

# An Exploration of the Goal Orientations of Japanese EFL Learners

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## Abstract

This study explored the academic and social goals of a group of Japanese University-level English learners from the perspective of Goal Orientation theory. Using self-report survey data from 157 students, this study attempted to confirm the salience of mastery and performance goal orientations as a motivational construct in both academic and social domains for EFL learners in a Japanese university context. In addition, evidence for distinct positive *approach* and negative *avoidance* valences of performance goal orientations was sought. Factor analysis of the data supported mastery/performance distinctions in the academic domain. However, evidence for such a distinction in the social domain was only moderately strong. Finally, no clear evidence for approach and avoidance valences was found in this limited data set.

**Keywords:** Goal Orientation, Motivation, Learner Perceptions, Academic Goals, Social Goals

## 1. Introduction

### (1) Literature Review

#### a) Construct Confusion

The conceptualization of goals as a key motivational construct of interest to teachers and researchers rests on the assumption that goals and the ways an individual approaches the fulfillment of such goals directly influence achievement. Since goals are conscious thoughts that can be elicited from learners of all ages, they can be a practical means to learn more about what drives some learners to persistently work towards success while others easily give up. In school-based contexts, insights from the study of student goals and the set of beliefs learners associate with reaching them offer educators the promise that they can create programs that promote achievement and reduce attrition rates in their classrooms and schools.

Yet despite the intuitive appeal of goals as a framework to examine motivation, a great deal of construct confusion and ambiguity exists in the literature over the nature of goals and their influence on achievement. In their review of motivation terminology Murphy and Alexander attribute this lack of conceptual clarity to the wide variety of terms used in goal-centered studies: *task goal*, *task-involved goal*, *content goal*, *goal orientation*, *learning goal*, *mastery*

*goal, ego-involved goal, performance goal, ego-social goal, and work avoidance goal* among others have all been used by researchers in the field (Murphy & Alexander, 2000). They found that, in general, many of these terms appear to be similar, yet differences in nuance and theoretical groundings among researchers active in this area have complicated efforts to unify the construct.

Bong has pointed to the lack of an overall comprehensive model of motivation as the principle source for the lack of clear and consistent goal terminology and makes the case that differences in cognitive and social-cognitive psychological research traditions have exacerbated the problem (Bong, 1996). For example, cognitive approaches have focused on the individual as the primary locus of control in goal formation. In this tradition, theorists such as Weiner have largely been concerned with the ways learners' internal perceptions, preconceptions, and attributions affect their actions and behavior (Weiner, 1985). In contrast, researchers working in the social-cognitive tradition have been more concerned with the influence of specific social contexts, most notably, classroom and school environments.

#### **b) Developing Goal Orientation Theory**

Covington has traced the historical origins of this conceptual split by looking back at some of the coining of goal theory terms in the work of early motivation researchers such as Atkinson who viewed motivation as a fundamental human drive or need (Covington, 2000). Unlike with Maslow and his hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), Atkinson viewed motivation as a learned need that was largely the result of an individual's natural emotional development. Atkinson thought of motivation as the by-product of two fundamental emotional valences: the *motive to approach success* and the *motive to avoid failure* (Atkinson, 1957). In his work, he applied probabilistic modeling to anticipate the likelihood that an individual would exert effort and persistence arguing that individuals who were disposed to strive for success were more likely to seek challenges and to view setbacks as useful feedback in striving for a goal.

In contrast, individuals who were disposed to avoid failure would tend to exert effort only when goals were either well within their capability or far beyond it. Atkinson's reasoning was that in either of these latter cases, failure would be less threatening to a person's identity since success was either guaranteed or so unlikely that failure to achieve it would not reflect on that person's innate ability or capacity. So in Atkinson's model *motive* is conceptualized as a disposition to strive for a type of satisfaction. *Expectancy* is viewed as a type of cognitive anticipation aroused inside a person when performing an act where success/failure consequences are present. Finally, *incentive* is viewed as the relative attractiveness or unattractive-

ness offered by a specific goal. All three of these variables combined in a probabilistic model to determine an individual's motivation. Atkinson's conceptualization of the opposing emotions of pride and shame to explain fundamental motivational behaviors echoes through many more recent approaches to motivation in general and goal theory in particular. Similarly his explanation of the relationship between motive, expectancy, and incentive as well as the important role of feedback provided a clear framework for both cognitive and social-cognitively oriented motivation researchers.

Early achievement goal researchers have borrowed from Atkinson's conceptualization of motivation as the product of conflicting drives: the appeal of success and the fear of failure. Among the most influential goal researchers in educational contexts has been Dweck who coined the terms *learner/task-mastery* and *performance* goals. For Dweck, the former were associated with achieving competence and mastery while the latter were thought to be goals that were heavily influenced by concerns over how one might be perceived by others. Empirical studies based on both experimental conditions and situated classroom environments have largely supported the existence of this dichotomy between learning/task and performance goals (Elliot & Dweck, 1988).

Other researchers have used a variety of different terms to describe what appear to be very similar dichotomies and the plethora of labels may have slowed the development of a more comprehensive model. However, most researchers currently working on what is now known as a *goal orientation theory* framework tend to refer to the two achievement orientations as *mastery* and *performance* so these terms will be used in subsequent sections of this paper.

