables. The reason type he expressed was:
  - *Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt inferior to their team*
- This suggests that all key participants felt that peer cooperation positively and directly pertained to their levels of expectancy.

# CHAPTER 7
# FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION 3:
# OTHER POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ALL FOUR VARIABLES

## Introduction

In Chapters 5 and 6, I presented and discussed the main findings from this study, which focused on two routes connecting peer cooperation with L2 classroom motivation, as well as perceived changes in four key variables, which are related to these two routes. The two routes adopted different mediating factors. One route was through expectancy. The other was through levels of English and expectancy.

During the investigation of these two routes, we saw that the students perceived four different relationships between the key variables: between peer cooperation and levels of English, between levels of English and expectancy, between expectancy and L2 classroom motivation, and between peer cooperation and expectancy. The results from analysing the qualitative data show that the students tended to see positive relationships between all these variables. This suggests that, in the minds of these students, peer cooperation enhanced L2 classroom motivation (or expectancy) in two ways: directly and indirectly. In other words, these students believed that peer cooperation increased expectancy directly, and that peer cooperation at the same time indirectly improved expectancy through an enhanced level of English. Needless to say, expectancy is considered a crucial motivational element, and these investigations are all built of this basis. In fact, in this study most key participants[67] thought that an enhanced level of expectancy improved L2 classroom motivation, and all the key participants felt that their levels of expectancy were positively related to their levels of motivation.

[67] The term, key participants, refers to the following six students who were interviewed at the beginning and the end of CL: Ayumi, Taro, Ichiro, Tatsuya, Hiroshi and Ken. The other participants who have been involved in this study were not key participants (they took the same CL course and answered many other questionnaires and tests, but they haven't been specifically interviewed for this study).

The findings above answered most of the research questions, including RQs Sets 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6, and the single RQ 5. The important thing about these findings is that they indicate possible ways in which Dörnyei's (1997) framework for CL-generated L2 learning motivation might be extended to include a more *indirect* route from CL (peer cooperation) to motivation. As discussed in Chapter 3, his framework proposes only the *direct* relationship from peer cooperation (group support) to expectancy (motivation). Other researchers have found or proposed links between peer cooperation and levels of English, and yet others have found or proposed relationships between levels of English and expectancy as well as relationships between expectancy and motivation. The findings from my study, focusing on low level learners of English in Japan, show how all of these factors are related in a single model. A relationship which appeared to be particularly important for the students in my study was between peer cooperation and levels of English. The 'peer feedback effect' was especially important. In other words, the feedback which is created by *peer cooperation* may raise *levels of English* (because they learn from others). Attribution theory explains the rest of the indirect relationship: the perceived relationship between levels of English and expectancy (motivation) suggests that the students' attributional beliefs concerning controllability had a positive impact on their expectancy (motivation). In sum, attribution theory and the peer feedback effect explain the perceived *indirect* relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy through the levels of English. This implies that the *indirect* relationship can be added to Dörnyei's framework, alongside the direct relationship which he mentions.

Importantly, the findings also imply that peer cooperation in CL is effective in improving students' motivation through two different routes; i.e. 1) *direct* enhancement (of the levels of expectancy), which seemed to occur by the psychological relief resulting from peer support; and 2) *indirect* enhancement (of the levels of expectancy) through the higher levels of English created by peer feedback. Needless to say, this information could be useful, particularly for EFL

teachers in Japanese universities who have low achieving students. However, it may also be useful for teachers who have low achieving EFL students in general and who are interested in improving their students' motivation, as well as their levels of English.

Now, let us turn to the research question which still needs an answer: RQ 7. RQ 7 relates to other possible links, identified by the students themselves, between all the key variables (L2 classroom motivation, peer cooperation, expectancy, and levels of English). This part of the study was based on qualitative research procedures which mean that it was small scale and exploratory in nature (as discussed in Chapter 4). The procedures were consistent with other parts of the study which employed qualitative methods, except for one point: it did not focus on any preconceived ideas or theories. In other words, this part of the study aimed at drawing patterns from findings, rather than testing or assessing theories. More specifically, it aimed to reveal any relationships perceived by the participants between the key variables. Therefore, RQ 7 concerns other possible perceived links between all four variables:

RQ 7: When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?

This chapter aims at answering this question. The resulting data include findings about perceived relationships between L2 classroom motivation and levels of English (both directions) and perceived relationships between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation through mediating factors other than expectancy and/or levels of English. Needless to say, qualitative analyses were conducted in the same way as described in Chapter 5. The presentation of findings is also described in the same way as in Chapters 5 and 6.

In the following section, I describe and discuss how I obtained the data related to RQ 7 (at interviews) and how I used students' perceptions, as revealed through these interviews, to clarify the data. This also helps to show the spontaneity of the

students' comments related to RQ 7. After this, I present and discuss a number of quotations in relation to RQ 7, as follows. First, I discuss findings concerning the perceived relationships between L2 classroom motivation and levels of English, then, the findings related to the perceived relationship between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation. In the last section, I summarise this chapter and present a table of answers to RQ 7 for the sake of clarity.

## 7.1 Backgrounds of students' comments related to research question 7

It may be useful to describe how I collected the qualitative data related to RQ 7 because identifying possible links between all four variables is predictably a complicated task. Interviews were the main source of the data[68], and in this section I outline the process of the interviews. This may also help to show the *spontaneity* of the students' comments related to RQ 7.

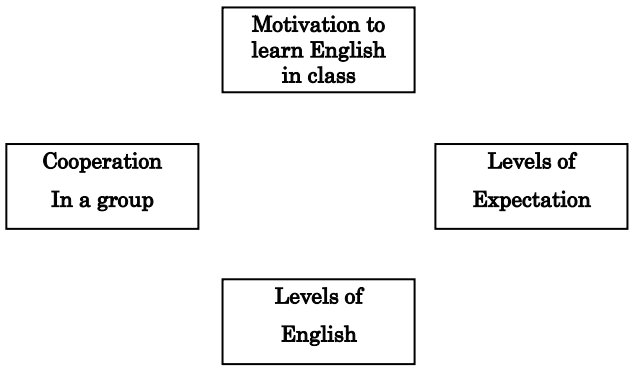
I used a diagram (see Figure 7.1 below) in the interviews at the end of CL (please note that words in the boxes of Figure 7.1 are translated from Japanese). As discussed in Chapter 4, this diagram was also used when asking (probe) questions related to the other research questions outlined in Chapters 5 and 6. There were two reasons for using this diagram. One was to avoid confusion on both sides because the variables seemed to be closely related to each other. Another was to provide the participants with a *tool*, something to help them think of possible relationships between the variables in view of the complications of the task.

The participants often drew lines between the variables when trying to describe what they saw as possible relationships between them. Interestingly, this mostly happened when they were actually answering probe questions related to *research questions other than* RQ 7. Accordingly, the comments relating to RQ 7 were generated in the process of answering these probe questions. In other words, the

[68] The other data sources, such as field notes from observation and interviews, comment sheets on the cooperation questionnaire and opinions on the diagram and the background questionnaire, were used to obtain supplementary information (see Chapter 4 for more details).

students' comments were sometimes unrelated to these questions. However, these comments were relevant to the study because they were related to RQ 7 and to relationships between the key variables. In short, the students' comments relevant to RQ 7 were highly *spontaneous* because of the way in which these comments were made.

**Figure 7.1 The diagram used for the interviews at the end of cooperative learning**




There are two possible reasons why these comments emerged in the way they did. One reason may be that the probe questions made the students think of possible relationships between variables without being explicitly asked about any particular relationships. For example, when a student (Ichiro) was asked about changes of his level of English, he answered that he felt that his overall level of English had risen. Then, in response to a probe question, "What do you think the cause of the increase is?", his answer was:

> … I got more and more motivated as I got used to working with my team-mates. And my attitude towards studying English has changed over this semester. I got much more serious about studying English in class than before. That's why I understand English a little, unlike before. So, I think that my motivation is related to my level of English. (Ichiro; this quotation is also shown in Table 7.1)

As we can see here, the probe question made him think of the relationship between motivation and levels of English although the question was not explicitly about this particular relationship[69]. The other reason could be that the students

[69] Similar things happened to the findings which were discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. However, the

were already tired of answering questions when the last question, which focused on RQ 7[70], was asked. Before asking the last question, I (as the interviewer) briefly summarised what they had already said in the interview, in particular, all the relationships they had commented on, in order to avoid any confusion or repetition on their part. Their typical response to the question was: "I don't think there are any other relationships (between these four variables)".

As the probe questions were *not* explicitly aiming at any particular relationships, the students' comments were considered to be truly spontaneous. Although a few comments were made when a question focusing on RQ 7 was asked, these were only repetitions of remarks from the students' earlier comments.

## 7.2 Relationships between L2 classroom motivation and levels of English

Even though the key participants were not explicitly asked about the relationship between motivation and levels of English, they all spontaneously provided their own views on this topic. In this section, I outline and discuss what they said about this relationship.

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 below present the participants' perceptions about this relationship at the end of CL. These perceptions included both directions of the relationship. Table 7.1 shows one direction of the relationship (how the levels of motivation affected levels of English), and Table 7.2 shows the other direction (how levels of English affected the levels of motivation).

As we can see from Table 7.1, the first category shows that three key participants commented that their levels of English had risen because their levels of motivation had been enhanced. In other words, they felt that their levels of

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frequency was not as high as in the finding in this chapter (All the findings in this chapter were basically collected in this way).

[70] A typical question on the last one was: "Could you tell me if you think there are any other possible relationships between these four variables?"

motivation were positively related to their levels of English.

**Table 7.1: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in their levels of L2 classroom *motivation* and changes in their *levels of English* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research question 7: *When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English had increased because their levels of motivation were enhanced (2/4/3)** | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English because they became more motivated** (Ichiro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I got more and more motivated as I got used to working with my team-mates. And my attitude towards studying English has changed over this semester. I got much more serious about studying English in class than before. That's why I understand English a little, unlike before. So, I think that my motivation is related to my level of English." (Ichiro)*<br><br>**Reason Type 2: Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers** (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I've been working with my team-mates in this semester, so… I'm much more motivated than before… There was only one time when I got extremely low points on a quiz… At that time… I felt guilty towards my team-mates because it was only me who got low points. Then, I got higher points on the next quiz… I think it's because I studied more than before. " (Taro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English had remained low because their levels of motivation decreased (1/2/1)** | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) had remained low because they became less motivated** (Participants felt that motivation, levels of English and expectancy had a circular connection: their low levels of expectancy decreased their levels of motivation, and these decreased levels of motivation led their levels of English to remain low, and these low levels of English had a negative influence on their levels of expectancy) (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "I think that motivation, level of English and expectancy have a circular connection. My case is the negative circular connection. My level of expectancy remains low… I know I can't do class work anyway. So, I became less motivated than before…And then my level of English is also low because I'm not motivated to study. And my expectancy can't go up because my level of English remains low. This circular connection goes on and on, I think." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).

**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.

***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.

****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other. Also, there are cases in which some quotations are related to two or more different reasons.

*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

Looking at the reason types in the first category, we can see that the two reason

types (1 & 2) exhibited a difference in terms of what the students thought was the cause for the enhanced level of motivation. In other words, in the second reason type, the students felt that their levels of motivation had risen because of *a sense of responsibility for their peers*, but in the first reason type, the student (Ichiro) did not specify a reason for his enhanced level of motivation. However, he did state that peer cooperation was somehow related to the improvement of his motivation. His comments relevant to this were: "... I got more and more motivated as I got used to working with my team-mates..." (see Table 7.1 for the rest of his comments). Importantly, when responding to a probe question regarding his level of motivation[71], he indicated that he had in fact become more motivated because of a sense of responsibility for his peers (see Appendix 10 or Table 7.3 in this chapter). In short, all three students in the first category felt a sense of team responsibility. Interestingly, this sense of responsibility seems to be strongly associated with the participants' cultural background.

Before discussing the connection between the sense of responsibility and Japanese culture, I would like to discuss what they felt about the cause of their sense of responsibility. According to their comments (including Ichiro's), they felt a sense of responsibility for their team-mates due to the team point system (or team scores) in CL (see also Chapter 6, Section 6.2). In this system, a team can earn a certain number of points when all members reach/exceed their own pre-assigned level in a quiz (see Chapter 4 for more details). Importantly, the purpose of this system is to create a situation in which each student has individual accountability, which means that each member is responsible for his/her own part of a group task. In a nutshell, in this situation, the students seemed to be forced to feel the sense of responsibility, whether they liked it or not. However, they were more likely to feel 'part of a whole'. This could be partly due to their cultural background; having the sense of shared responsibility appeared to be natural, even comfortable, for them, at least to a certain extent.

[71] Ichiro's comments presented in reason type 1 aimed to answer a probe question regarding his level of English (see Section 7.1 for more details).

Now, I would like to discuss the connection between a sense of responsibility for their peers and Japanese culture. In Japanese society as a whole, people tend to attach importance to interpersonal relationships because of the cultural values inherent in these relationships, such as harmony and cooperativeness (see e.g., Leestma et al., 1987). They usually learn these values from their parents in many occasions/places. For example, when shopping in a supermarket, we can hear mothers sharply admonishing their children, "Don't run in here! It makes things difficult for others." In these cases the mothers are trying to teach their children that they should care about others and keep rules to get along with others. Needless to say, keeping in harmony and/or cooperating with others require people to consider certain things, such as taking responsibility for completing their own part of a cooperative undertaking, keeping certain rules in their communities, caring about/for others, and so on. In other words, doing such things is significant for surviving in Japanese society. In addition, Japanese education strongly reflects the cultural priorities of the society (see Shimahara, 1992). This suggests that the participants have already learned cultural priorities in the elementary and secondary school, as well as learning from their parents.

Interestingly, non-academic activities in the Japanese school are considered to be significant in fostering students' *sense of responsibility* and *cooperativeness*. For example, in the upper secondary school, students are responsible for many non-academic activities, such as classroom management tasks (taking attendance, making announcements, etc.), cleaning the school and taking part in club activities (Johnson & Johnson, 1996). Students usually have to take turns at doing tasks or cleaning, and therefore all students are basically required to be *responsible* for such *jobs*. Furthermore, they need to *cooperate* with their class-mates when cleaning the school because they have to form small groups and do the cleaning together. Although these activities are under the teachers' supervision, students are usually in control of the activities for themselves.

When observing a school festival or a sports day, we can also see the significance of these activities in terms of promoting a *sense of responsibility* and *cooperativeness* among the students. In a school festival, students usually have to put on a show or mount an exhibition as a class, for example, singing, acting, selling refreshments, and so on. To make it succeed, they need to *cooperate* with one another. In short, in the course of these activities, they learn how to *cooperate* with others and importance of having a *sense of responsibility*. Similar activities are also required in the elementary and lower secondary school. Thus, for Japanese students, having a *sense of responsibility* for or *cooperating* with their team-mates may not be unusual at all. In fact, the participants often commented on their *sense of responsibility for their peers* when they talked about their enhanced levels of motivation and English (see e.g., Tables 7.1 & 7.3).

Importantly, this sense of responsibility for their peers, as well as being a typical feature of Japanese students, is considered to be a CL-generated motivational factor. According to Dörnyei (1997), the sense of responsibility is a typical factor generated by *group cohesion* (a cohesion-generated factor) which is a crucial component in his framework of CL-generated L2 motivation (see also Chapter 6, Section 6.2). In other words, it may have positive effects on students' motivation. This implies that CL (peer cooperation) is useful for enhancing Japanese students' level of motivation in L2 learning. To put it another way, EFL teachers, in particular those who teach in a similar Japanese context to that in the present study, should be more aware of the usefulness of CL in improving their students' motivation. In addition, considering that the participants felt that their motivation had a positive impact on their levels of English, the teachers should also be aware of its usefulness in raising their students' levels of English.

Up to this point, we have observed the first category of Table 7.1 which concerns the perceived *positive* effects of motivation on levels of English (positive category): *Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English had increased because their levels of motivation were enhanced*. Now, I would like to

look at the other category which concerns the perceived *negative* effects of motivation on levels of English (negative category). In this category, we can observe that one key participant (Ken) commented that his level of English *remained low* because his level of motivation *declined*. As discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.5 & 5.6), his statements about his level of motivation were contradictory. At the beginning of CL, he said that he was *not motivated* at all, while at the end of CL he said that his level of motivation *had declined*. Since there is no lower level of motivation than "not motivated at all", it is assumed that he probably meant to say that his level of English remained low because his level of motivation remained low. Or if there had been lower levels of motivation and English than "not motivated at all" and "I don't even know elementary level of English"[72], it is also assumed that he meant to say that his level of English had *declined* because his level of motivation *declined*. This suggests that he felt that his level of motivation was positively related to his level of English.

