Motivation is a vital component of the learning process. ESL researchers have for years argued that motivation to learn and attitudes towards the target language are essential factors in second language learning. My research partner and I were interested in measuring and comparing the “different” types of motivation amongst two different groups of college students.

The purpose of our research was to compare the motivation preferences between two groups of Japanese university students. We suspected that students who studied the natural sciences had different motivational influences from students who majored in the liberal arts. We set out to identify the similarities and differences in the types of motivation to study English by creating a survey to measure motivation. A detailed questionnaire was created to measure the different reasons for studying English. The twenty-seven questions on the survey aimed to measure intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, in addition to instrumental and integrative motivation. Data collected from this survey indicated that both groups of students did share some common motivational traits. For example, we could find no major statistical differences in the students’ extrinsic motivation. However, some differences were discovered on questions that aimed to measure intrinsic and instrumental motivation. The information collected from this data is useful for learning about our students and the type of motivation they have towards learning English. In addition, being aware of the different types of motivation that groups of students bring to class can be helpful in choosing appropriate teaching materials and using the most effective pedagogical approaches to maintain or develop motivation.