As an analytical framework, the mastery/performance dichotomy has great intuitive appeal as it does seem to explain much observable behavior of students in classroom settings. Mastery goal-oriented learners do seem to seek out challenge, have a high tolerance for failure and negative feedback, and tend to expend greater effort over the long-term. In contrast, performance goal-oriented learners behave much differently, appearing to follow maladaptive learning approaches such as the avoidance of new challenges, an overdependence on approval from peers, parents and teachers, fear of failure, and lack of persistence and effort. Nevertheless, several empirical studies have found that performance orientations are not always maladaptive and can, in certain contexts, be associated with positive educational attainment (Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot & Church, 1997; Middleton & Midgley, 1997; Harackiewicz, Barron, Tauer, Carter, & Elliot, 2000; Pintrich, 2000; Grant & Dweck, 2003).

These findings have led goal orientation theory researchers to separate performance goals

into two distinct valences: a *performance approach* and a *performance avoidance* orientation and to look for empirical evidence to support their viability as two distinct orientations. Consistent with Atkinson's early model of motivation, the avoidance valence is associated with the aforementioned negative behaviors while the performance goal orientation is ascribed to those learners who are sufficiently energized by the competition for positive social approval that they do end up successfully achieving their goals. Some researchers such as Pintrich have hypothesized that the approach/avoidance valence may also apply to mastery goal orientations, but to date this remains mostly speculative without broad-based empirical support (Pintrich, 2000b).

### c) Social Goal Orientations

One key difference from Atkinson's framework is the weight goal orientation theorists give to the social context of learning. This is a fundamental difference in that goal orientations are viewed as dispositions that are dynamic and context specific rather than trait-like personality tendencies. For educators this holds out the promise that modifying the learning context can result in changes in a learner's motivational state. Goal orientation theorists believe that learners can develop more mastery oriented behaviors and can be scaffolded from highly directed towards more autonomous learning states. Ames has called for practitioners to change their classroom structures in three distinct areas: in the tasks teachers assign, the way authority is structured in the classroom, and the way evaluation is done (Ames & Archer, 1988; Ames, 1992).

As researchers have learned more about learners' academic goal orientations, there is growing recognition of the need to examine learners' social goal orientations as well. The powerful negative consequences on attainment that occur when the cultural norms of the school conflict with the cultural norms of learners' ethnic or gender group are well known among educators (Ogbu, 1985; Blumenfeld, 1992; McCaslin & Good, 1992). Although less obvious, it seems logical to assume that group norms play a significant role in establishing the measures of social comparison implicit in the approach and avoidance valences inherent in academic goal orientation theory.

So what happens when social goals and academic goals collide? Wentzel points out that goals can develop both from within an individual and from the surrounding social environment (Wentzel, 1991). Students may have a primary goal to socialize with friends and be swept along by highly motivated mastery oriented peers. On the other hand, students who are intrinsically motivated may be persuaded to forgo study for group acceptance and ap-

proval. In reality, students undoubtedly must constantly balance both social and academic goals. For example, they may struggle to reconcile the desire to minimize work with the desire to learn new things. Having fun with friends or being responsible to a class group may help learners to persist with learning something even though they may find little appeal in the achievement itself. Clearly social goals must influence academic goals on some level as learners rarely study in complete isolation. However, the exact nature of the relationship has yet to be fully explored.

Some researchers have tried to apply the same logic from academic goal orientation theory and have hypothesized a similar mastery/performance approach/performance avoidance framework. Researchers working primarily with university students in North America have found some empirical support for the existence of these variables (Horst, Finney, & Barron, 2007; Ryan & Shim, 2006). However, longer-term studies with different learner populations have yet to be done. Urdan and Mestas did a small-scale interview study of fifty-three high school students drawn from two urban American schools. They discovered evidence for two social goal orientations, one focused on *social competition*, which is how one does relative to others, and the second on *social appearance* to others, which refers to how one is perceived and evaluated by others. Moreover, they found support in their students' responses for adding an approach and avoidance valence to both the competition and appearance goal orientations (Urdan & Mestas, 2006). So there is good reason to speculate that social goals can be influenced by both a disposition to approach success and a tendency to want to avoid failure. What is less clear is that the mastery/performance distinction holds true in other cultures and learning contexts. Unlike with academic goal orientations, generalizations about social goal orientations may be much more difficult to support across cultures and age groups. Group norms and cultural expectations are likely to be more dynamic and changeable than academic goals for school age learners.

## **(2) Rationale**

Empirical support for goal orientation theory and its influence on achievement has primarily come from North American educational contexts. However, since performance goal orientation is thought to be heavily influenced by what others think, it seems logical to question whether performance goal orientation will function in the same way for Japanese ELT learners as it does for other school groups in the United States.

In Asian cultures where group and social norms are likely to be quite different from those in North America, social goal orientations may be conceptualized quite differently by learners.

Some researchers in Asia acknowledge the existence of cultural differences, but believe that motivational goals are more trait-like universal tendencies that transcend cultures. They argue that all humans, regardless of the culture they are socialized in, strive to master challenges, relate well with others, and become autonomous (Wu, 2003). In contrast, others point to the strong social influence of cultural-specific norms (Holloway, 1988; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) arguing that the social dynamics of classroom learning in societies such as Japan are much more likely to differ significantly from those found in North America.

This study attempts to contribute to the research literature, by investigating the nature of the goal orientations of Japanese university ELT students and determining whether the students perceive performance goal orientation in the same way as their counterparts in North America. It also seeks to test the utility of goal orientation surveys developed for and validated with North American participants.