Now, I would like to discuss these findings (in Table 7.1) from a theoretical point of view. According to Weiner (1994), an important assumption of attribution theory is that personal attributional perception influences an individual's performance (through expectancy/motivation). In other words, students' belief in (un)controllability has an impact on their levels of English (through expectancy/motivation). This assumption could apply to the finding in Table 7.1 (the perceived effect of motivation on levels of English) by adding other findings discussed in Chapter 5: the participants felt that their *levels of English* were positively related to their levels of *expectancy*, and that their levels of *expectancy* were positively related to their levels of *motivation*. Drawing on the assumption of attribution theory, the positive case of these findings was assumed to be as follows: ascribing success (higher levels of English) to *controllable* factors (e.g., efforts) led to higher levels of English through enhanced levels of expectancy/motivation. In contrast, the negative case was assumed to be:

[72] The participant (Ken) commented at the beginning of CL that he did not even know an elementary level of English (see Chapter 5, Table 5.2 and Appendix 9 for this).

ascribing failure (low level of English) to *uncontrollable* factors (e.g., lack of ability) led to (remaining) low levels of English through reduced levels of expectancy/motivation. As we can see, this is considered a circular connection between these three variables (levels of English, expectancy and motivation). This suggests that the finding in Table 7.1 (perceived effect of motivation on levels of English) can be regarded as part of this circular connection, supporting attribution theory. In fact, Ken commented on this circular connection in his words (see his quotation in the second category in Table 7.1). The role for the teacher is to find a way to break into this cycle – to work out the point at which this will be easiest to do. By good clear teaching, the student might change the level of English; but it is also worth thinking about ways in which the teacher can raise the level of the students' expectancy/motivation. One way to do this might be to encourage peer cooperation (in CL), by, for example, making good use of team scores. In my study, this was found to be an effective way to improve students' motivation (see above). In addition, peer cooperation with team scores, as well as the cycle discussed above, appears not to be a distinctively context-specific methodology/theory, according to findings in the fields of education and/or educational psychology (see Chapters 2 & 3 for more details). Taking account of this, the approach is well worth consideration by other teachers working in other contexts.

Apart from team scores, there was another methodological strength of CL in this study ('Student Teams Achievement Divisions' - see Chapter 4) which could break into the cycle, for low achievers in particular. This was the system, called individual improvement scores, which provided students with the individual performance goal which they could reach if they did their best (see Chapter 4 for more details). These goals were based on each participant's level of English and/or scores on quizzes in the CL course. In this system, the students appeared to be able to believe in controllability. In other words, they knew that they could improve their levels of English by their own efforts (or that their levels of English were *controllable*). Similar to team scores, this system may not be a distinctively

context-specific procedure (and it is also a combinational system, with team scores). Therefore, teachers working in other contexts, as well as those who deal with low achievers, might find this system useful if they are interested in improving their students' levels of expectancy and/or motivation. Although it might also work as a standalone procedure, at least to some extent, it may be better with peer cooperation and team scores, because each procedure may have its own characteristics, including individual strengths and weaknesses.

At this point, I would like to discuss the importance of the belief in controllability among these participants, who were low achieving EFL students in a university in Japan. Many of the participants had had unpleasant experiences in the past which could have created a belief in uncontrollability or *learned helplessness*s (see Chapter 2 for more details). According to Miller and Seligman (1974 cited in Seligman, 1975), *learned helplessness*, which can be generated by experience with uncontrollability, has a negative impact on expectancy and on belief in the causality of success and failure (a concept basically the same as attribution theory). In short, creating the opposite belief, the belief in controllability, appeared to be essential to improve the students' motivation because *learned helplessness* could form a potent obstacle due to unpleasant experiences in the past.

To summarise the theoretical point of view discussed above, the finding that motivation was perceived to have a positive effect on the students' levels of English includes the suggestion that there were two different causes for the level of motivation being enhanced. One was a sense of responsibility for their peers (peer cooperation), which is a cohesion-generated motivational factor. The other was a belief in controllability. Both appeared to be closely related to the students' background, which concerned their culture and education. This suggests that teachers should pay more attention to their students' background if they are interested in more effective teaching. Teachers in particular who have low achieving students should try to learn the reason why their students are low

achievers, in the light of their cultural and educational background. Such students may have levels of 'psychological damage' which are similar to those of the students in the present study.

So far, I have presented and discussed the perceived effect of *motivation* on *level of English*, including certain related matters. In the following, I consider the students' spontaneous comments about the other direction of the relationship: the perceived effect of *level of English* on *motivation*. Table 7.2 below presents this direction of the relationship which the students themselves identified.

**Table 7.2: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in their *levels of English* and changes in their levels of L2 classroom *motivation* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research question 7: *When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had increased because their levels of English were enhanced (3/7/4)** | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English** (Ichiro 1, Taro 1)*<br>Example quotation: *"I'm motivated to do class work on my own now (unlike before), because I understand English unlike before (when compared with the beginning of this class)." (Ichiro)*<br><br>**Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because their listening ability improved** (Ichiro 1)*<br>Example quotation: *"... I became able to understand what people said (in English) unlike before... I improved a bit... Before this semester I didn't even try to listen to English because I couldn't understand anything. But now I don't give up listening to English... At the beginning of this semester, I wasn't motivated at all but my motivation has definitely changed... I'm motivated, unlike before..." (Ichiro)*<br><br>**Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English through cooperating with their peers** (Hiroshi 2, Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1)*<br>Example quotation: *"In the last semester I mostly worked alone in (English) class, so there were many things I didn't understand (in class). I used to think 'I'm in an awkward situation'... But throughout this semester I've realised I can understand many things (about English unlike before) through discussing them with team-mates... So, I think I'm more motivated than before... " (Hiroshi)* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation fluctuated because their levels of English fluctuated (1/1/1)** | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they became less motivated when they couldn't understand the work but became more motivated when they could** (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…When I didn't understand something in a row (in class), my motivation went down… But when I could complete some class work myself, my motivation went up…" (Ken)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased because their levels of English remained low (1/1/1)** | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they couldn't understand many things in class** (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "My overall motivation decreased a bit lower than before… Because there were many things I couldn't understand in class." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other. Also, there are cases in which some quotations are related to two or more different reasons.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

Looking at reason types in the first category in Table 7.2, we can easily see similarities and differences between them. However, we need to look closely at the students' (typical) comments to understand an important similarity: a belief in controllability. One participant (Ichiro) was relevant to two reason types in the first category. To clarify the probability that he had learned to believe in controllability, it may be helpful to learn something of his background.

At the beginning of CL, compared with other students, Ichiro seemed to have a strong negative attitude to studying English, as well as a serious feeling of inferiority to other students. His comments about his level of motivation at the

beginning of CL were: "…I don't like studying English because I know I can't understand or do anything in English class." (This quotation was also shown in Chapter 5). In addition, he talked about his feelings of inferiority to other students, particularly concerning his level of English. From his point of view, this complex resulted from the English lessons he had received in upper secondary school and the level of the school from which he graduated. The outline of his story was as follows: he came from an upper secondary school which could be regarded as a low achieving school. In the school, most students obtained employment immediately after graduation, so they were not motivated to study, in particular in the English class. According to Ichiro, the teacher was also apparently reluctant to teach, and his lessons appeared to be largely unprepared. A typical lesson was to play his favourite English songs on a CD player for a whole class period, but not provide any activities or exercises related to the songs. Ichiro and his friends complained about this because they wanted to study English, but the situation remained the same until their graduation. He thought that this greatly affected the level of his English.

Now, let us revert to the reason types in the first category in order to clarify the similar belief in controllability which they all exhibit. In the first reason type, Ichiro said, "I'm motivated to do class work on my own now (unlike before), because I understand English unlike before". Considering his background and comments, at the beginning of CL he seemed to be unwilling to study English because he thought his level of English was too low to understand and/or complete any class work. In other words, he thought that studying English or making an effort was useless because he felt that it would never improve the level of his English. However, his comments above (at the end of CL) suggest that he learned somehow during the course of this study, that his effort could improve his English. Otherwise, his autonomous attitude towards class work seems to be difficult to explain. In short, he had become much more likely to believe that his level of English was *controllable* by his effort (or by doing class work).

In the second reason type, the same participant (Ichiro) said, "...Before this semester I didn't even try to listen to English because I couldn't understand anything. But now I don't give up listening to English…". In this statement, he specifically talked about his ability to understand what he listened to in English. However, his intention seems to be the same as that in the first reason type. In short, this quotation implies that he believed that he could *control* how much spoken English he could understand by the degree of effort he made. In the third reason type, another participant (Hiroshi) typically said, "...there were many things I didn't understand (in class). I used to think 'I'm in an awkward situation'…But throughout this semester I've realised I can understand many things through discussing them with team-mates…" Unlike the quotations in the first and second reason types, this quotation clearly indicated that he had realised that he could *control* his level of English through his own individual effort (or by discussing things with team-mates).

Here, it may be useful to discuss two interesting points related to this perceived belief in controllability. One is the absence from the students' comments of expectancy. The other is the power of the peer feedback effect, which appeared to develop the student's beliefs in controllability. Needless to say, the absence of expectancy can be easily understood because expectancy is part of the cycle on the basis of attribution theory. However, there is one more possible reason. It is that, as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2), the students' levels of English could be used as a way of judging their levels of *expectancy* because it is very difficult to recognise our level of expectancy without knowing our own levels of English. In other words, recognising their own levels of English and having high levels of expectancy should go hand in hand. In a nutshell, the students could easily forget the existence of expectancy due to its natural coexistence with perceived levels of English. Importantly, taking account of this absence, the finding (in Table 7.2), which mainly concerned the perceived effect of levels of English on motivation, reflects the finding discussed in Chapter 5 (i.e., the students felt that their higher levels of English had had a positive impact on their levels of expectancy and

motivation).

Regarding the peer feedback effect, apart from the effect on levels of English discussed in Chapter 3, there seems to have been an interesting effect on the students' attributional beliefs. All the participants in this study were low achieving EFL students according to their scores on the English language test which was given at the beginning of the CL course (see Chapter 4 for more details). In addition, they had to cooperate with their team-mates (peer cooperation) during the study. In this situation, they might see other students learning and struggling as they did. They were sharing this experience with their classmates. Importantly, they might also see that others improved their levels of English by making an effort. This might have led them to think that they could do as well as their classmates by making an effort likewise. In other words, they might think that they could *control* their levels of English through their own efforts, even though they might at times ask their team-mates for help. This can be considered as a context-specific peer feedback effect which occurred when the students saw each other's learning processes and improvements at first hand. In short, this contextual peer feedback seemed to develop the students' beliefs in controllability, at least to some extent.

Interestingly, there was a quotation relevant to this peer feedback (this quotation was also shown in Table 6.5 and was briefly described in Chapter 6, Section 6.6 to clarify that two reason types in the table share the point that comparing themselves to peers led students to higher levels of expectancy):

> "...when I worked with my team-mates, particularly when we did dictation exercises, I felt a sense of relief by seeing how much others could do or knowing that others had the same answers as mine. There were low achievers like me in my team… And when I saw that others had the same answer as mine, I felt confident of my answer… So, I became more confident about doing class work than before." (Taro)

In sum, he felt a sense of relief by seeing what others were doing in class work,

and also felt that this sense of relief helped to raise his level of expectancy. This might strengthen the view above regarding the existence of the contextual peer feedback effect on the students' belief in controllability. Importantly, this suggests that homogeneous groups in terms of their levels of English, particularly low achievers, may work particularly well in developing their members' beliefs in controllability, which leads to a rise in their levels of expectancy (and motivation).

Interestingly, this finding ties in neatly with Murphey's (1998) 'near peer role models' and also with the phenomena found in Romney's (1997) study which were discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.5). Murphey found that when Japanese students observe other students who are like them performing well in English it raises their levels of motivation and strengthens their belief in their own ability.

So far, I have discussed the first category in Table 7.2. Now, I would like to discuss the second and third categories. One key participant (Ken) made unique statements about the relationship between the two variables. He commented that he became less motivated when he couldn't understand class work but became more motivated when he could. He also commented that his overall level of motivation had declined because he couldn't understand many things in class. In short, he perceived that, although his level of motivation fluctuated according to his level of English, his overall level of motivation had declined because his level of English remained low.

However, as discussed earlier in this section, this participant (Ken) in particular made contradictory statements about his level of motivation (at the beginning of CL, he said that he was not motivated at all, and at the end of CL he said that he became less motivated). In addition, he also commented at the beginning of CL that his level of English was low because he didn't even know elementary level English. Considering these comments, he seemed to imply that his level of motivation remained low because his level of English remained low. Or if there had been lower levels of motivation and English than *not motivated at all* and

*didn't even know elementary level English*, he probably would have said that he became even less motivated because his level of English had declined.

From a theoretical point of view, his perceptions above seemed to be related also to his attributional beliefs. Looking at the perceived fluctuant levels of English and motivation, he appeared to have both positive and negative beliefs (e.g., his beliefs in controllability and uncontrollability), depending on his perceived level of English. However, in the mind of this student, his belief in controllability seems to have been unstable and weak, and his overall attributional belief at the end of the CL course eventually turned to be negative. Intriguingly, this appeared to be partly related to his characteristics, apart from learned helplessness, which resulted from his unpleasant experience in the past.

To clarify the possible causes of his continuing belief in uncontrollability, I would like to discuss his characteristics, as well as his background, comparing them with those of another participant (Ichiro). Ken seemed to have had a relatively similar background and sense of inferiority to Ichiro's. According to Ken, his feeling of inferiority came from his unpleasant experience with an EFL teacher in lower secondary school. The outline of his story is as follows: According to Ken, his teacher had cared only about the high achieving students in class, and low achievers like him had been totally ignored (see Section 7.3 for more details). In addition to this, there was an incident which had infuriated him with the teacher and made him decide not to study English at all. As we saw in Chapter 1, when he asked a question about assigned exercises in class, the teacher answered sharply, "I knew someone like you would never be able to answer questions." From this point, he had stopped studying English and consequently he had begun to feel more inferior to other students than before (other comments by him are shown in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1). This shows how a one-off comment by a teacher can have a profound and long-lasting effect on a student's self-esteem and subsequent ability to understand the subject of the class.

As we can see here, both of these students had had a particular teacher whom they identified as the main cause of their low levels of English and they both had a feeling of inferiority to other students. In addition, their feelings of inferiority seemed to be noticeably strong, compared with those of the other key participants'. In contrast to these similarities, their other characteristics appeared to be very different in terms of their interpersonal relationships, in particular with other students. Ichiro appeared at least in class to be the more extravert of the two and more willing to join in class activities. Ken, in contrast appeared to be more introverted and claimed to dislike group learning throughout whole period of the study. He spoke only to one member of the group for the whole of the semester and appeared to have difficulties in communicating with other members of the group. Comments below from these two students concerning peer cooperation at the end of the course serve to illustrate these differences in their personalities (these quotations were also used in Chapter 6, Section 6.2, but they for a different purpose: to describe how the development of interpersonal relationships with peers influenced their perceived changes in peer cooperation).

> "I asked my peers questions a little… But I still felt reluctant to ask them questions… Because I thought that working with team-mates was meaningless. Although my team-mates worked together, it was only on the surface. I mean that 'in reality' they worked 'individually', not together. I saw that they memorised English words or key sentences outside the class. That's individual work, I think… " (Ken)

> "It (how I cooperated with my peers) changed! …it was much easier to communicate with the peers all around me because we belonged to the same team… When I asked them questions, they answered me respectfully… There were no high achieving students in our team who could understand English very well. So, we sometimes had to ask the teacher (questions) or think together by using dictionaries… I had team-mates who could teach me. And I sometimes taught them, unlike before… Because we had such a (class) environment…I was a lot more cooperative (to my peers than at the beginning of this semester)…" (Ichiro)

As we can see here, from Ken's point of view, his reluctance to ask his team-mates

questions did not result from his introverted personality. However, taking account of his typical behaviour in class, his personality appeared to be a possible cause of this reluctance, as well as his continuing belief in uncontrollability. In other words, it may have inhibited the peer feedback effect discussed earlier in this section and this could have encouraged his negative beliefs, instead of creating a belief in controllability.

Importantly, we have no way of knowing whether differences such as these are innate characteristics, or whether they are a consequence of previous learning experiences and life experiences more generally; they are probably a mixture of all three. What we do know is that as teachers we have to accept them and deal with the effects of them on students' learning and levels of motivation.

In this section, I have discussed the finding which mainly concerns the perceived relationship between motivation and level of English (in both directions), alongside related matters. In the next section, I consider spontaneously produced comments about the relationship between peer cooperation and motivation, which was mediated by factors other than expectancy and/or level of English.

## 7.3 Relationships between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation mediated by factors other than expectancy and/or level of English

As mentioned in the introduction, the participants' perceptions about the relationship between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation mediated by *expectancy* and/or *levels of English* have been presented and discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. In this section, I address their perceptions about the relationship mediated by factors other than these two variables.

Analysing the students' comments closely, this perceived relationship seemed to be mediated by the factors (and/or related factors) discussed in Chapter 3, such as *group cohesion* or *status ordering*. These perceived mediating factors can be

explained by Dörnyei's (1997) framework of CL-generated L2 learning motivation (*group cohesion*) and Cohen's (1994) view concerning problems which typically occur in CL groups (*status ordering*). This suggests the importance of *group cohesion* and *status ordering* in a similar Japanese context to that in this study. Significantly, the findings (presented in this section) appeared to indicate the importance of *cohesion-generated factors*, that is, the factors generated by group cohesion. These factors include *a sense of responsibility for their peers* and *having more fun in class* (enjoyment). In other words, the participants stressed these factors, which had a *direct* impact on their motivation, more than they stressed group cohesion. This suggests that Dörnyei's framework could be partly extended in the area of *cohesion-generated* factors. In the following, I will discuss these points in more detail, along with the perceived relationship between peer cooperation and motivation (mediated by the factors discussed above).

Table 7.3 below presents the participants' perceptions about the relationship mediated by factors other than expectancy and/or level of English. These perceived mediating factors included having more fun in class (or a *cohesion-generated factor*), a sense of responsibility for their peers (or a *cohesion-generated factor*) and a feeling of inferiority to team-mates (or *status ordering*). These three perceived factors can be explained by a CL-related motivational component (*group cohesion*) and a problem (*status ordering*), which were discussed in Chapter 3.

**Table 7.3: Reasons expressed by participants for the relationships they perceived between changes in the nature of their *peer cooperation* and changes in their levels of L2 classroom *motivation* during the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)**

Research question 7: *When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers** (Ayumi 5, Ichiro 2, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… my team-mates praised me (for what I did in class)… saying things like 'You made it!'… Such words (from team-mates) generated… 'cohesion' (within our team) and we got closer to each other within our team and then the class got more fun. Having more fun in class made me motivated.* |

| | |
|---|---|
| increased because of peer cooperation (3/22/6)** | *'Having fun'… never ends. I've been motivated more and more by having fun…" (Ayumi)*<br><br>**Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers** (Taro 2, Ayumi 2, Tatsuya 4, Ichiro 1, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I had been working alone (in English classes) last semester, so I hadn't cared about my mark so much although I had been motivated to some extent. Because even if my mark got worse, it hadn't influenced the marks of others… But this semester there was the 'team points system' (in this class)… It (the team points system) made me concerned about my marks a bit more… I felt like all my team-mates would go down if I did something wrong… (So,) I was trying to study in this class more than before… I think I had been just sitting in the classroom last semester… But this semester I sometimes felt I was taking part in the class… I was trying to make an effort (to study)… At the beginning of this semester, I didn't realise I would be like this…" (Taro)*<br><br>**Reason Type 3: Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers** (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I've been working with my team-mates in this semester, so… I'm much more motivated than before… There was only one time when I got extremely low points on a quiz… At that time… I felt guilty towards my team-mates because it was only me who got low points. Then, I got higher points on the next quiz… I think it's because I studied more than before." (Taro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased because of peer cooperation (1/1/1)** | **Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt inferior to their team** (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "My motivation at present is lower than before… because… I felt like all other team-mates understood English (except me)… I felt this on many occasions… (For example,) when there was a discussion (about class work) in our team, all the other team-mates discussed it a lot with each other. But I didn't even understand what was going on… I think that all the team members should be at the same achievement level. Otherwise, low achievers like me become less motivated…" (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other. Also, there are cases in which some quotations are related to two or more different reasons.
*****Findings about the relationship mediated by expectancy and/or level of English are excluded from this table.
******(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

The perceived mediating factors which were generated by peer cooperation (cooperation-generated) can be roughly divided into two types which are

consistent with the categories in Table 7.3. In one type, the factors made a *positive* impact on the students' levels of motivation: *Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had increased because of peer cooperation*. In the other, the factors made a *negative* impact on their levels of motivation: *Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased because of peer cooperation*.

The former category (positive) involved five key participants[73]. Considering the spontaneity of their comments as discussed in 7.1, their perceptions about the mediating factors above, as well as those about the relationship between peer cooperation and motivation, were relatively strong. This suggests, from the students' point of view, that peer cooperation was positively related to their levels of motivation through the cooperation-generated mediating factors.

Interestingly, all three reason types in this category indicated *group cohesion* and/or *cohesion-generated factors* as their perceived mediating factor. A closer look at these three reason types reveals that they do not directly indicate *group cohesion* and/or *cohesion-generated factors* as perceived mediating factors for their enhanced levels of motivation. However, all of them are related to group cohesion. To clarify why these are related to it, I should first briefly describe group cohesion. According to Dörnyei (1997; see Chapter 3 for more details), in CL the learning process can be *enjoyable* because team-mates have positive relationships with each other (group cohesion), and this *enjoyment* or *fun* improves students' motivation. In addition, *a sense of responsibility for their peers* is also a typical element generated by group cohesion, implying that this element has a positive impact on students' motivation (ibid.). In short, *enjoyment* (or fun) and *a sense of responsibility for their peers* are *cohesion-generated* factors to enhance students' levels of motivation.

[73] The names of the key participants were Ayumi, Taro, Ichiro, Tatsuya, Hiroshi and Ken. The other participants shown in tables (e.g., Yuji in Table 7.3) were not key participants (they took the same CL course and answered many other questionnaires and tests, but they were not specifically interviewed for this study).

Now, I would like to look at each reason type in the former category more closely, in order to clarify how each of the three reason types was related to group cohesion. In the first reason type, the participants commented that they had more *fun* in class because they got on well with their team-mates (group cohesion), and this led to an increase in their levels of motivation. In other words, in the minds of the students, group cohesion created *enjoyment* in class (cohesion-generated factor), and this *enjoyment* enhanced their levels of motivation. Both the second and third reason types involved the same perceived mediating factor for their enhanced levels of motivation: *a sense of responsibility for their peers*. As discussed earlier, this sense of responsibility is also considered to be a typical cohesion-generated factor. Typical quotations illustrating these reason types are shown in Table 7.3. In short, from the students' point of view, group cohesion and the two cohesion-generated factors intervened between peer cooperation and motivation, enhancing the level of motivation. In addition, these findings also suggest that the students felt that peer cooperation was positively related to their level of motivation through group cohesion and the two cohesion-generated factors (*enjoyment* and *a sense of responsibility for their peers*).

As we can see from this, these findings partly support Dörnyei's (1997) framework of CL-generated L2 motivation, in terms of the importance of group cohesion for enhancing students' levels of motivation, in particular in a similar context to that in this study. This implies that EFL teachers, above all those who teach in a similar context to that in the present study, should be more aware of the importance of group cohesion and cohesion-generated factors for enhancing the levels of motivation in their students.

Interestingly, there is one more thing to say about these findings. As they show, the students felt that group cohesion had raised their levels of motivation only through cohesion-generated factors, such as having fun in class and/or having a sense of responsibility for their peers. This suggests that Dörnyei's framework could be partly extended to include the view that group cohesion may not directly

improve motivation, at least in some cases. Although Dörnyei proposes that group cohesion increases motivation through cohesion-generated factors, he does not explicitly indicate whether or not group cohesion directly improves motivation. This extension could be important when we explore possible routes from group cohesion to motivation.

This finding could be useful for teachers who are interested in such routes. Needless to say, group cohesion is considered to be one of the most important motivational factors in CL-generated L2 learning motivation.

In association with the importance of the cohesion-generated factors, there are two implications for researchers who are interested in group cohesion/cohesion-generated factors. One is that, when investigating group cohesion in CL, we should pay more attention to cohesion-generated factors rather than to group cohesion itself, particularly in similar contexts to that of this study. This is because at the interview the students stressed the cohesion-generated factors rather than group cohesion itself when commenting on causes for their higher/lower levels of motivation. The other is that there may be other cohesion-generated factors to influence motivation, because there are countless varieties of context and individuals, including cultural influence, which can create group cohesion. In fact, Dörnyei (1997: 485) claims that "many group-related phenomena" can be explained by group cohesion. This suggests that it might be interesting to investigate such cohesion-generated factors, because these factors could be a major clue to finding which cohesion-generated factors are more influential in motivating certain students. To put it another way, students who have similar backgrounds and are in a similar context may have similar tendencies concerning the influential cohesion-generated factors which motivate them most strongly. For example, Japanese students in a university in Japan might feel that combination of *having a sense of responsibility for their peers* and *having fun with their peers* is more influential than other cohesion-generated factors. The reason for this, as discussed in Section 7.2, is that this sense of

responsibility could be a typical feature of Japanese students, due to their cultural background, which is closely connected with their education in the past. In short, this kind of information may be useful when EFL teachers seek to enhance the level of motivation (and thus achievement) in their students. It leads teachers to consider how they can create situations which produce more effective cohesion-generated factors by which to motivate their students in CL.

So far, I have discussed the former (positive) category, which concerns the perceived *positive* effect of peer cooperation on motivation through mediating factors (*Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had increased because of peer cooperation*). In the following, I would like to consider the latter (negative) category, which concerns the perceived *negative* effect of peer cooperation on motivation through mediating factors (*Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased because of peer cooperation*).

As we can see from Table 7.3, there was only one key participant (Ken) whose comments belong to this category. However, considering the spontaneity of participants' comments as discussed in Section 7.1, his perceptions about the mediating factor, as well as about the relationship between peer cooperation and motivation, appeared to be relatively strong. In short, the finding in this category suggests that, from his point of view, peer cooperation was positively related to his level of motivation through the mediating factor.

Here, I suggest looking at his reason type more closely to clarify what the mediating factor is. There was only one reason type in this category: *Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt inferior to their team*. His comments suggest that he felt inferior to his team-mates on many occasions, in particular because he could not even understand what was going on when other team-mates were discussing something with each other. This means that he felt that peer cooperation had a negative impact on his level of motivation, due to his

feeling of inferiority. In other words, from his point of view, the cooperation-generated mediating factor was his feeling of inferiority.

This feeling can be explained by a concept, called *status ordering*, as discussed in Chapter 3. According to Cohen (1994: 27), small student groups which are required to do tasks have a tendency to create hierarchies or *status ordering* in which students themselves identify some members as being more capable and having done more work than others. Importantly, learners who feel that they are noticeably less capable in the group may "sit back and play a very passive role, learning little from the experience" of doing the required tasks (ibid: 29). Moreover, Cohen (ibid: 28) claims that the "very same problem occurs in groups of students who have been well-prepared for cooperative learning". In short, a student who feels inferior to his/her team-mates can be demotivated and this appears to have happened to one of the participants (Ken) in this study.

In his case, he felt that he was inferior to all the other team members (*status ordering*). This sense of inferiority, from his point of view, led him to a reduced level of motivation at the end of CL. Importantly, as discussed in Chapters 1, 3 and Section 7.2 in this chapter, it seemed that he had experienced the feeling since his secondary school years. In relation to the earlier discussion, in the background questionnaire[74] (at the beginning of CL), he answered that his level of expectancy had declined during the second semester of his first year in lower secondary school (and had never risen since then). In addition, he commented on the reason for this reduced level of expectancy (his other comments, which indicate his low level of expectancy from secondary school, are shown in Chapter 1, Section 1.2.1):

> (Because)...The teacher (in my English class) has always focused on high-achieving students, and low-achieving students (like me) have totally been ignored by the teacher...

[74] The background questionnaire asked about participants' experiences of their EFL lessons in secondary school (see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.7 for more details).

In sum, he had indeed had unpleasant experiences in the past. In other words, he had had this sense of inferiority about his level of English since secondary school, and this sense could be a cause for his developing a sense of inferiority to his team-mates in the CL course, at least to some extent.

Here, it is useful to consider his contradictory statements about his level of motivation because motivation is one of the key elements in his reason type in the latter category (in Table 7.3). As discussed in Chapter 5 (Sections 5.5 & 5.6) and earlier in this chapter (Section 7.2), he made contradictory statements (that is, at the beginning of CL he said that he was *not motivated* at all, while at the end of CL he said that his level of motivation had *declined*). However, these contradictory statements do not modify the understanding of the core of his perceptions about changes in his level of motivation. In other words, regardless of his contradictory statements above, it is clear that he perceived his level of motivation as being *negatively influenced* by some factors. Interestingly, this perception was consistent in all of the comments he made related to his level of motivation.

Considering this, the contradiction about his comments above is not very important in understanding his perceptions about his level of motivation. Thus, his reason type in the latter category (in Table 7.3: *Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt inferior to their team*) can be understood as follows. From his point of view, his sense of inferiority (to his team-mates) had a negative influence on his level of motivation. In other words, he felt that peer cooperation was positively related to his level of motivation through his sense of inferiority to his team-mates.

There are implications from the latter category in Table 7.3. One is that Ken's sense of inferiority resulting from *status ordering* could be typical of the Japanese setting, in particular for low-achieving EFL students. Their unpleasant experiences in a typical English class at secondary school seem to lead them to

develop a sense of inferiority (as discussed earlier in this section). In other words, it might happen to many students who have a similar background and study in a context similar to that of this study. In addition, Ken's case supports Cohen's (1994) view of *status ordering* that it may at least to some extent cause demotivation among students who feel inferior to other students.

Now, I turn to discuss two more interesting points which seemed to indicate connections between this finding and the participants' cultural background. One is that the participants seemed to have a tendency to feel the two cohesion-generated factors *together*: a sense of responsibility for their peers and enjoyment (or having fun in class). The other is that status ordering appeared to also create a positive feeling among their peers, as well as the negative one in Ken's case: a sense of superiority to their peers. The coexistence of the two cohesion-generated factors appeared to be connected with the participants' cultural background. As discussed in Section 7.2 in this chapter, for Japanese students, having *a sense of responsibility for their peers* is at least to some extent a natural part of the learning process, because they have been educated to take such responsibility due to the cultural priorities in Japan, such as harmony and cooperativeness (or 'being part of a whole'). Accordingly, having a sense of shared responsibility appeared to be natural, even comfortable, for these students. This suggests that *the sense of responsibility* seemed to provide a condition for creating their *enjoyment* in class; these two cohesion-generated factors may tend to occur together or coexist in the context in this study.

Looking at the case studies in this study, all the key participants except Ken seemed from their own point of view to have had fun in class and a sense of responsibility during the course (see Tables 7.3 & Appendix 11 for more details). Among them, only Taro did not directly say that he had had fun in class. However, he indicated that he felt joy or a pleasing sense of fulfilment in class through working with his team-mates, in the following statement (see Table 7.3 for the rest of his quotation):

> …I think I had been just sitting in the classroom in the last semester… But in this semester I sometimes felt I was taking part in the class… I was trying to make an effort (to study)… At the beginning of this semester, I didn't realise I'd be like this… (Taro)

This suggests that he had enjoyed working with his team-mates, along with having had a sense of responsibility for his peers during the course. In short, these findings support the view that the two cohesion-generated factors coexist in similar contexts to that in this study.

Regarding status ordering, earlier in this section we observed the negative case in one finding; the participant (Ken) felt that his sense of inferiority to his peers had lowered his level of motivation. In other words, he felt that peer cooperation had reduced his level of motivation through his sense of inferiority to his peers. Cohen (1994), who introduces the concept of status ordering, emphasises only its negative effect, which typically occurs in CL. However, another participant (Hiroshi) felt its positive effect; He felt that his level of expectancy had risen because he felt superior to his peers (see Chapter 6, Table 6.5 for more details). In other words, he felt that peer cooperation had increased his level of expectancy through his feeling of superiority to his peers. This case suggests that Cohen's view of status ordering could be extended to include its positive effect on students' levels of expectancy and motivation (through their feelings of superiority). As Hiroshi commented, (this quotation was also shown in Table 6.5 and was briefly described in Chapter 6, Section 6.6 to clarify that two reason types in the table share the point that comparing themselves to their peers led to higher levels of expectancy among students).

> …My expectancy is higher than before. (Because) I could recognise how well I could do class work by working with my team-mates… (For example,) When doing dictation exercises, I could write more than others in my group. (Through such experiences)… I became more confident (of doing class work) than before… I mean I couldn't recognise that I could do better than others if I worked alone… So, the 'team working system'

worked for me in a way… (Hiroshi)

Apart from the concept of status ordering, this case seems to relate to a typical feature of CL: the supportive classroom environment. As discussed in Chapter 3, CL may contribute to a supportive classroom context. The reason for this is that students typically have less anxiety and stress (than in other class structures) because they do not have to compete with others and can enjoy peer acceptance and support, which subsequently results in a higher perception of self-efficacy or expectancy (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998). Importantly, as mentioned in Chapter 2, high levels of anxiety prevent learners from displaying what they are capable of (Ehrman, 1996). In this participant's (i.e., Hiroshi's) case, he is likely to have been relatively anxiety-free due to peer acceptance and support (peer cooperation), and this seems to have enabled him to display his ability and recognise how well he could do in his class work.