### **(3) Research Questions**

This study explores the nature of the academic and social goals of a group of Japanese university-level learners of English. Specific research questions addressed by this study include the following:

1. What sorts of goals do this population of Japanese learners of English have?
2. Do these learners perceive mastery and performance goals as distinct, separate orientations?
3. Do these learners recognize mastery and performance orientations in both academic and social contexts?
4. Do these learners perceive the hypothesized approach/avoidance valences in both academic and social domains?

## **2. Methods**

### **(1) Participants**

The 157 participants in this study were all students at a four-year public university in Western Japan. The students were drawn from four intact English classes taught by the researcher himself. Of the 157 participants who agreed to participate in the study 85 were male and 72 female. Ninety of the 157 were first-year students majoring in engineering, maritime science or business administration. They were all taking a compulsory general education English course. The remaining students were social science majors in their second or third year

of school. In general, the students in the study were higher than average achievers in high school as all of them had to do well on the National Center Exam to gain admission to the university. However, once matriculated, their placement into class sections was based solely on their family names and departmental affiliation, not on their English proficiency.

When polled anonymously by the instructor about their attitudes towards English on the first day of class, over 50% of the students in each of the freshman general English courses indicated that they did not have positive attitudes towards studying English. In contrast, a significant majority of the second and third year students indicated that they did have positive attitudes towards studying English.

## **(2) Procedures**

### **a) Task #1: Eliciting Student Goals**

On the first day of class, students were assigned the task of creating an individual *picture card* for attendance and record keeping purposes. In addition, students were instructed to write a brief self-introduction and to compose a list of five personal goals related either to English language learning or English class. The purpose of this task was to learn more about individual students and their background as well as to learn something about the ways they conceptualize their personal goals and the challenge of language learning. This task was completed outside of class and students who did not complete the task within one week were given additional time to do the task. The goals were tallied and coded holistically by the researcher to determine a rough goal hierarchy.

### **b) Task #2: Goal Survey**

On the fifth class meeting, a survey of academic and social goal orientations was distributed. The instructor explained the purpose of the research project and obtained written consent from 157 of the students. Although the survey was conducted in English, students were given 15-20 minutes of class time to complete the 36 question survey and were encouraged to use dictionaries or to ask questions if any items were unclear (Appendix A). Problematic idioms and vocabulary words were accompanied by paraphrases to help make them easier to understand. The survey was a fusion of two existing instruments. Academic goal orientation items were taken from the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Scales (PALS) developed at the University of Michigan (Midgley, Maehr, Urdan, Anderman, Anderman, & Freeman, 2000). This is a survey battery that has been widely used among learners of different ages, primarily in North America, and has been found to be valid and reliable. Its psychometric properties are rela-

tively well known and it has been widely used in goal orientation studies. This instrument examines a variety of constructs, but only those questions related to personal academic achievement goals were selected for inclusion on this survey. Five items targeting mastery goal orientation, five items for performance approach goal orientation and four items covering performance avoidance goal orientations were placed on the survey form in random order. Eight social mastery items, seven social performance approach items, and seven social items measuring performance-avoidance were also included on the survey form. These items were drawn from the Social Achievement Goal Orientation Scale (SAGOS), a 22-item original survey instrument designed to assess social mastery and social performance approach and social performance avoidance goal orientations. Unlike the PALS, much less is known about the psychometric properties of the SAGOS. Ryan created the survey items by conducting focus groups among North American college students and then testing the instrument with middle school and college students who were also from North America (Ryan & Shim, 2006). Horst and her associates conducted confirmatory factor analysis on the scales and found the three factor model for social goals was promising, but noted that there were still some areas where items misfit the hypothesized model (Horst, et al, 2007).

In total the survey form used in this project had 36 items. Each item on the survey was a statement hypothesized to address a specific type of goal orientation. Likert scale responses from 1 to 5 were provided with a 5 score indicating a statement that was *very true of me* and a 1 score indicating that a statement was *not at all true of me*. Reliability estimates for the 36 item survey was reasonably good with Cronbach's alpha coming in at .86.

Factor analysis was selected as a way to explore student survey responses for patterns since it has been the most common method used to give goal orientation theory its current form. Ordinarily, confirmatory factor analysis would be preferred when an a priori hypothesis exists. However, in this study exploratory factor analysis was used instead. It was decided to let items load freely since the researcher speculated that Japanese socio-cultural norms might produce novel academic or social goal orientations. Using exploratory factory analysis would also allow for novel relationships to be highlighted between items that might be unexpected, but worth investigating further.

The analysis was run in three stages. First, the Academic Goal items taken from the PALS were run to see if survey item factor loadings would cluster around mastery, performance approach, and performance avoidance orientations. Next, the same procedure was done with the Social Goals from the SAGOS. Finally, a third analysis was done with all of the survey items to determine if a clear six factor solution could be found and if not, which clusters, if



any, would reflect mastery, performance approach, or performance avoidance orientations.

### 3. Results

#### (1) Analysis of Task #1 Personal Goal Statements

Students written goal statements were collected, coded and tallied. Students were asked to list 5 goals associated with their English class or English language learning in general and to rank them in order of importance at the start of the course. However, in practice, many students failed to rank order their goal statements and simply submitted a list of items. In addition many students listed more than five goals while other students did not list any personal goals at all. Due to such inconsistencies in student response an analysis of students' goal prioritization was abandoned in favor of a frequency based analysis of the total number of student responses. One hundred and ninety-eight cards were collected and a total of 657 responses were transcribed and then placed into categories.

Many of the goals reported by students seemed to be mastery oriented. Of the listed goals 25.94% referred to improving a specific language skill such as speaking fluency, listening comprehension, or vocabulary knowledge.