This suggests that peer cooperation may reduce students' levels of anxiety, as well as raising their levels of expectancy and motivation, in particular when the contexts is similar to that in this study. According to Takahashi (2004), many EFL learners in Japanese universities, low achievers in particular, experience high levels of debilitating anxiety compared with students in other contexts. This debilitating anxiety results from 'entrance exam-oriented EFL instruction' in secondary schools (ibid. - see Chapter 1 for the exam-oriented instruction). Although the positive effect of peer cooperation may not be particularly context-specific, it may be more effective for low achieving EFL students because they are likely to have higher levels of anxiety than higher achievers. Needless to say, EFL teachers who deal with low achievers would do well to attend to the effectiveness of peer cooperation if they are interested in improving their students' levels of motivation.

The purpose of this chapter has been to present and discuss relevant findings with the aim of answering research question 7, which was the last question to be

answered. Table 7.4 below presents a summary of answers to RQ 7 and their implications. In the next, concluding, chapter, I will discuss some implications of the findings in this study. I will also discuss the limitations of the study and suggestions concerning possible areas of future research.

**Table 7.4 Summary of answers to research question 7 and their implications**

RQ 7

**When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive?**

**Answers to RQ 7:**

- The possible relationships which are perceived can be divided into two kinds: relationships between L2 classroom motivation and level of English (in both directions), and between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation through mediating factors. The former can be further divided into two types on the basis of the direction (from motivation to levels of English and from levels of English to motivation). Accordingly, the perceived possible relationships can be divided into three types, and they are separately summarised below.

Between motivation and levels of English: (from motivation to levels of English: shown in Table 7.1)

- Three key participants felt that their levels of English had risen because their levels of motivation had increased. Their reason types were as follows (positive cases):
  - *Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English because they became more motivated*
  - *Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers*
- One key participant felt that his level of English had remained low because his level of motivation had gone down. His reason type was as follows (negative cases):
  - *Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) had remained low because they became less motivated*
- These findings suggest that four key participants perceived that their levels of motivation positively pertained to their levels of English.

Main implications of these findings:

- In the eyes of the students, their *sense of responsibility for their peers* came from 'team scores' in CL (see Chapter 4 for details of 'team scores'). However, the sense of responsibility appeared to have a close connection with the participants' cultural backgrounds.

- In Japanese schools, students usually learn their cultural values or priorities, such as *harmony* and *cooperativeness* (see e.g., Leestma et al., 1987), as well as from their parents. In particular, 'taking responsibility for completing one's own part' is treated as an important component for Japanese students to learn in state academic schools, such as elementary and secondary schools (see e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1996). In other words, it is a required attitude to maintain *harmony*. For this reason, Japanese students may not feel uncomfortable in taking responsibility for or cooperating with their team-mates. In fact, the participants frequently commented on their sense of responsibility for their peers, as well as their enjoyment in class, when referring to their higher levels of motivation and/or English (see e.g., Tables 7.1 & 7.3).
- This sense of responsibility is a cohesion-generated factor in Dörnyei's (1997) framework for CL-generated L2 learning motivation, as well as being a typical feature of Japanese students. In other words, it is a CL-generated motivational factor that Japanese students may feel comfortable with. This implies that peer cooperation in CL is effective in improving Japanese students' motivation. EFL teachers, in particular those who teach in similar Japanese contexts to the one in this study, should be more aware of the effects. In addition, bearing in mind that the participants felt that their enhanced motivation had raised their levels of English, teachers may find it well worth considering.
- Theoretically speaking, the findings (the perceived effect of motivation on levels of English) can be interpreted by attribution theory (e.g., Weiner, 1994). In other words, students' belief in (un)controllability may influence their levels of English (through expectancy/motivation). For example, the positive case of the findings could be explained: attributing success (higher levels of English) to a *controllable* factor (efforts) had produced higher levels of English through raised levels of expectancy/motivation (as discussed in Chapter 5, perceived positive links from levels of English to levels of expectancy and from levels of expectancy to levels of motivation have been found in this study); whereas the negative case: attributing failure (low levels of English) to a *uncontrollable* factor (lack of ability) had led to (remaining) low levels of English through reduced levels of expectancy/motivation. This could indicate a circular connection between these three variables (levels of English, expectancy and motivation). This suggests that the findings can be interpreted as part of this circulation, supporting attribution theory. In fact, Ken's comments clearly indicated this circulation (see his quotation in the second category in Table 7.1).
- This view that there is a circular connection could be applied to other contexts, as well as to contexts similar to that in this study, considering findings in the field of educational psychology (see Chapter 2 for more details). In addition, peer cooperation in CL (e.g., with 'team scores')

may be useful to break into the circulation, because it is considered to be effective in increasing students' achievements and levels of motivation in many other contexts (see Chapter 3 for more details). Needless to say, this study found that peer cooperation with team scores was perceived to be useful to improve students' motivation (see above). This suggests that it is well worth consideration by EFL teachers who deal with students in other contexts, as well as those who teach similar students to those in the present study.

- 'Individual improvement scores', although the system used is a combinational system with team scores, could be also useful for breaking into the cycle, for low achievers in particular. In this system, as discussed in Chapter 4, all students have a chance to reach their goals because these goals are based on each student's own level of English. Accordingly, it may be easier for them to believe that their levels of English can be raised by their own efforts (belief in controllability). Importantly, this system may not be particularly context-specific, like the feature of team scores. Therefore, teachers working in other contexts, in addition to those who deal with low achievers, should pay more attention to the effects of this system.
- Considering the negative experience which Japanese students have undergone in secondary schools (as discussed in Chapters 1 & 2), inculcating a belief in controllability may be vital if their motivation is to improve. This is because the experience appears to have created their belief in uncontrollability.

Between motivation and levels of English: (from levels of English to motivation: shown in Table 7.2)

- Four key participants felt that their levels of motivation had risen because their levels of English had increased. Their reason types were as follows (positive category):
  - *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because their listening ability improved*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English through cooperating with their peers*
- One key participant (Ken) felt that his level of motivation went up and down, being determined by his level of English. However, his level of motivation had ultimately declined because his level of English remained low. His reason types were as follows (negative category):
  - *Participants felt that they became less motivated when they couldn't understand the work but became more motivated when they could*
  - *Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they couldn't understand many things in class*
- These findings suggest that five key participants perceived that their levels of English positively pertained to their levels of motivation.

Main implications of these findings:

- The finding (the perceived links from levels of English to motivation) appears to have accidentally lacked factors of 'expectancy'. Considering that expectancy is part of the circle (based on a view of attribution theory), this absence can be understandable. In addition, expectancy could have been regarded as identical with levels of English because it is difficult to estimate someone's level of expectancy without knowing the level of English.
- In view of this absence, the finding (in Table 7.2), which mainly concerned the perceived relationships from levels of English to motivation, mirrors the finding discussed in Chapter 5 (i.e., the perceived links from levels of English to levels of expectancy and motivation).
- The finding (in Table 7.2) seems to have related to an interesting phenomenon or peer feedback effect, which is consistent with Murphey's (1998) 'near peer role models'. He found that when Japanese students see others who are similar to them doing well in English, it improves their motivation as well as their beliefs concerning their own ability. At least one participant in this study commented that he felt a sense of relief by observing his team-mates performing in the same way as himself (e.g., he probably saw others struggling and progressing) and that this has led him to higher level of expectancy. In other words, this observation of his team-mates could have probably inspired him to think that he could do as well as his peers. This implies that he felt that he could have *controlled* his level of English through his own efforts. In short, this contextual peer feedback appears to have produced his belief in controllability, at least to some extent.
- Ken's perceptions in the negative category seem to have pertained to his continuing belief in uncontrollability, and this belief could probably have come from his unpleasant experience in secondary school (see Chapters 1, 2 & 7 for more details; Ken's perceptions: although his level of motivation went up and down in response to his level of English, his ultimate level of motivation had declined because his level of English remained low).
- His continuing belief could have been partially connected with his personality. Another participant (Ichiro) seems to have had a similar background to Ken's and a similar deep sense of inferiority at the beginning of CL. However, unlike Ken, Ichiro felt, at the end of CL, that his levels of English, expectancy and motivation had risen and this suggests that during the CL course he had begun to have a belief in controllability. One possible reason for this could be differences in their personalities regarding interpersonal relationships; although Ken appeared to be an introverted type and had kept negative opinions about group learning throughout the course, Ichiro seemed much more extravert and had been a lively participant in class activities. In short, Ken's personality (and/or attitudes towards group learning) seem to

have interfered with the peer feedback effect (see above, introduction & Chapter 3 for more details) and this could have facilitated his negative beliefs, instead of producing his beliefs in controllability.

Perceived effect of peer cooperation on motivation through mediating factors:

- Five key participants felt that their levels of motivation had risen due to peer cooperation through the following three mediating factors: *getting on well with their peers* (*group cohesion*), *having more fun in class* (*enjoyment*) and *a sense of responsibility for their peers*. Reason types of the participants were (positive case):
  - *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers*
  - *Participants felt that they had become more motivated because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers*
  - *Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers*
- The three mediating factors seem to be group cohesion or cohesion-generated factors; these are motivational elements in Dörnyei's (1997) framework for CL-generated L2 motivation.
- One key participant (Ken) felt that his level of motivation had declined due to peer cooperation which led him to feel inferior to his team-mates. This sense of inferiority appears to have been produced by *status ordering*, typical of CL groups, which refers to hierarchies among students (Cohen, 1994). Such hierarchies may have a stronger impact on the lowest achievers than on any others because of their marked sense of inferiority to fellow-students; they can easily become demotivated (ibid.). With Ken's sense of inferiority, this was in fact the case. This reason type was (negative case):
  - *Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt inferior to their team*
- All these findings also imply that in the minds of six key participants, peer cooperation positively pertained to their levels of motivation through mediating factors, such as *group cohesion, cohesion-generated factors* (*having more fun in class* and *a sense of responsibility for their peers*) and *sense of inferiority* created by *status ordering*.

Main implications of these findings:

- The findings (the positive case) suggest that Dörnyei's (1997) framework (for CL-generated L2 motivation) could more clearly indicate that, at least in some cases, group cohesion has a positive impact on levels of motivation *only through* cohesion-generated factors (e.g., having fun in class and/or having a sense of responsibility for their peers). Since Dörnyei does not explicitly indicate whether or not group cohesion directly improves motivation, this indication could be

useful information when exploring possible routes from group cohesion to motivation.

- Ken's sense of inferiority which appears to have come from *status ordering* could be a typical feature of low achievers in Japanese classrooms, in view of their negative experiences in secondary school (discussed in Chapter 3).
- Status ordering appears to have had a positive effect − a sense of superiority − with regard to peers, as well as the negative one in Ken's case. Although Cohen (1994) stresses only the negative effect of status ordering, this study found that at least one participant (Hiroshi) perceived its positive effect; he felt that his level of expectancy had risen because he felt more capable than others (through peer cooperation). This finding implies that status ordering could create a positive effect on students' levels of expectancy and motivation.
- This (Hiroshi's) perception can be interpreted in another way, underlining a benefit of the supportive classroom context in CL. As discussed in Chapter 3, CL typically provides a supportive context which produced less anxiety and stress than other classroom structures do and this may lead to higher levels of expectancy (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998). In addition, as mentioned in Chapter 2, great anxiety may interfere with students displaying their actual abilities (Ehrman, 1996). Hiroshi could have been reasonably free from anxiety as a result of the supportive context (created by peer cooperation). This appears to have supported him displaying his ability. Accordingly, he felt that his level of expectancy had increased.
- This suggests that peer cooperation may lower students' levels of anxiety, and less anxiety may raise their levels of expectancy and motivation, in particular in contexts similar to the one in this study. Peer cooperation could be more useful in classrooms for low achievers because these students tend to have higher levels of anxiety than higher achievers have; it is worth trying by EFL teachers working in such classrooms.

<u>Spontaneity of the students' comments related to RQ 7:</u>

- Given that all the perceptions discussed in this chapter did not result from asking explicit questions about the links between variables, the perceptions about the links appear to have been relatively strong.

# CHAPTER 8
# CONCLUSIONS

## Introduction

As noted at the outset, the motivation to start this study came from my apprehension that many students appeared to be reluctant to study in my English class. This apprehension seems to be not only my problem, but also a problem for many other university teachers in Japan, most of all for those who teach low-achieving EFL students. Through this study, I believe that I have found a partial solution for, and several ways of dealing with, the reluctance of these students, ways which are all related to peer cooperation in cooperative learning environments.

The main aim of this study has been to explore whether or not Japanese EFL learners perceive peer cooperation in cooperative learning environments to be useful in terms of its ability to improve their levels of expectancy, motivation and ultimate attainment in the L2. In other words, this study has explored students' perceptions about the relationship between the variables of *peer cooperation* and *L2 classroom motivation* through mediating factors. More specifically, two foreseen routes which might connect these two variables have been the main focus of this study. One route was through expectancy. The other was through the level of English and expectancy, as we can see in Figure 8.1.

Figure 8.1 Two possible routes linking peer cooperation and motivation

**Route 1:**

Peer cooperation > Expectancy > Motivation

**Route 2:**

Peer cooperation > Levels of English > Expectancy > Motivation

In addition, other possible relationships which have been perceived between all four key variables (peer cooperation, levels of English, expectancy and L2 classroom motivation) have also been explored.

The structure of this concluding chapter is as follows. First, I summarise the key findings in the study. I also discuss their implications for EFL teachers and for research in the area of L2 learning motivation. Finally, I outline the limitations of the study and suggest possible areas for future research.

## 8.1 Summary of key findings and their theoretical implications

The main findings in this study were related to the relationship between peer cooperation and L2 classroom motivation in these Japanese classrooms. The relationship included several perceived routes, which mainly indicated that the students felt that cooperation with their peers had a positive effect on their levels of motivation. There were also some negative effects related to issues of hierarchy.

The positive routes perceived to link peer cooperation to motivation can be roughly divided into two types; 1) the two routes which were the main focus of the study: through expectancy and through a combination of level of English and expectancy; and 2) other routes identified in the course of the study: levels of motivation were felt to be enhanced through group cohesion and/or cohesion-generated factors (a sense of responsibility for their peers and having fun in class) and enhanced/diminished through factors related to status ordering (feelings of superiority/inferiority to peers).

The important thing about the first set of main findings, the two perceived routes, is that the second, more *indirect*, route from CL (peer cooperation) to motivation (through level of English) was the more common of the two. This route could be included in Dörnyei's (1997) framework for CL-generated L2 learning motivation, in addition to the *direct* relationship from peer cooperation (group support) to

expectancy (motivation) that he mentions. The relationships between the variables relevant to the indirect route (between peer cooperation and levels of English, between levels of English and expectancy, and between expectancy and motivation) have been found or proposed separately by other researchers. However, the findings from my study, focusing on low achievers of EFL in a Japanese university, call attention to the way in which these variables, from the students' point of view, are linked in a single model. The link between peer cooperation and levels of English appeared in my study to be particularly important for them because of the 'peer feedback effects' created by *peer cooperation*. This feedback was found to have two different effects: raising the *level of English* (by their learning from each other) and creating *beliefs in controllability*.

Interestingly, the latter effect may have resulted from two different phenomena relevant to students' beliefs in controllability. One is that the participants felt that their levels of English were *controllable* through their efforts, in particular when they recognised that their levels of English had risen through peer cooperation. The other is that they may have seen their peers who were also low achievers performing well in their class work or improving their levels of English by making efforts. Consequently, these observations may have strengthened their belief in their own ability, as well as their raising the level of motivation. This phenomenon can be explained by Murphey's (1998) 'near peer role models'. Importantly, the use of such role models may have had a context-specific peer feedback effect which occurred in the context where all group members had similar backgrounds and/or levels of English. In short, this contextual feedback effect seems to have nurtured the participants' belief in controllability, at least to some extent.

Attribution theory explains the rest of the perceived indirect relationship, between levels of English and expectancy (motivation). In other words, the students' attributional beliefs concerning controllability are likely to have raised their levels of expectancy (motivation). In short, attribution theory and the peer

feedback effect provide the best explanation for the perceived *indirect* relationship between peer cooperation and expectancy through changes in the level of English.

The second set of main findings pertains to the other perceived routes connecting peer cooperation and motivation. These can be roughly divided into two types; 1) routes through group cohesion and/or cohesion-generated factors (*a sense of responsibility for their peers* and *having fun in class*); and 2) routes through factors related to status ordering (*feelings of superiority/inferiority in relation to their peers*).

There are two important things to say about these findings. One is that the first set of main findings indicates that Dörnyei's (1997) framework (for CL-generated L2 learning motivation) could perhaps be supplemented by the finding that group cohesion may influence students' levels of motivation *only* indirectly. The other is that the positive case of the latter finding indicates that Cohen's (1994) view of *status ordering* (that it may cause demotivation among students who feel inferior to other students) may be extended to include a positive effect; it may *improve* levels of expectancy and motivation among low achievers who feel superior to others.

As we saw in Chapter 7, Dörnyei's framework linking cooperative learning to raised motivation does not indicate whether or not group cohesion has a direct impact on motivation. Therefore, the supplementation mentioned above could be useful. Concerning the positive effect of *status ordering*, we should consider that it can also be interpreted from a different point of view. This takes into account that the relatively anxiety-free context which is typical in CL appeared to result in higher perceptions of self-efficacy and expectancy (Ehrman & Dörnyei, 1998). If we grant that high levels of anxiety prevent learners from displaying their abilities (Ehrman, 1996), the participant who commented on the positive effects of status ordering may have been free from anxiety due to the supportive environment (created by peer cooperation). This appears to have enabled him to

display his ability and raise his level of expectancy.

This study has focused on low achieving EFL students who had been unwilling to study English in class due to their unpleasant experiences in secondary school. Considering their past experiences and levels of English, it is easy to understand why it is difficult for them to use English or communicate in English in class. Japan suffers from many low level EFL classes where the target language is rarely used. However, as discussed in Chapter 3, studies focusing on these classes seem to be limited, compared with those focusing on students who can communicate in English or in other target languages in class. In view of this, the present study can contribute to this area of ELT[75] research as it considers one sample of such EFL settings. Importantly, there are no or very few qualitative studies that focus in a comprehensive way both on low achieving EFL students in a Japanese context and the relation between peer cooperation and motivation/achievement.

## 8.2 Implications of these findings for EFL teachers

In this section, I discuss the implications of these findings for EFL teachers. These implications can be roughly divided into two categories: 1) implications for teachers of low achievers in Japanese universities; and 2) more general implications for teachers in Japanese universities.

### 8.2.1 Implications for EFL teachers of low achievers in Japanese universities

This study may provide EFL teachers and educators in Japan with useful information, in particular those who deal with low achievers in universities. As discussed in Chapter 1, many students in the university classroom are reluctant to study EFL. This reluctance or demotivation has presumably developed from their unpleasant experiences in secondary schools, which are typically

[75] ELT = English language teaching

*non-supportive* and/or focus on 'entrance exam-oriented instruction'. The present study has shown that, from the students' point of view, peer cooperation in CL is an effective way to raise levels of motivation to study EFL in class, as well as raising levels of English. This may be because peer cooperation in CL creates a *supportive* classroom environment, which appears to be different from the EFL classrooms the students have experienced in the past.

However, we as teachers should be careful when using peer cooperation in class because students, particularly low achievers in universities, are typically very susceptible to feeling inferior to others and easily give up completing assigned class work. In addition, some students may have extremely strong feelings of inferiority. This may be due to the low level of expectancy which they have developed in secondary school; these low levels of expectancy may be related to their lack of motivation. In short, to solve the problem of their demotivation, it may be useful to raise their levels of expectancy. Importantly, the low achievers have usually had a long history of suffering from the low level of expectancy and therefore the demotivation may be difficult to remedy. However, their low levels of motivation cannot be raised unless their low levels of expectancy rise. The teachers and educators must first realise this.

How can we deal, then, with levels of expectancy in low achievers of EFL in Japanese universities? We may be able to use peer cooperation, which I have found valuable. This peer cooperation needs to be tailored to the Japanese context in particular and take account of the educational and/or cultural backgrounds of the students. Although many features of this tailored peer cooperation have been discussed in the previous chapter, I would like to outline its key features in a more organised way in order to underline the essential points we need to pay attention to when introducing it to Japanese university classrooms.

In order to raise Japanese students' low levels of expectancy, the peer cooperation we institute must include the following three procedures; 1) the setting of

'supportive contexts' created by peer cooperation (e.g., through the use of 'team rules', as shown in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1, and of 'team scores'); 2) the administration of 'individual improvement scores' which every student can reach by doing his/her best; 3) the use of small student groups in which 'all members are low achievers'. The first procedure, setting supportive contexts, requires, as the first step, making sure that students clearly understand the 'team rules'. The main ideas in these rules are that they *must* 'help each other', 'ask for help when needed' and 'care about each other', with a focus on creating 'peer support and acceptance'. The system of team scores may encourage peer cooperation, which leads to supportive contexts. However, from my teaching experiences in EFL classes, Japanese students, most of all the low achievers, tend to hesitate to talk to their classmates if they do not know them well, even though they are classmates. This probably comes from their cultural background, as discussed in Chapter 7. In other words, they have been educated to care about others and not to make trouble for them as a way of maintaining harmony. Hence, the rules may help to generate a situation in which they can easily talk to their team-mates. Once they understand the rules and are used to talking to others or can in some way get to know each other, then 'team scores' may work well. In short, teachers must apply team rules first and make sure that their students clearly understand them, in addition to using the system of team scores.

The second feature of the peer cooperation, individual improvement scores, is essential when using team scores, as mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1; the team scores are based on the individual scores. However, for the purpose of clarifying the key point of the procedures to show how and why they are necessary, I have indicated them separately. The third feature that all the members of the teams should be low achievers is not regarded as a regular element by the CL system which has been used in this study (STAD: Students Teams-Achievement Divisions). However, it may be as important as the other two in cases such as my own because it may generate the positive feeling that 'I can do as well as my team-mates' (e.g., 'near peer role models').

Regarding the system of team scores, the findings from this study suggest that it is useful to raise the students' levels of motivation. Unlike the other procedures, this system focuses on fostering their sense of responsibility for their peers (as well as enhancing the level of expectancy) in order to raise their levels of motivation. In other words, it may work both by creating a supportive context which enhance the students' levels of expectancy and by fostering the sense of responsibility.

Importantly, the findings from this study suggest that, from the students' point of view, peer cooperation within the three procedures is also useful in raising their levels of English, as well as their levels of expectancy and motivation. Therefore, it may be worthwhile for teachers interested in enhancing their students' levels of English, expectancy and motivation to consider promoting peer cooperation through the above procedures.

There is one more thing we should be careful about when dealing with low achievers. The findings from this study suggest that we must be conscious that teachers' inconsiderate comments can strikingly affect students' attitudes towards learning, as well as their self-esteem. In other words, even if the three procedures above were properly applied, teachers' thoughtless words could easily destroy everything. At least one participant in this study had such an experience and he had ceased to learn English ever since. Importantly, low achievers in general may have had unpleasant experiences in EFL classes in the past and consequently be more likely than a higher achiever to feel inferior to others. Therefore, teachers should be more aware of students' sensitivity or feelings about their levels of English.

### 8.2.2 More general implications for EFL teachers in Japanese universities

Some of the implications mentioned in the previous section may also apply to

Japanese university students more generally. In particular, peer cooperation with the first and second procedures (team rules, team scores & individual improvement scores) may be applicable. As discussed in Chapter 7, cultural priorities in Japanese society in general, such as harmony and cooperativeness (or 'being part of a whole'), are important factors in CL (or peer cooperation). This suggests that peer cooperation in CL is suitable for Japanese students. In addition, as mentioned in the previous section, both team rules and team scores may be useful for Japanese students due to their cultural backgrounds. The individual improvement scores in combination with team scores may also be useful for making team scores work well; the students have no excuse for not doing their best to earn team rewards. In short, the promotion of peer cooperation through the above procedures may be more generally suitable for use in EFL classes in Japanese universities; it may be well worth consideration if teachers are interested in enhancing their students' levels of English, expectancy and motivation.

The connection between the cultural background and effectiveness/suitability of the peer cooperation for Japanese students suggests an important point which their teachers should realise. It is that we as teachers and Japanese must first be aware that we have advantages or useful information/experiences that we can use to understand and predict how students feel, think and/or react in class. This is partly because many Japanese teachers had similar school experiences when they were students themselves and they know the culture well, compared with teachers who have been brought up outside Japan. Once we realise this, we may understand more about the important things that we need to deal with when teaching our students (e.g., how influential teachers' comments or attitudes are).

There is one more thing to be added to this section concerning the wider implications of this study. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 7, the peer cooperation (with team rules, team scores & individual improvement scores) recommended in this section is considered to be effective in improving students' achievement and

motivation in many other contexts and backgrounds. In addition, as suggested in this study, it may be effective to create the participants' belief in controllability, which leads to raising their levels of expectancy, motivation and English. Attribution theory is not particularly context-specific and therefore, once students recognise that their levels of English have risen through peer cooperation, it is possible that their belief in controllability may be encouraged to grow. In short, the approach recommended in this section may be useful in other contexts; teachers in other contexts interested in raising their students' levels of expectancy, motivation and English may find it well worth trying or at least thinking about using it.

## 8.3 Implications for research in the area of L2 learning motivation

Throughout the present study, we have observed how the backgrounds of the learners have affected in various ways their levels of motivation and learning in EFL classes. In particular, the case studies of the two participants (Ken & Ichiro), who had felt markedly high levels of inferiority at the beginning of CL, highlight the importance of paying attention to students' backgrounds and personalities. Although they had similar backgrounds, only Ichiro had, at the end of CL, a strong belief in controllability, as well as higher levels of expectancy and motivation. A possible cause of these different perceived consequences appears to have resulted from their different personalities. What is important here is that, without the detailed background information which I collected, it would have been difficult to identify the source of this difference. This suggests that it may be interesting to consider more data on learners' backgrounds, with the aim of finding possible causes of problems or phenomena which occur in class.

Importantly, this also indicates the importance of taking a qualitative perspective. It may be difficult to obtain such detailed background information in the context of a quantitative investigation. In order to gather the necessary information about students' backgrounds, one would need to focus intensely on a small number of

students. This would involve time-consuming work, such as the development of deep and trusting relationships with the participants, the organisation of classroom observations for a whole semester, long interviews, many kinds of questionnaire, language tests, translation from one language to another, and so on. However, I believe that a detailed analysis of contextual and background factors is well worth consideration because it may be a better way to find possible causes/solutions of classroom phenomena/problems which cannot be resolved by quantitative studies. In my study, I have made different findings by means of the two methods; despite the fact that the students felt there was a relationship between peer cooperation and levels of English, no statistical relationship was found. This may add some weight to the importance of taking a qualitative view because it suggests that qualitative investigations have some potential to discover certain aspects of students which quantitative studies cannot find.

## 8.4 Limitations of the study and opportunities for further research

The present study has investigated students' perceptions of the effects of peer cooperation on their levels of motivation and their perceived possible relationships between four factors (peer cooperation, levels of English, expectancy and motivation). It has made suggestions for a framework in CL-generated L2 learning motivation, a concept of typical problems in CL and also of problems for EFL teachers in Japanese universities. However, there are limitations in this study, which should be noted.

First, the subjects in this study were low achieving EFL students in a Japanese university. They could be different in several ways from subjects in other CL-related L2 learning motivation studies, in particular concerning their experience of learning the target language and cultural backgrounds, as well as their levels of English, expectancy and motivation. These differences are likely to have influenced the findings. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalisable to EFL learners in other contexts. Second, this study has mainly

taken a qualitative perspective, and therefore it is small scale and exploratory in nature. In other words, the findings in this study have mainly resulted from students' perceptions; there are no statistical results and/or relationships between variables in the main findings.

Regarding opportunities for future research, there are a number of improvements which could have been made to the methodology used in the present study. These improvements could help to point the way to interesting future research. The central improvements which could have been made are described below.

### 8.4.1 Improvements in the measurement instruments

Two in particular of the measurement scales used in this study could be improved. They are the Cooperation Questionnaire and A Comprehensive English Language Test for Learners of English (CELT).

The main purpose of the Cooperation Questionnaire was to estimate how much the students interacted and helped/supported each other (or how well they cooperated with each other), and therefore the items were relatively straightforward. For example, in item number 1 ('When I don't understand something, I ask classmates'), if they answered/checked 'strongly agree', it indicated that they (try to) cooperate or interact well with each other (or that their levels of peer cooperation in the item were as high as possible). However, the answers of some of the participants in this study were not so straightforward, particularly concerning item (# 1) and related items (e.g., #12). According to their written comments on the items, for example, for # 1, their answers changed from 'strongly agree' (or 'agree') to 'strongly disagree' (or 'disagree') at the end of CL because they had become able to manage class work on their own (or they wanted to challenge it by some means) so that their levels of English improved on the level at the beginning of CL. In other words, their levels of peer cooperation had not declined (or had probably risen), despite the fact that their answers indicated

that their levels of peer cooperation in this item had declined.

There is one more improvement that could be made to the items in the Cooperation Questionnaire. At least one participant commented that the word 'encourage' ('hagemasu' in Japanese) appeared not to be appropriate when he wanted to convey his supportive attitudes to his team-mates. An outline of his comments was that he answered 'strongly disagree' to the item # 9 ('When I do class work, I encourage my classmates') at the end of CL because he did not normally use encouraging words (e.g., 'Good work!') although he tried to be supportive to his team-mates.

Thus, items related to these two points need to be revised and/or more items need to be created so that the participants' answers indicate their actual levels of peer cooperation. Making these improvements would let us examine the level of peer cooperation more comprehensively. This would also be useful if we applied the Cooperation Questionnaire in a larger scale study; it might lead, in statistical terms, to more precise results regarding relationships or correlations between peer cooperation and other variables.

The English language tests (CELT) used in this study were standardised language tests, and therefore they did not seem to be particularly suitable for evaluating what the students had learned in the cooperative learning course. From my point of view (as the teacher of the participants), the standardised tests appear to focus on higher achieving EFL students (at least, students of higher achievement than the participants). This was one of the reasons why I used only a small part of the tests (20 % of the whole; see Chapter 4, Section 4.4.6 for more details) and why I chose the relatively easy items included in the tests, as well as reducing the number of the items to be used. Although I used this compact (or easier) version of the tests, the maximum score gained by the participants at the beginning of the CL course was below 50 % (see Table 6.3 in Chapter 6, Section 6.5 for more details). In addition, the participants could have learned only a limited

amount of lesson content throughout the course (e.g., a small number of vocabulary items and grammatical rules; see Chapter 4, Section 4.3 and Appendices 1 and 3 for more details). Considering this, it might have been more appropriate to use teacher-made tests in order to be able to estimate what students had actually learned during the course, although the participants made certain improvements in the language tests.

But it should not be forgotten here that a teacher-made test might have some weaknesses; it would not have undergone the same screening process as a standardised test has been put through in order to check its flaws, and it might be affected by certain design defects.

### 8.4.2 Studies outside Japan

The present study has focused only on Japanese students studying in Japan. Therefore, it may be interesting to investigate EFL learners in other countries. In particular, if the learners have similar problems to those of the students in this study, it may be interesting to examine whether the type of peer cooperation used in this study is effective in solving the problems. Needless to say, investigating students' perceptions of the reasons why they feel it is effective or ineffective would help us to explore possible solutions for their problems. It may also be interesting to compare their cultural and educational backgrounds with those of Japanese students in order to examine possible reasons for having similar problems and why they feel peer cooperation to be effective or ineffective. In addition, it would be beneficial to collect information about their personalities in order to explore possible sources concerning differences of perception between some individual learners. It may be better to take a qualitative perspective in collecting the detailed information mentioned above, and therefore such an investigation may require a huge amount of time. However, it would be an interesting piece of research to carry out.

### 8.4.3 Large scale studies

The purpose of this study has been to provide an interpretation of the classroom phenomena which were related to the problems in EFL classrooms in a Japanese university. The classroom phenomena tended to involve complicated relationships and were difficult to measure; it was useful to focus on the students' perspectives rather than my own. Therefore, this thesis has been basically qualitative in nature which means that it has been small scale and exploratory in nature.

Considering this, it may be useful to work on a larger scale or bring in more quantitative research in possible future projects. By making this change, we may be able to clarify the cause and effect relationships between variables relevant to the findings from this study, and this may lead to a deeper comprehension of the students' perceptions. Even if the quantitative results were not consistent with the findings from the present study, the outcomes might provide helpful information by which to understand the strengths and weaknesses of both research perspectives.

I would like to note here that it might be useful to adopt more qualitative approaches when studying the same classroom phenomena before conducting large scale research. It is still possible that we may find more relationships between the variables and/or students' reasons regarding the relationships which this study has already disclosed. In addition, regarding the questionnaires used in this study, it is possible that we will find more ways of improving them to consider. In a nutshell, it is important to be careful when creating self-reported structured questionnaires for a large scale investigation. In such questionnaires, students have to give some sort of answer, even if the answers on offer do not exactly express their feelings or opinions, and this may lead to inaccurate results. In other words, a lack of information may greatly affect the results or outcomes of the research.

### 8.4.4 More indirect procedures for collecting data

As mentioned in the previous section, this study has focused on students' perceptions, employing a qualitative perspective, and it has therefore relied mainly on self-reported data. I conducted classroom observations during the cooperative learning course. However, I was also the teacher of the class in question, and therefore it was difficult to take detailed notes on every incident that occurred in class. In other words, it may be useful to apply other indirect research methods. Adopting such methods may provide interesting future research because it may contribute to examining students' interactions more comprehensively. Accordingly, we may understand students' perceptions in greater depth, not least concerning the relationships between the variables. One way to do this may be to videotape students' interactions in class. The researcher as teacher who does this may not have to be concerned about forgetting things which happen in class before taking notes of observations. The potential issue of researcher bias was discussed in Chapter 4, where it was argued that keeping 'reflective journals' during the study would override this potential bias. However, future studies could usefully involve other researchers who have both closer and more distant relationships with the students.