Goals related to an interest in foreign cultures were the next most frequent goal type mentioned at 19.33%. It is noteworthy that many students cited their interest in traveling independently overseas and interacting with "foreigners," often in a single goal statement. Such goal statements would appear to be expressing academic mastery goals as the students' responses highlight an implicit understanding that significant gains in English proficiency would be needed to achieve such independence. At the same time, there also seems to be a social mastery goal component to these statements since the desire to travel overseas appeared to be commonly associated with the opportunity to interact with non-Japanese "in situ" where English would be the medium of communication.

Goals related to academic success such as getting course credits, attending all classes, and passing exams were the next most frequent goals cited at 15.07%. These goals bear the closest resemblance to academic goals although the orientation behind wanting to get course credits may be more performance approach oriented than academic mastery in nature.

The next most frequently cited goals were related to changing one's attitudes towards English. 12.63% expressed the hope that they might enjoy studying English or one day forget bitter memories of past experiences associated with English study. Such attitudes seem to be associated with performance avoidance orientations. However, also included in this category

were resolution type statements where students promised themselves to be more assertive, active or persistent in their language study.

Proximal goals such as watching movies without subtitles or reading a newspaper in English were the next most frequent at 11.87%. These goals seem to be consistent with academic mastery orientation as they appear to be pointing towards the acquisition of some type of task-based competence in English.

Finally, at a lower but still noteworthy frequency was the desire to make friends in class. Although smaller than anticipated at 6.70%, this goal fits nicely into the social goal orientation framework. None of the remaining coded responses were greater than 5%.

## (2) Analysis of Task #2 Survey Results

### a) Descriptive Statistics

Student consent was received from 157 students in week #5 of the semester. The remaining students who had submitted goal statements in week #1 chose not to participate in the study or were absent from class on the day the survey was conducted.

Frequencies, means and standard deviations for the self-report survey conducted in week #5 appear in Table 1. There were no univariate or multivariate outliers in the data and two missing values were dealt with by listwise exclusion. There were only two missing values in the entire data set and given the N size of 157, the two cases with one missing value each were included in the statistical analysis. A visual scan of item frequency histograms pointed to significant negative skewness among all of the academic mastery and social mastery items. This indicates that most students were strongly endorsing all of these items with either a 4 or 5 response.

On the surface, this would seem to indicate problems with the item scaling, but instead this may very well be an effect of the self-report style of data gathering. It's logical to assume that very few people, in principle, would be likely to indicate that they had no desire to understand things or no desire to seek out mutually caring friendships. It was hypothesized that the social goal orientation items would turn out to be less reliable than the academic goal orientations, but that three factor solutions indicating mastery, performance approach, and performance avoidance for each both academic and social goal scales would be found.

**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics for Social and Academic Achievement Goals Survey

Item (Goal Type)						M	SD	N
	1*	2	3	4	5			
1. It is important to me to have friends who really understand me. ( <i>Social Mastery 1</i> )	0	0	11	27	119	4.69	0.60	157

2.	It is important to me to have friends who truly care about me. ( <i>Social Mastery 2</i> )	0	2	24	45	86	4.37	0.79	157
3.	My goal in most social situations is to impress others. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 1</i> )	7	23	79	36	12	3.15	0.92	157
4.	It is important to me that I avoid looking foolish. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 1</i> )	9	31	56	47	14	3.17	1.03	157
5.	My goal is to avoid doing things that would cause others to make fun of me. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 2</i> )	19	35	62	33	8	2.85	1.05	157
6.	It's important to me that I learn a lot of new concepts this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 1</i> )	2	6	29	69	51	4.03	0.88	157
7.	It's important to me that other students in my class think I am good at my class work. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 1</i> )	12	40	72	27	6	2.84	0.93	157
8.	It's important to me that I don't look stupid in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 1</i> )	11	34	64	37	11	3.02	1.01	157
9.	It is important to me to be seen as having a lot of friends. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 2</i> )	15	44	67	24	7	2.77	0.97	157
10.	It is important to me to work on improving the quality of my relationships with my friends. ( <i>Social Mastery 3</i> )	1	6	33	64	53	4.03	0.87	157
11.	It is important to me that I feel that I have friends I enjoy spending time with. ( <i>Social Mastery 4</i> )	0	6	15	50	86	4.38	0.81	157
12.	I would be successful if I could avoid being socially awkward* (*awkward means unskillful or not smooth) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 3</i> )	3	25	73	42	13	3.24	0.89	156*
13.	I want to be friends with "popular" people. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 3</i> )	15	48	56	28	10	2.81	1.04	157
14.	One of my goals is to show others that I'm good at my class work. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 2</i> )	22	59	58	14	4	2.48	0.93	157
15.	One of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can. ( <i>Academic Mastery 2</i> )	1	2	21	58	75	4.30	0.80	157
16.	One of my goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 2</i> )	20	62	66	8	1	2.41	0.80	157
17.	It is important to me to have "cool" friends. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 4</i> )	21	40	65	20	11	2.75	1.07	157
18.	In social situations, I feel successful if I manage to avoid having others think I am a dork*. (*A dork is a socially unskilled person) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 4</i> )	11	31	53	51	11	3.13	1.04	157
19.	I want to have friends who are interested in me. ( <i>Social Mastery 5</i> )	2	0	27	72	56	4.15	0.79	157
20.	I like friendships that challenge me to learn new things about myself. ( <i>Social Mastery 6</i> )	0	5	41	47	64	4.08	0.89	157