## 8.5 Concluding statement

In this thesis we have shown that, in the eyes of the students investigated, cooperative learning had a positive effect on their attitudes towards learning in class. They also perceived that it led to improvements in their motivation to learn EFL in class. Although I believe that my study so far has been productive, the findings are only a small contribution to the vast expanse of research on L2 language learning motivation. There are uncountable combinations of students' backgrounds and personalities, and they shape the limitless variety of learners' motivation or demotivation in L2 language learning. However, this also inspires me to continue my investigation, because I believe that there are likely to be

numerous as yet unforeseen or unidentified phenomena pertaining to learners' motivation.

Finally, I hope that this study has contributed to the development of the theoretical and educational knowledge base of second/foreign language learning motivation.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Examples of the materials used in the main study (Chapter 4)

### 1. Lesson sheet for class presentation

**Vocabulary items** *(n.) = noun = 名詞

Excuse me = 「すいません」(呼びかけ)　　Lobby = ロビー、ホール、広間

change (n.) = 小銭　　money changer = 両替屋、両替機

over there = あそこに　　bill (n.) = 紙幣、札

Sure = 「わかりました」、「かしこまりました」、「もちろんです」

There you are = 「はいそうぞ」(頼まれた事を終えて、何かを渡すとき)

make a phone call = 電話をかける（= call)

Right over there = 「すぐそこに（あります)」(rightは強調の意味で使われることがある)

**Key sentences (patterns)**

(*things you want*：*an object*)

Where can I get *some change*? = どこで 小銭が 手に入りますか？

Where can I get *some cigarettes*? = どこで タバコが 手に入りますか？

(*a verb* + *an object*)

Can you *change this bill* (for me)? = この紙幣を両替してもらえますか？

Can you *send this letter* (for me)? = この手紙を送ってもらえますか？

(*things you want*：*an object*)

Can I have *some coins*? = 小銭をもらえますか？

Can I have *some stamps*? = 切手をもらえますか？

＜Expressions concerning 'time'＞

What time is it (now)? = 今何時ですか？

It's 1：20. = 1時２０分です。

It's 4：00. = 4時です。

＜Yes/No Question＞

Is Junko in the main lobby? Yes, she is. / No, she isn't (is not).

Does she want some coins? Yes, she does. / No, she doesn't (does not).

**This lesson sheet is partly translated from Japanese by the author.

***This lesson sheet is created by the author on the basis of the following source: Berlitz & ITOCHU, FIRST STEP ABROAD: Tabi−kotoba to shūkan, pp. 27-28, © 1987. The permission of KINSEIDO Publishing Co., Ltd. to do this is gratefully acknowledged.

## 2. Worksheet for team study

A. Please fill the blanks by English word(s)/phrases.

１．小銭　＝　（　　）

２．紙幣、札　＝　（　　）

３．「すいません」(呼びかけ)　＝　（　　）

４．電話をかける　＝　（　　）

５．あそこに　＝　（　　）

６．「すぐそこに（あります)」＝　（　　）

B. Please fill the blanks by some words in English.

１．どこで小銭が手に入りますか？　＝　（　　）

２．どこで切手が手に入りますか？　＝　（　　）

３．どこでハガキが手に入りますか？　＝　（　　）

４．この紙幣を両替してもらえますか？　＝　（　　）

５．このハガキを送ってもらえますか？　＝　（　　）

６．このハガキをもらえますか？　＝　（　　）

７．この切手をもらえますか？　＝　（　　）

８.チーズケーキを(一切れ)もらえますか？　＝　（　　）

９．オレンジジュースを（一杯）もらえますか？　＝　（　　）

10. コーヒーを（一杯）もらえますか？　＝　（　　）

11. ４時５０分です　＝　（　　）

12. ３時です　＝　（　　）

C. Please answer the following questions (concerning Dialogue #) in English.

1. Is Junko looking for her mother? → (　　)
2. Is she asking for the time? → (　　)
3. Is she at the airport? → (　　)
4. Does she want some coins? → (　　)
5. Does she want some bills? → (　　)

*Rubrics for sections A, B and C are translated from Japanese by the author.

**This worksheet is created by the author on the basis of the following source: Berlitz & ITOCHU, FIRST STEP ABROAD: Tabi−kotoba to shūkan, pp. 27-28, © 1987. The permission of KINSEIDO Publishing Co., Ltd. to do this is gratefully acknowledged.

### 3. Answer sheet for the worksheet (for team study)

A1 = change
A2 = bill
A3 = “Excuse me.”
A4 = make a phone call
A5 = over there
A6 = “Right over there.”

B1 = Where can I get some change?
B2 = Where can I get some stamps?
B3 = Where can I get some postcards?
B4 = Can you change this bill (for me)?
B5 = Can you send this postcard?
B6 = Can I have this postcard?
B7 = Can I have this stamp?
B8 = Can I have (a piece of) cheese cake?
B9 = Can I have (a glass of) orange juice?
B10 = Can I have (a cup of) coffee?
B11 = It’s 4:50 (four fifty).
B12 = It’s 3 (o’clock).

C1 = No, she isn’t.
C2 = No, she doesn’t.
C3 = Yes, she is.
C4 = Yes, she does.
C5 = No, she doesn’t.

*This answer sheet is created by the author on the basis of the following source: Berlitz & ITOCHU, FIRST STEP ABROAD: Tabi–kotoba to shūkan, pp. 27-28, © 1987. The permission of KINSEIDO Publishing Co., Ltd. to do this is gratefully acknowledged.

## 4. Quiz

Student ID number: Name: Team Name:

A. Please fill the blanks by English word(s)/phrases.

１．電話をかける　＝（　　）

２．小銭　＝（　　）

３．紙幣、札　＝（　　）

４．「すぐそこに（あります)」＝（　　）

５．「すいません」＝（　　）

B. Please fill the blanks by English words.

１．どこで小銭が手にはいりますか？＝（　　）

２．この紙幣を両替してもらえますか？＝（　　）

３．チーズケーキをもらえますか？＝（　　）

４．どこで切手が手に入りますか？＝（　　）

５．２時です＝（　　）

６．どこでハガキが手に入りますか？＝（　　）

７．この切手をもらえますか？＝（　　）

８．このハガキを送ってもらえますか？＝（　　）

９．オレンジジュースをもらえますか？＝（　　）

１０．コーヒーをもらえますか？＝（　　）

C. Please answer the following questions (concerning Dialogue #) in English.

１．Is Junko at home?　= (　　)

２．Does she want some chocolate cake? = (　　)

３．Is she looking for her brother? = (　　)

４．Does she want to drink something? = (　　)

５．Does she have any money? = (　　)

*Rubrics for sections A, B and C are translated from Japanese by the author.

**This quiz is created by the author on the basis of the following source: Berlitz & ITOCHU, FIRST STEP ABROAD: Tabi−kotoba to shūkan, pp. 27-28, © 1987. The permission of KINSEIDO Publishing Co., Ltd. to do this is gratefully acknowledged.

## 5. Worksheet for dictation exercises

*(Junko is expecting Hiro to meet her at the airport, but he is late.)*

**Junko:** Excuse me. What time is it?

**Old Man:** It's ( ).

**Junko:** ( ) the main lobby?

**Old Man:** Yes.

**Junko:** Thank you.

*(Junko decides to call Hiro.)*

**Junko:** Excuse me. ( )?

**Woman:** Um…( ) a money changer over there.

**Junko:** Thank you.

**Money Changer:** Yes?

**Junko:** ( )?

**Money Changer:** ( ). Twenty-forty-sixty-eighty-one hundred.

**Junko:** ( )? I need them for a telephone call.

**Money Changer:** There you are.

**Junko:** Thank you. ( )?

**Money Changer:** ( ).

*This worksheet is created by the author on the basis of the following source: Berlitz & ITOCHU, FIRST STEP ABROAD: Tabi–kotoba to shūkan, pp. 27-28, © 1987. The permission of KINSEIDO Publishing Co., Ltd. to do this is gratefully acknowledged.

## Appendix 2: The materials for team recognition (team scores) used in the main study (Chapter 4)

*A Team Summary Sheet was also used for assigning students to teams.

### 1. Team Summary Sheet (adopted from Slavin, 1994b: 86)

**TEAM NAME:** _____

| Team Members | | | | | | | | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Total Team Score | | | | | | | | |
| Team Average | | | | | | | | |
| Team Award | | | | | | | | |

Team Average = Total Team Score ÷ Number of Team Members

Slavin, A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO COOPERATIVE LEARNING, © 1994. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc.

### IMPROVEMENT POINT CRITERIA

| If a quiz score is... | a student earns... |
|---|---|
| a perfect paper regardless of base scores | 30 improvement points |
| more than ten points above base score | 20 improvement points |
| base score to ten points above base score | 20 improvement points |
| ten points below to one point below base score | 10 improvement points |
| more than ten points below base score | 5 improvement points |

* In the main study, this sheet was translated into Japanese (by the author) for classroom use.

**2. Quiz Score Sheet** (adopted from Slavin, 1994b: 87)

| | | Objective | | | Objective | | | Objective | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Date | | | Date | | | Date | | | |
| ID No. | Student Name | Base | Quiz | Points | Base | Quiz | Points | Base | Quiz | Points | New Base |
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*The column headed 'ID No.' (on the extreme left) was added to the original. The main purpose of this sheet is to record students' quiz scores and their 'improvement points'.

## Appendix 3: Samples of the lesson plan used in the main study (Chapter 4)

### 1. Teach: The first segment of the constant cycle of activities in STAD

Time: 1 class period
Main idea: Presenting the lesson
Focused chapter: Dialogue 5 'Asking for change'
Objectives:

- Learning expressions for changing money, as well as related words, phrases and grammar
- Learning how to answer simple 'Yes/No questions' and 'information questions'

Material needed: a lesson plan, a video tape, lesson sheets for Dialogue 5 and worksheets for dictation exercises

Opening:

- Presenting the objectives for this period
- Explaining why these objectives are important (or why students should learn the things shown in objectives), so as to interest students
- Presenting and explaining preparatory information and/or knowledge (e.g., the monetary unit in the U.S.)

Development:

- Distributing and demonstrating lesson sheets for (key) vocabulary items
- Asking students questions regarding the vocabulary items (e.g., their pronunciation) and having them answer the questions as a team (Students have some time to discuss/consult with their team-mates.)
- Distributing worksheets for dictation exercises
- Playing a video tape twice for dictation (individual students dictate the dialogue in the video)
- Having students discuss with their team-mates to submit one sheet (for dictation exercises) as a team
- Having students see their textbook to check the answers of the worksheet, playing the video tape one more time
- Demonstrating the content of the dialogue in the video (and the textbook), as well as explaining cultural backgrounds for the U.S.

Guided Practice:

- Distributing and demonstrating lesson sheets for key sentences
- Asking students questions (in Japanese) concerning what they have learned so far in this period, having students answer the questions as a group

*This sample is translated from Japanese by the author.

## 2. Team study: The second segment of the constant cycle of activities in STAD

Time: 1 class period
Main idea: Students study worksheets in their teams
Focused chapter: Dialogue 5 'Asking for change'
Objectives:

- Learning expressions for changing money, as well as related words, phrases and grammar
- Learning how to answer simple 'Yes/No questions' and 'information questions'

Material needed: a lesson plan, 'worksheets for team study' and 'answer sheets' for the worksheet

Outline of this lesson:

- Reviewing objectives
- Reviewing vocabulary items and key sentences in the lesson sheets (distributed in the previous period)
- Asking students questions regarding the vocabulary items and key sentences to make sure that they have understood the content of the lesson sheets (Students have some time to discuss/consult with their team-mates and answer the questions as a team.)
- Writing 'team rules' (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3) on the blackboard and explaining them
- Distributing 'worksheets for team study' and 'answer sheets' for the worksheet
- Demonstrating how to work with their team-mates by using these materials
- Having students work on these materials in their team (in pairs or threes)
- Giving advance notice that there will be an individual quiz on the materials in the next period, as well as providing a brief explanation of 'team scores', 'individual improvement scores' and 'awards' for teams (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3)

## 3. Test: The third segment of the constant cycle of activities in STAD

Time: 25 to 30 minutes
Main idea: Students taking an individual quiz without any help from others
Focused chapter: Dialogue 5 'Asking for change'
Material needed: quizzes for the chapter

Outline of the test:

- Giving students some time (10 to 15 minutes) to study for the quiz with their team-mates
- Distributing the quiz and giving students 15 minutes to complete it
- Collecting the quiz from students and notifying them that their quiz scores, together with their 'team scores' and 'awards' for teams, will be available in the next period

*For the rest of this period, the second routine of the STAD schedules (e.g., 'teach' and 'team study') had begun and was being conducted.

## 4. Team recognition: The last segment of the constant cycle of activities in STAD

Main idea: Comprehending 'individual improvement scores' and 'team scores', in addition to rewarding teams

Outline of team recognition:

- Returning students' quizzes with Team Summary Sheet and demonstrating 'individual improvement scores' and 'team scores'

  *The first base score was assigned on the basis of the teacher's best guess and the scores in the standardised language test which students took at the beginning of cooperative learning.)

- Rewarding teams

  **For the rest of this period, the second routine of the STAD schedules (e.g., 'team study' and 'test') was conducted.

***This sample is translated from Japanese by the author.

## Appendix 4: Interview guides used in the main study (Chapter 4)

### 1. The interview guide used at the beginning of cooperative learning

Peer cooperation

1. Can you tell me about how you usually work with your classmates in class?

   Probes: Can you tell me how your classmates help and/or teach you?; Can you tell me how you help and/or teach your classmates?; Can you give me an example?; Can you tell me in what ways/why your classmates do not help and/or teach you?; Can you tell me in what ways/why you do not help and/or teach your classmates?; Can you give me an example?

Expectancy

2. Do you think that your level of 'expectation' (of how well you can do the class work in English classes) is higher or lower than your class-mates' (levels of expectation)?

   Probes: Why is it lower/higher?; What might make it higher/lower?; Can you give me an example?

L2 classroom motivation

3. Do you think that your level of motivation to learn English in class is higher or lower than your class-mates' (levels of motivation)?

   Probes: Why is it lower/higher?; What might make it higher/lower?; Can you give me an example?

Students' own perceptions of their levels of English

4. Can you tell me what your level of English is?

   Probes: (overall, grammar, reading, listening, speaking) Can you give me an example?

*This guide is translated from Japanese by the author.

## 2. The interview guide used at the end of cooperative learning

Peer Cooperation

1. Do you think that the way you work with your class-mates in class, at present, has changed or hasn't changed compared with how you felt about it at the beginning of the class?
   Probes: Can you tell me in what ways?; Why has it (not) changed?; Can you give me an example?

Expectancy

2. Do you think that your level of 'expectation' (or expectancy) in the class, at present, has changed or hasn't changed compared with how you felt about it at the beginning of the class?
   Probes: Can you tell me in what ways?; Why has it (not) changed?; Can you give me an example?

L2 classroom motivation

3. Do you think that your level of motivation to learn English in class, at present, has changed or hasn't changed compared with how you felt about it at the beginning of the class?
   Probes: Can you tell me in what ways?; Why has it (not) changed?; Can you give me an example?

Students' own perception of their levels of English

4. Do you think that your level of English, at present, has changed or hasn't changed compared with how you felt about it at the beginning of the class?
   Probes: (overall, grammar, reading, listening, speaking) Can you tell me in what ways?; Why has it (not) changed?; Can you give me an example?

Relations between key variables

* For this section, the diagram (see Appendix 5) was shown to the interviewees.

5. Do you think that peer cooperation is related or not related to your level of 'expectation' (or expectancy)?
   Probes: Why?; In what ways?; Can you give me an example?

6. Do you think that your level of 'expectation' (or expectancy) is related or not related to your level of motivation to learn English in class?
   Probes: Why?; In what ways?; Can you give me an example?

7. Do you think that peer cooperation is related or not related to your level of English?
   Probes: Why?; In what ways?; Can you give me an example?

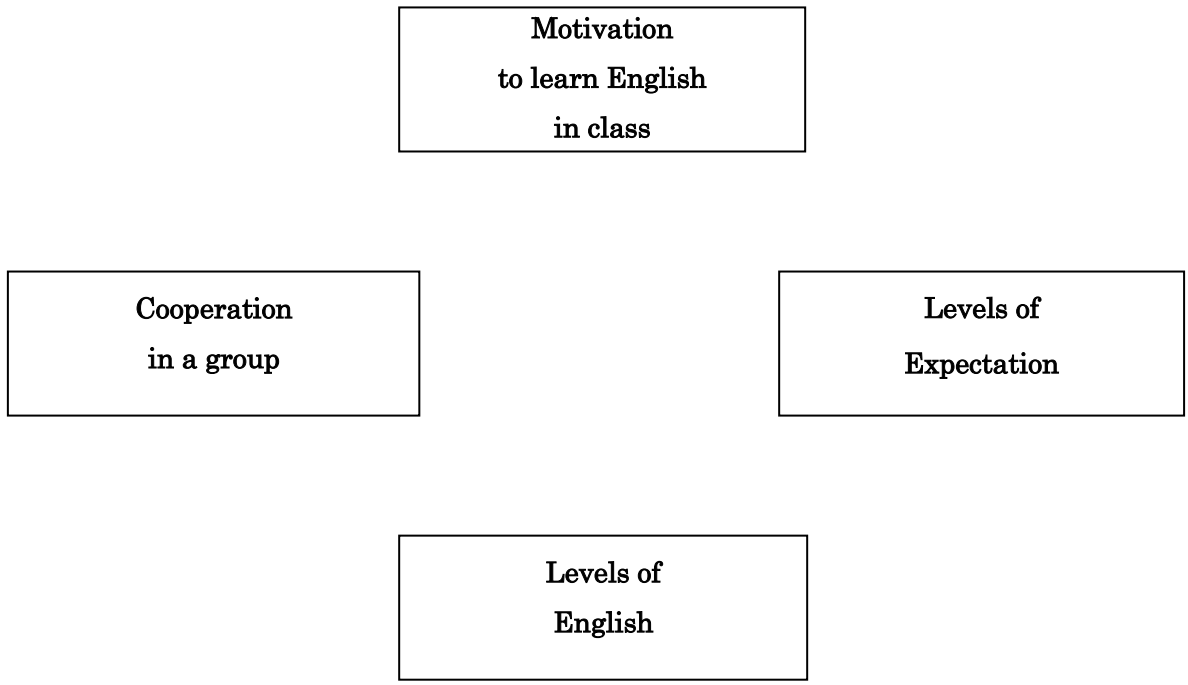
8. Do you think that your level of English is related or not related to your level of 'expectation' (or expectancy)?
   Probes: Why?; In what ways?; Can you give me an example?

9. Do you think that there are any other possible relationships between these four (the variables in this diagram)?
   Probes: Why?; In what ways?; Can you give me an example?

*This guide is translated from Japanese by the author.

## Appendix 5: Diagram used in the main study (Chapter 4)

### 1. The diagram used for the interviews at the end of cooperative learning



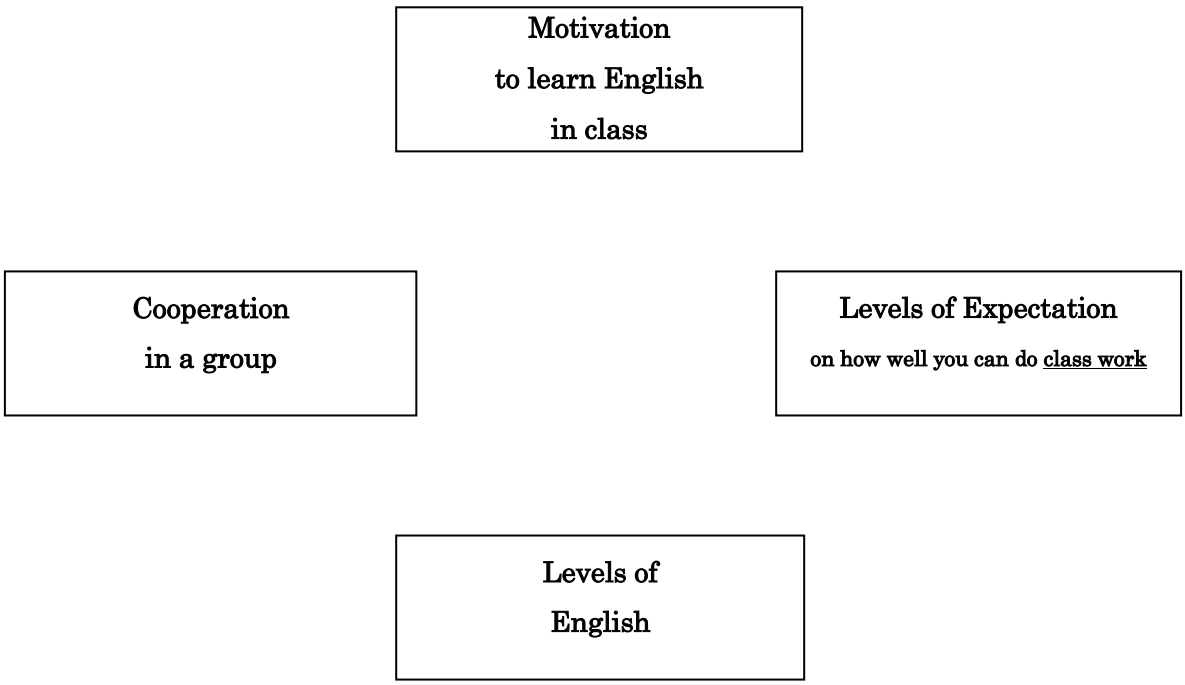

*The words in the boxes in this diagram are translated from Japanese by the author.

## 2. 'Opinions on the diagram' used at the beginning and the end of cooperative learning

Name: _____ Date: _____

**Please indicate your opinion on this diagram by using the blank space as you like.**

(*Please note that 'class work' means all the exercises, activities and assignments you have to do in the class.)




*The words in the boxes in this diagram are translated from Japanese by the author.

## Appendix 6: The Cooperation Questionnaire used in the main study (Chapter 4)

## 1. The Cooperation Questionnaire used at the beginning of cooperative learning

Class: _____ Student ID No.: _____ Date: _____
Gender: M / F Faculty / Course: _____ / _____
Name: _____ Tel:(Home)_____ (Mobile)_____

In the following section, please indicate your opinion after each statement by putting an '×' in the box that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement. When you think that it depends on each class, please push yourself to a generalization that seems mostly true. Example:

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Milk is unhealthy. | □ Strongly disagree | □ Disagree | □ Slightly disagree | □ Partly agree | □ Agree | □ Strongly agree |

If you think, for example, that there is something to this statement but it is somewhat exaggerated, you could put an '×' in the fourth box (Partly agree).

Concerning the English classes you have taken in the past (Lower and Upper Secondary Schools, and University), please indicate your opinion in relation to each statement.

✱ Note that 'class work' means all the exercises, activities and assignments you have to do in the class.

1. When I don't understand something, I ask classmates.
2. When I do class work, I don't help my classmates.
3. I can't do class work well.
4. When I do class work, my classmates don't encourage me.
5. When I do class work, my classmates help me.
6. When I do class work, I don't encourage my classmates.
7. When I do class work, my classmates encourage me.
8. When I don't understand something, I don't ask my classmates.
9. When I do class work, I encourage my classmates.
10. When I do class work, I help my classmates.
11. When I do class work, I'm confident.
12. When I do class work, my classmates don't help me.

*The questionnaire is translated from Japanese by the author.

## 2. The Cooperation Questionnaire used at the end of cooperative learning

In addition to the 12 items shown in 1 of Appendix 6 (see the previous page), the following comment sheet for each item was used at the end of cooperative learning:

Name: _____ Date: _____

By using a red pen, please indicate your present opinion on the questionnaire which you have already marked at the beginning of this class by putting an '×' in the box that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. If your opinions have changed, please give reasons why they have changed in each space, numbered 1~12, corresponding to the statements of the questionnaire. Even if your opinions have not changed, please feel free to write a comment in each space.

<Reasons why my opinions have changed, and other comments>

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____

♦Please write any comments concerning cooperating with your team-mates in the space below.

*The questionnaire is translated from Japanese by the author.

## Appendix 7: The Background Questionnaire used in the main study (Chapter 4)

*This questionnaire was used at the beginning of cooperative learning.

This is not a test. The purpose of this questionnaire is to improve your English learning in class. Please give your answers candidly as only this will help to achieve its purpose. It is guaranteed that no one except the researcher will know what you write down.

Class: _____ Student ID No.: _____ Date: _____
Gender: M / F Age: _____ Faculty / Course: _____ / _____
Name: _____ Tel:(Home)_____ (Mobile)_____
Email: _____
Junior High School: Private / Public Name of School: _____
High School: Private / Public Name of School: _____

◆ Have you studied English in your elementary school? Yes / No
If you answer 'Yes' to the question above, please fill in the blank below:
Elementary School: Private / Public Name of School: _____

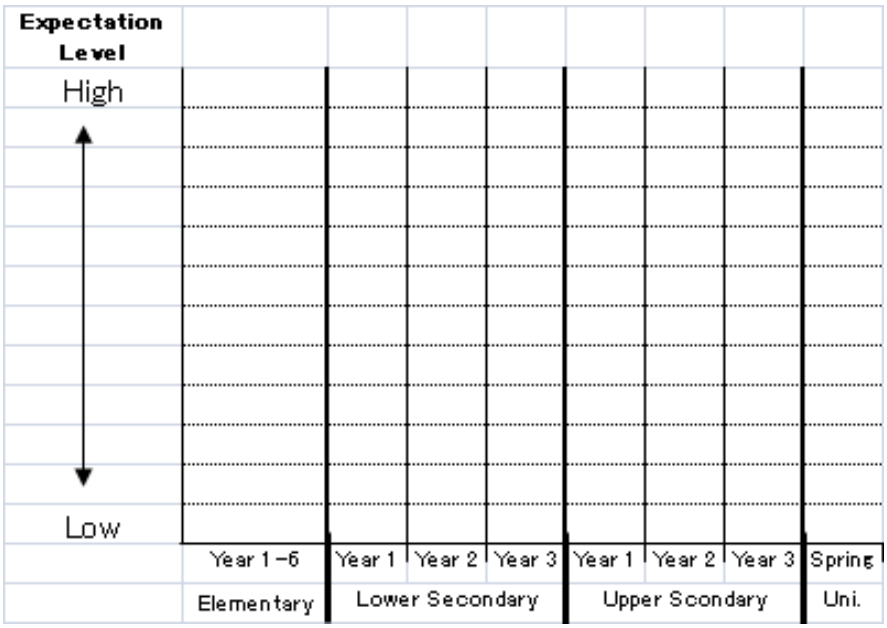
◆ How much do you like working with your classmates in English classes? Please indicate your opinion by putting an '×' in the box that best describes what you feel.

| □ | □ | □ | □ | □ | □ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strongly unwilling | Unwilling | Slightly unwilling | Slightly willing | Willing | Strongly willing |

◆ Concerning your opinion above, please explain the reasons why you feel that way as descriptively as possible.

◆ Please draw your 'expectation level' on how well you have been able to do class work in English classes in the past (from elementary school to university) by using the following graph:

- ✱ Please note that 'expectation level' means how well you expect you can do class work in English classes.
- ✱ Please note that 'class work' means all the exercises, activities and assignments you have to do in the class.




◆ Please explain the turning points when your 'expectation level' was getting higher and/or lower.

◆ Please make any other comments on your English classes which you think are justified by an English class in lower or upper secondary school. In particular, point out the classes which you felt were at too high a level to understand or were easy to understand and enjoyable.

**The questionnaire is translated from Japanese by the author.

## Appendix 8: Reasons given by participants for their perceived levels of *expectancy* during the cooperative learning stage (Chapter 5)

### 1. At the beginning of the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews carried out at the beginning of this stage)

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy were low (at the beginning of CL) (1/5/4)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of expectancy were low because they couldn't understand elementary level English (Ichiro 2, Ken 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation*: *"… When I study in (English) class… I feel 'how stupid I am' because I don't understand anything… I don't even know elementary level English… So, it (my level of expectancy) is low… In class… it is very rare that I understand something." (Ichiro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy were moderate (at the beginning of CL) (1/2/2)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of expectancy were moderate because they could understand English moderately (Hiroshi 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation*: *"My level of expectancy is not so low but not so high… Probably because I didn't study elementary level English so well… or I don't remember it so well… But I wouldn't say I can't understand anything about English… " (Hiroshi)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL
****Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.

## 2. Regarding the changes they perceived (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)

Research question 1a: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of CL*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had increased (5/24/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I understand English much better than before because my team-mates taught me many things. I couldn't even understand elementary level English at the beginning of this class. But I could ask my peers very basic things (about English) because we belonged to the same team. I couldn't ask such things before… Now, I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before… (For example) when a teacher called on me in class, I couldn't answer anything before. But now I feel I can answer a question from the teacher somehow…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English (Taro 1, Tatsuya 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… level of English is definitely related to expectancy… Because I feel a little more confident of doing class work than before. I think it's because I feel I can understand English more than before…" (Taro)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt that they could do the work more reliably and/or faster through working with their peers (Ayumi 2, Taro 4, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 2, Hiroshi 3, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…I could expect that I could do class work better than before. Because I could do the work faster and avoid misunderstanding it through working together with my team-mates." (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt they had developed confidence about doing the work through working with their peers (Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "My expectancy is higher than before. Because when I worked with my team-mates, particularly when we did dictation exercises, I* |

| | |
|---|---|
| | *felt a sense of relief by seeing how much others could do or knowing that others had the same answers as mine. There were low achievers like me in my team… And when I saw that others had the same answer as mine, I felt confident of my answer… So, I became more confident about doing class work than before." (Taro)*<br><br>Reason Type 5: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt superior to their team (Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…My expectancy is higher than before. (Because) I could recognise how well I could do class work through working with my team-mates… (For example,) When doing dictation exercises, I could write more than others in my group. (Through such experiences)… I became more confident (of doing class work) than before… I mean I couldn't recognise that I could do better than others if I worked alone… So, the 'team working system' worked for me in a way…" (Hiroshi)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of expectancy had remained low (2/3/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt that their levels of English remained low (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "My expectancy remains low. It's not changed at all (compared with the beginning of this semester). Because I know I can't understand English. I still don't know elementary level English. So, it's impossible for me to expect to be able to do class work well." (Ken)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had remained unconfident about coping with the work because they felt inferior to their team (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I felt inferior to others because I had to work in a team… Hiroshi was sitting next to me and I felt his level of English was much higher than mine. And his listening ability was incredible to me. Also, when the other team-mates were discussing something together, I couldn't join them because I couldn't understand what they were talking about. So, I'm still not at all confident to do class work and my expectancy remains low." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

## Appendix 9: Reasons given by participants for their perceived *levels of English* during the cooperative learning stage (Chapter 5)

### 1. At the beginning of the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews carried out at the beginning of this stage)

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) were low (at the beginning of CL) (1/5/4)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) were low because they didn't even know elementary level English (Ichiro 2, Ken 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I didn't study English very much at secondary school. Particularly, at upper secondary school... My school was a commercial school and it focuses on commercial related subjects rather than other (academic) subjects, such as English... I also didn't like (studying) English at all. So, now I don't even know elementary level English..." (Ayumi)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) were moderate (at the beginning of CL) (1/2/2)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) were moderate because they could understand English moderately (Hiroshi 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I can understand English to a certain level but I'm not so confident…Probably because… I didn't study elementary level English so well… or I don't remember it so well…" (Hiroshi)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (grammar) were low (at the beginning of CL) (1/6/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (grammar) were low because they didn't know elementary level English grammar (Ichiro 1, Ken 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (my level of English grammar) is definitely low. Because I don't even know elementary level (English) grammar at all." (Tatsuya)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (reading) were low (at the beginning of CL) (1/2/2)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (reading) were low because they couldn't even read short sentences in English (Ichiro 1, Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (my level of English reading) is definitely low. Because I can't even read or understand short sentences in the materials used in this class." (Ken)* |

| | |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (reading) were moderate (at the beginning of CL) (1/4/4)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (reading) were moderate because they could understand the overall meaning of English passages even if they couldn't understand them in detail (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (my level of English reading) is not as bad as my grammar… Because I can understand the overall meaning of English passages… Even if I can't understand some parts of the passages, there are always some 'clues or information' to help me understand their main meaning when I read the previous or later parts of the passages. But I'm not saying that I can understand them in detail, I only understand the main meaning…" (Tatsuya)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) were low (at the beginning of CL) (1/2/2)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (listening) were low because they couldn't understand what people said in English at all (Ichiro 1, Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I can't understand what people say in English at all… " (Ichiro 1)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) were moderate (at the beginning of CL) (1/4/4)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (listening) were moderate because they could understand the general meaning of what people said in English (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I did some listening practice in the last secondary school. So, I can understand what people say in English to some extent… I can't understand difficult things. But at least I can understand the general meaning of what they say." (Hiroshi)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (speaking) were low (at the beginning of CL) (1/6/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (speaking) were low because they couldn't speak English at all (Ichiro 1, Ken 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It's just impossible for me to speak English. I just know I can't." (Hiroshi)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL
****Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.