21. I feel successful when I impress others with my personality or social skills. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 5</i> )	2	13	52	53	37	3.70	0.96	157
22. It's important to me that my teacher doesn't think that I know less than others in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 3</i> )	16	41	74	25	1	2.71	0.88	157
23. One of my goals is to master a lot of new skills this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 3</i> )	3	7	34	52	61	4.03	0.98	157
24. One of my goals is to show others that class work is easy for me. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 3</i> )	52	56	37	8	4	2.08	1.00	157
25. In social situations I am often concerned about the possibility that others will think I am a loser*. (A loser is an unsuccessful person and a social outcast) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 5</i> )	17	34	71	29	6	2.83	0.98	157
26. I try not to goof up* when I am out with people. (*goof up means make a mistake) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 6</i> )	2	23	71	42	18	3.33	0.91	156 <sup>a</sup>
27. I want to be seen as important by other people. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 6</i> )	1	7	52	57	40	3.82	0.89	157
27. I feel successful when I learn something new about myself and how I relate to other people. ( <i>Social Mastery 7</i> )	0	6	37	70	44	3.97	0.82	157
29. It is important to me that others think of me as popular. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 7</i> )	16	64	55	21	1	2.54	0.87	157
30. I am often concerned that others won't like me. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 7</i> )	12	28	46	44	27	3.29	1.17	157
31. It's important to me that I thoroughly understand my class work. ( <i>Academic Mastery 4</i> )	0	12	61	63	21	3.59	0.82	157
32. It's important to me that I look smart compared to others in my class. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 4</i> )	35	57	50	15	0	2.29	0.92	157
33. One of my goals in class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 4</i> )	20	51	63	21	2	2.58	0.92	157
34. I would be successful if I had friends who accepted me for who I am. ( <i>Social Mastery 8</i> )	0	10	36	43	68	4.08	0.96	157
35. One of my goals is to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 5</i> )	40	49	49	16	2	2.30	1.01	157
36. It's important to me that I improve my skills this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 5</i> )	2	2	29	33	91	4.33	0.91	157

Note. \*1 = not at all true of you 3 = somewhat true of you, 5 = very true of you.

Scores 2 and 4 represent intermediate degrees of endorsement

N = 157, <sup>a</sup>Listwise deletion used for missing data

Cronbach's Alpha = .86

### b) Step #1: Principle Axis Factor Analysis: Academic Goals

Principle axis factor analysis (FA) was first conducted on students' responses to the 14 academic goal orientation items. FA was preferred to a principle components analysis due to the a priori hypothesis of a three factor solution. Three criteria were used in determining the number of factors: first eigenvalues of greater than 1.2, next a minimum factor loading of .45 and finally visual inspection of the scree plot generated by SPSS. The factor matrix was rotated several times and ultimately a two factor solution was achieved using varimax rotation. A direct oblimin rotation produced similar results so the varimax results were kept and are reported below. Table 2 shows the relevant factor loadings that confirm the endorsement of all of the academic mastery items, but which also indicate no significant distinctions between performance approach and performance avoid orientations. Reliability estimates for the academic mastery goals were fairly strong with alpha equal to .80. Taken together as single factor, the performance goals listed in Table 2 had a high alpha at .84. Reliability estimates for academic performance approach goals was also acceptable at .80, but the alpha for performance avoidance was only .67.

**Table 2 Summary of Factor Loadings and Communalities for Principal Factors Extraction of Academic Achievement Goals: Varimax Rotation, Two-Factor Solution, (N=157\*)**

Item	Factor Loading		
	1	2	$h^2$
<i>Factor #1: Academic Mastery Goals</i>			
6. It's important to me that I learn a lot of new concepts this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 1</i> )	0.68	-	0.46
15. One of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can. ( <i>Academic Mastery 2</i> )	0.70	-	0.49
23. One of my goals is to master a lot of new skills this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 3</i> )	0.81	-	0.67
31. It's important to me that I thoroughly understand my class work. ( <i>Academic Mastery 4</i> )	0.49	-	0.27
36. It's important to me that I improve my skills this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 5</i> )	0.65	-	0.43
<i>Factor #2: Academic Performance Goals (Approach and Avoidance)</i>			
14. One of my goals is to show others that I'm good at my class work. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 2</i> )	-	0.63	0.43
24. One of my goals is to show others that class work is easy for me. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 3</i> )	-	0.70	0.49
32. It's important to me that I look smart compared to others in my class. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 4</i> )	-	0.75	0.57

35. One of my goals is to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 5</i> )	-	0.79	0.63
8. It's important to me that I don't look stupid in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 1</i> )	-	0.57	0.37
16. One of my goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 2</i> )	-	0.53	0.28
22. It's important to me that my teacher doesn't think that I know less than others in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 3</i> )	-	0.53	0.29
33. One of my goals in class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 3</i> )	-	0.59	0.35
Proportion of Variance		17.29	25.30

Note. N = 157 <sup>a</sup>Missing values excluded listwise

### c) Step #2: Principle Axis Factor Analysis: Social Goals

Next, principle axis factor analysis (FA) with varimax rotation was conducted on students' responses to the 22 item SAGOS. Here too, FA was the preferred mode of analysis due to the a priori hypotheses regarding a three factor solution. Unfortunately, the results for the analysis of social goal items were similar to the academic goal outcomes. Three factor solutions did not produce clean loadings and were therefore discarded in favor of a two factor solution which is listed in Table 3 below. Cronbach's alpha for the loaded social mastery goals was only moderately strong at .75. Moreover, the factor solution was less theoretically clean as two social performance approach items loaded with the social mastery items. Despite this lack of clear separation covariance between mastery and performance approach goals has been a frequent finding in many goal orientation studies. As with the academic goals, students in this study did not seem to respond to the hypothesized approach/avoidance distinction in the social goal domain. Cronbach's Alpha for the combined social performance factor was fair at .68.

**Table 3 Summary of Factor Loadings and Communalities for Principal Factors Extraction of Social Achievement Goals: Varimax Rotation, Two-Factor Solution, (N=157<sup>a</sup>)**

Item	Factor Loading		
	1	2	$h^2$
<i>Factor #1: Social Mastery Goals</i>			
10. It is important to me to work on improving the quality of my relationships with my friends. ( <i>Social Mastery 3</i> )	0.48	-	0.24
11. It is important to me that I feel that I have friends I enjoy spending time with. ( <i>Social Mastery 4</i> )	0.49	-	0.24
20. I like friendships that challenge me to learn new things about myself. ( <i>Social Mastery 6</i> )	0.64	-	0.41

28. I feel successful when I learn something new about myself and how I relate to other people. ( <i>Social Mastery 7</i> )	0.62	-	0.39
34. I would be successful if I had friends who accepted me for who I am. ( <i>Social Mastery 8</i> )	0.60	-	0.38
21. I feel successful when I impress others with my personality or social skills. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 5</i> )	0.46	-	0.27
27. I want to be seen as important by other people. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 6</i> )	0.59	-	0.40
<i>Factor #2: Social Performance Goals (Approach and Avoidance)</i>			
13. I want to be friends with "popular" people. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 3</i> )	-	0.54	0.31
29. It is important to me that others think of me as popular. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 7</i> )	-	0.55	0.31
4. It is important to me that I avoid looking foolish. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 1</i> )	-	0.50	0.25
5. My goal is to avoid doing things that would cause others to make fun of me. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 2</i> )	-	0.58	0.35
18. In social situations, I feel successful if I manage to avoid having others think I am a dork*. (*A dork is a socially unskilled person) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 4</i> )	-	0.55	0.31
25. In social situations I am often concerned about the possibility that others will think I am a loser*. (*A loser is an unsuccessful person and a social outcast) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 5</i> )	-	0.47	0.22
Proportion of Variance	12.95	11.98	

Note. N = 157 aMissing values excluded listwise

#### d) Step #3: Principle Axis Factor Analysis: Combined Academic and Social Goals

Finally, a principle axis factor analysis of all of the survey items was performed with varimax rotation and minimum factor loadings at .45. Consistent with results in the previous analyses a three factor solution was reached. In this solution, both social mastery and academic mastery goals factored out cleanly. However, the factor accounting for the greatest amount of variance in the varimax rotated model was a mixed social and academic performance factor with both approach and avoidance valences. The results can be found in table 4 below. The mixed factor had good internal reliability at .87, but unfortunately did not reflect the anticipated outcome of the study. Despite its size, it only accounted for 15.48% of the variance in the model. Factor two was also theoretically mixed with one social performance goal among 6 additional social mastery items. Reliability estimates for this factor were moderate with an alpha of .76. The third factor, the one dedicated to academic mastery orientation, loaded most cleanly in this model but accounted for the smallest part of shared variance. Cronbach's alpha

for this third factor was .80.

**Table 4 Summary of Factor Loadings and Communalities for Principal Factors Extraction of Combined Academic and Social Achievement Goals: Varimax Rotation, Three-Factor Solution, (N=157<sup>a</sup>)**

Item	Factor Loading			
	1	2	3	$h^2$
<i>Factor #1: Academic Mastery Goals</i>				
6. It's important to me that I learn a lot of new concepts this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 1</i> )	0.69	-	-	0.48
15. One of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can. ( <i>Academic Mastery 2</i> )	0.65	-	-	0.44
23. One of my goals is to master a lot of new skills this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 3</i> )	0.75	-	-	0.60
31. It's important to me that I thoroughly understand my class work. ( <i>Academic Mastery 4</i> )	0.45	-	-	0.32
36. It's important to me that I improve my skills this year. ( <i>Academic Mastery 5</i> )	0.58	-	-	0.42
<i>Factor #2: Social Mastery Goals</i>				
10. It is important to me to work on improving the quality of my relationships with my friends. ( <i>Social Mastery 3</i> )	-	0.51	-	0.32
11. It is important to me that I feel that I have friends I enjoy spending time with. ( <i>Social Mastery 4</i> )	-	0.50	-	0.27
19. I want to have friends who are interested in me. ( <i>Social Mastery 5</i> )	-	0.49	-	0.26
20. I like friendships that challenge me to learn new things about myself. ( <i>Social Mastery 6</i> )	-	0.48	-	0.43
28. I feel successful when I learn something new about myself and how I relate to other people. ( <i>Social Mastery 7</i> )	-	0.46	-	0.37
34. I would be successful if I had friends who accepted me for who I am. ( <i>Social Mastery 8</i> )	-	0.64	-	0.41
27. I want to be seen as important by other people. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 6</i> )	-	0.64	-	0.43
<i>Factor #3: Mixed Academic and Social Performance Goals (Approach and Avoidance)</i>				
29. It is important to me that others think of me as popular. ( <i>Social Performance Approach 7</i> )	-	-	0.49	0.31
4. It is important to me that I avoid looking foolish. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 1</i> )	-	-	0.50	0.25
5. My goal is to avoid doing things that would cause others to make fun of me. ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 2</i> )	-	-	0.57	0.33
18. In social situations, I feel successful if I manage to avoid having others think I am a dork*. (*A dork is a socially unskilled person) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 4</i> )	-	-	0.57	0.34