## 2. Regarding the changes they perceived (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)

Research question 1b: *Do they perceive any changes in their levels of English between the beginning and the end of CL?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) had increased (4/28/8)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English because they worked with their peers (Ichiro 4, Hiroshi 5, Ayumi 2, Taro 2, Tatsuya 1, Jiro 1, Eiji 1, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "Working with my team-mates was really useful for me. Our team became much more cooperative than at the beginning (of this semester). So, I became more able to understand English than before, I think. And I could also correct my misunderstandings by teaching and helping my team-mates…" (Yuji)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to cope with the work because they felt increasingly able to understand English through working with their peers (Ichiro 3, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I understand English much better than before because my team-mates taught me many things. I couldn't even understand elementary level English at the beginning of this class. But I could ask my peers very basic things (about English) because we belonged to the same team. I couldn't ask such things before… Now, I feel a little more confident about doing class work than before… (For example) when a teacher called on me in class, I couldn't answer anything before. But now I feel I can answer a question from the teacher somehow…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English through cooperating with their peers (Hiroshi 2, Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "In the last semester I mostly worked alone in (English) class, so there were many things I didn't understand (in class). I used to think 'I'm in an awkward situation'… But throughout this semester I've realised I can understand many things (about English unlike before) through discussing them with team-mates… So, I think I'm more motivated than before… " (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that their levels of English had increased |

| | |
|---|---|
| | because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I've been working with my team-mates in this semester, so… I'm much more motivated than before… There was only one time when I got extremely low points on a quiz… At that time… I felt guilty towards my team-mates because it was only me who got low points. Then, I got higher points on the next quiz… I think it's because I studied more than before." (Taro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (overall) had remained low (1/2/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (overall) had remained low because they became less motivated (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "My (overall) level of English has not changed at all, I think... Because I'm not motivated to study (English) at all... I can say that my motivation is less than before..." (Ken)*<br>*"I think that motivation, level of English and expectancy have a circular connection. My case is a negative circular connection. My level of expectancy remains low… I know I can't do class work anyway. So, I became less motivated than before…And then my level of English is also low because I'm not motivated to study. And my expectancy can't go up because my level of English remains low. This circular connection goes on and on, I think." (Ken)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (grammar) had increased (2/4/4)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (grammar) because they had done the work somehow (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I know how to use verbs a bit, unlike before… Because I attended this class and did class work somehow." (Ken)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (grammar) because they listened to the teacher's lecture more carefully and worked with their peers (Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… It (my level of English in grammar) improved! I can write English sentences unlike before… I carefully listened to the teacher's description of grammar, unlike before. And I asked my peers when I didn't understand something. I asked them until I could understand… I mean my attitude in class totally changed… These processes helped me to understand English, I think. So, I feel I understand English now…" (Ichiro)* |

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| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (grammar) had remained low (1/2/2)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (grammar) had remained low because they still felt hopeless about understanding grammar (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I think it (my level of English in grammar) is still the same as before… (Because) I had been poor at doing grammatical problems from secondary school… I had felt hopeless about understanding grammar. And the feeling didn't go away…" (Hiroshi)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (reading) had remained low or moderate (1/6/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (reading) had remained low or moderate only because they hadn't studied to read better (Ken 1, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (my level of English reading) has not changed at all… I just concentrated on studying grammar and I didn't have enough energy to study reading… And there wasn't any class work for reading in class…" (Ichiro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) had increased (2/5/5)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (listening) because they worked with their peers (Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I think I can understand what people say in English more than before… Working in a group helped to improve my listening ability… If I worked alone (for listening exercises), I would easily give up listening to English. Because if I couldn't write a sentence or phrase completely in one blank (in dictation exercises), whatever I wrote in the blank would be a wrong answer. But when I worked with my peers, we could often find right answers by putting my incomplete answer and my peers' incomplete ones together…Our discussion (about dictation) got more and more active… So, I didn't give up on listening exercises easily. That's why my listening ability improved more than before, I guess." (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more able to understand English (listening) because they had done the work somehow (Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I feel it (my level of listening in English) improved more than before… (In dictation exercises) I could clearly write the 'key sentences' I heard which I had learned earlier in this class… I think that all the class work I did helped to improve my listening ability." (Tatsuya)* |

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| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (listening) had remained low (1/1/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (listening) had remained low but they didn't know why (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (my level of listening in English) didn't change at all. (What do you think was the reason it didn't change?) I don't know why." (Ken)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of English (speaking) had remained low (1/6/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that their levels of English (speaking) had remained low because they didn't have any chance to speak English in real situations outside the class (Ken 1, Ichiro 1, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1, Ayumi 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (my ability to speak English) didn't change at all. Because I've never talked with a foreigner in English outside the class. And there is no such chance." (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that quotations about the 'overall' level of English (the very first section of this table) include some quotations about specific levels of English (e.g. listening) in cases where they belong to the same 'reason type'.
*****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other. Also, there are cases in which some quotations are related to two or more different reasons.
******(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

## Appendix 10: Reasons given by participants for their perceived levels of L2 classroom *motivation* during the cooperative learning stage (Chapter 5)

### 1. At the beginning of the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews carried out at the beginning of this stage)

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that they were not motivated (at the beginning of CL) (2/4/3)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they were not motivated because they didn't need to use English (Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…I'm not motivated… Because I don't have any purpose to study English…I don't need to use English, at least for now." (Ayumi)*<br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they were not motivated because of their low levels of expectancy (or of English) (Ichiro 2, Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…I don't like studying English because I know I can't understand or do anything in English class." (Ichiro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that they were moderately motivated (at the beginning of CL) (3/4/3)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they were moderately motivated because they wanted to speak to foreigners (Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…I'm motivated to some extent now…Because I'd like to speak to foreigners…I have a part time job and many foreigners come to the work place…But they don't understand what I say in English at all. So, if I could speak English a bit more, it would make a big difference (at work), I guess." (Hiroshi)*<br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they were moderately motivated because they felt that the class was useful and the teacher was interesting (Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I'm motivated to some extent… because this class seems to cultivate the ability to express and describe something to others… Such ability will be useful in the future, I think… Also, I think that the teacher is interesting. It is also the reason for my motivation…" (Tatsuya)*<br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they were moderately motivated because of a sense of responsibility to their parents (Taro 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "…as I said earlier, my parents pay my tuition fees… So, I'm motivated (by a sense of responsibility to my parents) at least to some extent…" (Taro)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).

**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

## 2. Regarding the changes they perceived (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)

Research question 2a: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had increased (7/35/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt that they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers (Ayumi 5, Ichiro 2, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… my team-mates praised me (for what I did in class)… saying things like 'You made it!'… Such words (from team-mates) generated… 'cohesion' (within our team) and we got closer to each other within our team and then the class became more fun. Having more fun in class made me motivated. 'Having fun'… never ends. I've been motivated more and more by having fun…" (Ayumi)*<br>*"I'm definitely more motivated than before… (Because) In my team, we get on well with each other, so we have much more fun in class (than at the beginning of CL). 'Having fun' made me more motivated, I think." (Tatsuya)*<br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 2, Ayumi 2, Tatsuya 4, Ichiro 1, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I had been working alone (in English classes) in the last semester, so I hadn't cared about my mark so much although I had been motivated to some extent. Because even if my mark got worse, it hadn't influenced the marks of others… But this semester there was the 'team points system' (in this class)… It (the team points system) made me concerned about my marks a bit more… I felt like all my team-mates would go down if I did something wrong… (So,) I was trying to study in this class more than before… I think I had been just sitting in the classroom in the last semester… But in this semester I sometimes felt I was taking part in the class… I was trying to make an effort (to study)… At the beginning of this semester, I didn't realise I'd be like this…" (Taro)* |

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| | Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English (Ichiro 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I'm motivated to do class work on my own now (unlike before), because I understand English unlike before (when compared with the beginning of this class)." (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to cope with the work (Tatsuya 2, Hiroshi 1, Taro 1, Ichiro 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I feel I'm much more able to do class work than before. That's definitely one of the reasons why I'm more motivated than before…" (Tatsuya)*<br><br>Reason Type 5: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt that their listening ability improved (Ichiro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "... I became able to understand what people said (in English) unlike before… I've improved a bit… Before this semester I hadn't even tried to listen to English because I couldn't understand anything. But now I haven't given up listening to English… At the beginning of this semester, I wasn't motivated at all but my motivation is definitely changed… I'm motivated, unlike before…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 6: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they felt increasingly able to understand English through cooperating with their peers (Hiroshi 2, Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "In the last semester I mostly worked alone in (English) class, so there were many things I didn't understand (in class). I used to think 'I'm in an awkward situation'… But throughout this semester I've realised I can understand many things (about English unlike before) through discussing them with team-mates… So, I think I'm more motivated than before… " (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 7: Participants felt that their levels of English had increased because they had become more motivated by a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Taro 1, Ayumi 2)* |

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| | *Example quotation: "… I've been working with my team-mates in this semester, so… I'm much more motivated than before… There was only one time when I got extremely low points on a quiz… At that time… I felt guilty towards my team-mates because it was only me who got low points. Then, I got higher points on the next quiz… I think it's because I studied more than before." (Taro)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation fluctuated (1/1/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they became less motivated when they couldn't understand the work but became more motivated when they could (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "…When I didn't understand something in a row (in class), my motivation went down… But when I could complete some class work myself, my motivation went up…" (Ken)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants who felt that their levels of motivation had decreased (3/4/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt inferior to their team (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "My motivation at present is lower than before… because… I felt like all other team-mates understood English (except me)… I felt this on many occasions… (For example,) when there was a discussion (about class work) in our team, all the other team-mates discussed it a lot with each other. But I didn't even understand what was going on… I think that all the team members should be at the same achievement level. Otherwise, low achievers like me become less motivated…" (Ken)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they couldn't understand many things in class (Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "My overall motivation decreased a bit lower than before… Because there were many things I couldn't understand in class." (Ken)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become less motivated because they felt that their levels of expectancy remained low (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "I think that motivation, level of English and expectancy have a circular connection. My case is the negative circular connection. My level of expectancy remains low… I know I can't do class work anyway. So, I became less motivated than before…And then my level of English is also low because I'm not motivated to study. And my expectancy can't go up because my level of English remains low. This circular connection goes on and on, I think."* |

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| | *(Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

## Appendix 11: Reasons given by participants for their perceived nature of *peer cooperation* during the cooperative learning stage (Chapter 6)

### 1. At the beginning of the cooperative learning stage (data obtained from interviews carried out at the beginning of this stage)

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants whose impression of peer cooperation was negative (at the beginning of CL) (5/19/6)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they asked their peers few questions because they were not used to their peers (Hiroshi 2, Taro 2, Tatsuya 2, Ayumi 2, Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation*: *"… In secondary schools, classmates were always the same in any classes and we became friends easily. But in university, classmates are different in each class… So, I don't feel comfortable to ask (my peers) questions yet…" (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they didn't teach their peers because their levels of English were too low to teach (Ayumi 1, Ichiro 1, Taro 1, Ken 1)*<br>*Example quotation*: *"… I've never taught anyone in English class. Because I know I can't… I don't even know elementary level of English. So, it's just impossible for me to teach…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they asked their peers for answers because they were concerned about their marks (Ichiro 1, Taro 1, Ayumi 1)*<br>*Example quotation*: *"I asked my peers for answers, particularly when the teacher called on me in class. Because I'm not comfortable with not being able to answer the teacher…I'm afraid that my marks will be affected (by not answering)… I asked someone around me for an answer and responded to the teacher with the answer…" (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that they occasionally asked their peers questions because they couldn't do the work despite all their efforts (Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation*: *"I occasionally asked my peers questions, but only when I couldn't do class work despite all my efforts. For example, when I still didn't know what to do about the work after using a dictionary, I asked my peers." (Hiroshi)* |

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| | Reason Type 5: Participants felt that they occasionally taught their peers because they were asked (Hiroshi 1, Tatsuya 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I occasionally taught my peers. But I taught them only when I was asked." (Hiroshi)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese. Also, some quotations are about what participants had experienced in the previous semester because they didn't have enough experience to comment on peer cooperation at the beginning of cooperative learning.
****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

## 2. Regarding the changes that they perceived (data obtained from interviews and questionnaires collected when this stage had ended)

Research questions 3a & 3b: *Looking at low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university, do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of CL? If so, what changes do they perceive?*

| Reasons | Reason Type |
|---|---|
| Reasons expressed by participants whose impression of peer cooperation had become more positive (7/46/10)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had become more cooperative because of a developing sense of belonging to their team (Ichiro 1, Taro 2, Tatsuya 4, Jiro 3, Yuji 1, Eiji 1, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "It (how I cooperated with my peers) changed! …it was much easier to communicate with the peers all around me because we belonged to the same team… When I asked them questions, they answered me respectfully… There were no high achieving students in our team who could understand English very well. So, we sometimes had to ask the teacher (questions) or think together by using dictionaries… I had team-mates who could teach me. And I sometimes taught them, unlike before… Because we had such a (class) environment…I was a lot more cooperative (to my peers than at the beginning of this semester)…" (Ichiro)*<br>*Example quotation: "I tried to teach my peers, unlike before, because we belonged to the same team." (Jiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 2: Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because they had good relationships with them (Ayumi 2, Taro 1, Tatsuya 1, Jiro 2, Takashi 2, Naoki 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I had hesitated to ask my peers questions before because my level of English was lower than others'. But I could put many more* |

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| | *questions to my peers than before. Because we belonged to the same team and had good relationships with each other…" (Ayumi)*<br><br>Reason Type 3: Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of belonging to their team (Ichiro 1, Taro 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I definitely asked my peers more questions than before. Because we belonged to the same team and then I could ask elementary level questions without any hesitation…" (Taro)*<br><br>Reason Type 4: Participants felt that they had become able to put more questions to their peers because of a developing sense of responsibility for their peers (Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "There was the team points system in this class. So, I asked my peers many more questions than before… I tried to ask (questions) more actively because I felt a sense of responsibility for my team … " (Hiroshi)*<br><br>Reason Type 5: Participants felt that they had become more bonded with their peers because they got on well with them (Tatsuya 1, Ichiro 1, Taro 3, Ayumi 1, Jiro 3, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "I felt a sense of unity with my peers because we got on very well with each other." (Taro)*<br><br>Reason Type 6: Participants felt that they had had more fun in class by joining discussions in their team (Ichiro 1, Yuji 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… I gave my opinion when we discussed something in my team… It was really fun to join the discussion. I've never had such an experience before… I felt I took part in the class myself… So, I had much more fun in class than before (the beginning of this semester)… " (Ichiro)*<br><br>Reason Type 7: Participants felt that they had become more motivated because they were having more fun in class now that they were getting on well with their peers (Ayumi 5, Ichiro 2, Tatsuya 1, Hiroshi 1)*<br>*Example quotation: "… my team-mates praised me (for what I did in class)… saying things like 'You made it!'… Such words (from team-mates) generated… 'cohesion' (within our team) and we got closer to each other within our team and then the class got more fun. Having more fun in class made me motivated.* |

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| | *'Having fun'… never ends. I've been motivated more and more by having fun…" (Ayumi)* |
| Reasons expressed by participants whose impression of peer cooperation had remained negative (1/2/1)** | Reason Type 1: Participants felt that they had remained reluctant to ask their peers questions because they felt that peer cooperation was still individual work in reality (Ken 2)*<br>*Example quotation: "I asked my peers questions a little… But I still felt reluctant to ask them questions… Because I thought that working with team-mates was meaningless. Although my team-mates worked together, it was only on the surface. I mean that 'in reality' they worked 'individually', not together. I saw that they memorised English words or key sentences outside the class. That's individual work, I think… " (Ken)* |

*Round brackets after each reason type indicate the names of participants followed by the number of quotations from each participant (e.g., Ayumi 1).
**The first, second and third numbers in these brackets refer respectively to the number of reasons given, the number of quotations provided and the number of participants involved.
***Please note that the example quotations are translated from Japanese.
****Please note that some reasons/quotations in this table overlap with reasons/quotations in other tables because the four variables (peer cooperation, L2 classroom motivation, level of English and expectancy) are closely related to each other.
*****(The) cooperative learning (stage) = CL

## Appendix 12: List of research questions

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| ***All research questions concern *low-achieving EFL students in a Japanese university*.**<br><br>**RQ1a:** Looking at these students, do they perceive any changes in their levels of expectancy between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?<br><br>**RQ1b:** Do they perceive any changes in their levels of English between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?<br><br>**RQ1c:** Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of English are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?<br><br>**RQ1d:** If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship? |
| **RQ2a:** Do they perceive any changes in their levels of motivation to learn EFL in class between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?<br><br>**RQ2b:** Do they think that changes in their perceived levels of expectancy are related to changes in their perceived levels of motivation to learn EFL in class?<br><br>**RQ2c:** If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship? |
| **RQ3a:** Do they perceive any changes in the nature of their peer cooperation between the beginning and the end of cooperative learning?<br><br>**RQ3b:** If so, what changes do they perceive? |
| **RQ4a:** Do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of English?<br><br>**RQ4b:** If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship? |
| **RQ5:** Do their actual levels of peer cooperation relate to their actual levels of English? |
| **RQ6a:** Do they think that changes in their perceived peer cooperation in cooperative learning are related to changes in their perceived levels of expectancy?<br>**RQ6b:** If so, how do they perceive the nature of the relationship? |
| **RQ7:** When asked an open-ended question about possible links between all four variables, what kinds of relationships do the students perceive? |