25.	In social situations I am often concerned about the possibility that others will think I am a loser*. (A loser is an unsuccessful person and a social outcast) ( <i>Social Performance Avoidance 5</i> )	-	-	0.47	0.24	
14.	One of my goals is to show others that I'm good at my class work. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 2</i> )	-	-	0.62	0.42	
24.	One of my goals is to show others that class work is easy for me. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 3</i> )	-	-	0.66	0.48	
32.	It's important to me that I look smart compared to others in my class. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 4</i> )	-	-	0.73	0.54	
35.	One of my goals is to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class. ( <i>Academic Performance Approach 5</i> )	-	-	0.74	0.56	
8.	It's important to me that I don't look stupid in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 1</i> )	-	-	0.59	0.39	
16.	One of my goals is to keep others from thinking I'm not smart in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 2</i> )	-	-	0.49	0.25	
22.	It's important to me that my teacher doesn't think that I know less than others in class. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 3</i> )	-	-	0.57	0.33	
33.	One of my goals in class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work. ( <i>Academic Performance Avoidance 4</i> )	-	-	0.62	0.39	
Proportion of Variance				7.27	8.73	15.48

Note. N = 157 aMissing values excluded listwise

#### 4. Discussion

The results of the exploratory factor analyses of academic and social goal orientations in this study did not support the a priori hypothesis of distinctions between performance approach and performance avoidance orientations. This proved to be the case in both academic and social achievement domains. Contrary to the findings of previous researchers who have validated models with clear distinctions between approach and avoidance valences, the student responses in this study did not match such a pattern. So why did this occur? One possibility is that in taking the survey in English, students simply failed to pick up on the distinctions between approach and avoidance goals. In retrospect, this explanation makes intuitive sense as 90 of the study's 157 participants were drawn from lower proficiency first year general English courses.

Nevertheless, if given sufficient time to think about the questions and some mediation from their classroom teacher or the researcher, most of the student participants in this study could probably have understood the gist of each item on the survey instrument. However, given the

limited time to complete the surveys and the need to process 36 items written in English, reader fatigue may have adversely affected reading comprehension.

One must also bear in mind that many students may not have invested too much effort in thoughtfully completing the survey since over half of the participants reported in week #1 that they did not like or enjoy studying English.

In addition a further complicating factor to consider is that even for native speakers, the semantic distinctions between some survey items in this study would seem to require deeper processing to pick out and understand the implied differences in them. Take for example the social performance approach goal #7 (Q29), *It is important to me that others think of me as popular*. Contrast this with the social performance avoidance goal #7 (Q30), *I am often concerned that others won't like me*. Without thinking carefully, both of these items could be interpreted simply as ***I want others to like me***. When planning this study, the valence differences behind survey items such as these seemed salient enough to the researcher and appeared to clearly reflect the goal orientation constructs being explored. However, looking at the survey with fresh eyes, some of the survey items could, in fact, be logically interpreted in different ways from those intended by the researcher. Perhaps an equivalent Japanese version of this instrument given to the same students would have better supported the hypothesized outcomes in this study.

Another plausible explanation for the mixed results may lie in the cultural assumptions students may have held about the nature of the survey items themselves. For example, many of the performance approach goals in the survey express the importance of positive peer evaluations of one's abilities. Although it is very likely that Japanese students do want and seek peer approval for their actions, they would appear much less likely to endorse performance approach oriented statements such as #4 (Q32) *It's important to me that I look smart compared to others in my class* or #5 (Q35) *One of my goals is to look smart in comparison to other students in my class*. Social norms that discourage expressions of hubris may have discouraged the learners in this study from strongly endorsing such items.

In contrast, mastery orientation focused items on the survey emphasizing things such as the desire to learn new things or improve relationships between friends were clearly much easier for even the lower proficiency/less motivated students in this study to endorse. The heightened value placed upon academic achievement and emphasis on cultivating harmonious social bonds in Japanese society most likely contributed to the outcome which supported clearly both academic and social mastery orientations.

The composition of students' goal lists in the first week of classes also reflected this tenden-

cy as the more frequently listed goals expressed hope for better academic achievement through personal changes such as developing more positive attitudes towards English or attending all of one's classes, both of which are goals that lead to social approval. Even though the participants may have had little genuine intention of fulfilling goals such as reading English newspapers or seeking out native speakers to communicate with, endorsing such socially sanctioned goals seems to have been easier to do even if the students may not ultimately apply the effort to turn this impulse into action.

## 5. Conclusions

This study was developmental and exploratory in nature and thus the results must be interpreted with caution. The lack of clear results should not be interpreted as discrediting the conceptually useful framework of mastery, performance approach, and performance avoidance goal orientations. Support for these constructs is sufficiently diverse to indicate its promise for Japanese learners. However, it is likely that some accommodation to the unique cultural norms of Japanese society will be needed in revising a self-report instrument of this type. A logical next step towards this goal is to develop a reliable Japanese survey with both face and construct validity. Focus group meetings with students, though time-consuming, would also likely prove fruitful. In addition, a larger N size would give greater statistical power to the analysis, although in this case the results are likely more attributable to linguistic and cultural issues than with the number of respondents. In the final combined model, the three factors accounted for little over 30% of the variance in the rotated solution. This is, in fact, relatively small and indicative that the items were not terribly effective at eliciting the hypothesized factors.

Despite the lack of clear results in this particular study, the explanatory potential of goal orientations is still appealing. Although useful, other methods than self-report surveys will likely be needed to help discover what behaviors Japanese learners commonly associate with the performance approach and performance avoidance orientations. Focus groups, structured interviews, and self-reflection type learner diaries may be more productive ways to get learners to reveal their thought processes more frankly. Understanding more about such patterns of thought should prove very useful to instructors who must constantly find new ways to activate student interest and lead them to become more self-directed, independent learners.

## Appendix A

### Social and Academic Achievement Goal Survey

The following statements concern your general attitudes about relationships. Please indicate how true each statement is of you.

- ☞ If you think the statement is VERY TRUE OF YOU, mark a **5**.
- ☞ If a statement is SOMEWHAT TRUE OF YOU, mark a **3**.
- ☞ If a statement is NOT AT ALL TRUE OF YOU, mark a **1**.
- ☞ If the statement is more or less true of you, Find the number between **1** and **5** that best describes you.

**There are no right or wrong answers. Just answer as accurately as possible. Be sure to answer each item on the list!**

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**PLEASE NOTE: THE CHOICES ARE ONE TO FIVE**

1	2	3	4	5
NOT AT ALL TRUE OF ME	SOMEWHAT TRUE OF ME	VERY TRUE OF ME		

////////////////////////////////////

#### **Sample Question**

*I like strawberry ice cream. 5*

(I like it VERY much so this statement is VERY TRUE OF ME)

1. It is important to me to have friends who really understand me. (SM 1)
2. It is important to me to have friends who truly care about me. (SM 2)
3. My goal in most social situations is to impress others. (SPAP 1)
4. It is important to me that I avoid looking foolish. (SPAV 1)
5. My goal is to avoid doing things that would cause others to make fun of me. (SPAV 2)
6. It's important to me that I learn a lot of new concepts this year. (AM 1)
7. It's important to me that other students in my class think I am good at my class work. (APAP1)
8. It's important to me that I don't look stupid in class. (APAV 1)
9. It is important to me to be seen as having a lot of friends. (SPAP 2)
10. It is important to me to work on improving the quality of my relationships with my friends. (SM 3)

11. It is important to me that I feel that I have friends I enjoy spending time with. (SM 4)
12. I would be successful if I could avoid being socially awkward.\* (\*awkward means unskilled or unsmooth) (SPAV3)
13. I want to be friends with “popular” people. (SPAP3)
14. One of my goals is to show others that I’m good at my class work. (APAP 2)
15. One of my goals in class is to learn as much as I can. (AMc2)
16. One of my goals is to keep others from thinking I’m not smart in class. (APAV 2)
17. It is important to me to have “cool” friends. (SPAP 4)
18. In social situations, I feel successful if I manage to avoid having others think I am a dork\*. (\*A dork is a socially unskilled person) (SPAV 4)
19. I want to have friends who are interested in me. (SMc5)
20. I like friendships that challenge me to learn new things about myself. (SM6)
21. I feel successful when I impress others with my personality or social skills. (SPAP 5)
22. It’s important to me that my teacher doesn’t think that I know less than others in class.  
(APAV 3)
23. One of my goals is to master a lot of new skills this year. (AM 3)
24. One of my goals is to show others that class work is easy for me. (APAP 3)
25. In social situations I am often concerned about the possibility that others will think I am a loser\*. (A loser is an unsuccessful person and a social outcast) (SPAV 5)
26. I try not to goof up\* when I am out with people. (\*goof up means make a mistake)  
(SPAV 6)
27. I want to be seen as important by other people. (SPAP 7)
28. I feel successful when I learn something new about myself and how I relate to other people. (SM 7)
29. It is important to me that others think of me as popular. (SPAP 7)
30. I am often concerned that others won’t like me. (SPAV 7)
31. It’s important to me that I thoroughly understand my class work. (AM 4)
32. It’s important to me that I look smart compared to others in my class (APAP 4)
33. One of my goals in class is to avoid looking like I have trouble doing the work.  
(APAV 4)
34. I would be successful if I had friends who accepted me for who I am. (SM 8)
35. One of my goals is to look smart in comparison to the other students in my class.  
(APAP 5)
36. It’s important to me that I improve my skills this year. (AM 5)

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# 日本人 EFL 学習者におけるゴールオリエンテーションの調査

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## 要 旨

この研究はゴールオリエンテーション理論の視点から、日本の大学における英語学習者たちの学術的、社会的目標を調査したものである。この研究は学生 157 名の自己報告アンケート結果のデータを用いて、日本の大学の EFL 学習者の学術的、社会的両方の分野における動機構築が与えるマスタリーとパフォーマンスの重要性の認識を確認する事を目的としている。それに加え、パフォーマンスゴールオリエンテーションにおける積極的アプローチと消極的アヴォイダンスの明確な相違を証明することも探求されている。データの因子分析は学術分野においては、マスタリーオリエンテーションとパフォーマンスオリエンテーションにおける相違が裏付けられた。一方で、社会分野においてはその関連性はそれほど強くは見られなかった。最後に、今回の限定的なデータにおいて、アプローチとアヴォイダンスそれぞれの長所短所についての明確な証拠は見られなかった。

**キーワード：**ゴールオリエンテーション, 学習動機, 学習者認知, 学術的目標, 社会的目標

