

A qualitative study of the motivation for continuous Japanese learning among Chinese care workers in Japan

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Abstract. This qualitative study examines the process of continuous Japanese language learning among Chinese care workers, focusing on factors that promote or hinder sustained learning. Using a case study of one Chinese care worker, A, data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using the Trajectory Equifinality Approach (TEA). The findings show that A's learning motivation shifted over time, influenced by factors such as career development and support from family and peers. The study also highlights the multi-layered nature of learning motivation.

Keywords: Trajectory Equifinality Approach (TEA), health carer, language learning

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

In Japan, where the birthrate is declining and the population is ageing, a shortage of nursing care personnel has emerged as a serious social issue. According to the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare (MHLW), the demand for care workers is expected to reach approximately 2.43 million by 2025; however, securing this workforce remains difficult under current labour market conditions [1]. In response, the Japanese government is actively promoting the recruitment and acceptance of foreign workers.

According to the Association of Long-Term Care and Welfare Training Facilities (hereinafter referred to as the Care Association), international students who specialise in nursing care at training schools are expected to play a central role in the future care industry because they possess relatively high Japanese language proficiency as well as specialised professional knowledge. This participation is therefore seen as contributing to the alleviation of labour shortages and the strengthening of the care sector [2]. After graduation, these students obtain a status of residence for nursing care and are able to work in Japan as foreign care workers.

The Japan Association of Care Workers notes that foreign care workers with the "Nursing Care" status of residence are expected to function as skilled professionals, as they acquire nursing care knowledge systematically, both academically and in practice [3]. Because multiple policies exist for accepting foreign care workers under similar or overlapping labels, this paper specifically focuses on foreign care workers who have graduated from a care worker training school, obtained the "Nursing Care" status of residence, and are currently working in a care facility.

Although the policy of accepting foreign care workers has had a certain effect in addressing the shortage of human resources in the nursing care sector, challenges remain regarding the retention of foreign care workers and the improvement of their job satisfaction. A survey on the long-term work intentions of foreign care workers revealed that their intention to continue working is significantly lower than that of Japanese care workers, and is influenced by a variety of factors, such as cultural and language barriers, uncertain career paths, and challenges in the work environment [4]. In order to increase foreign care workers' intention to remain in the profession, Kameyama et al. demonstrated that developing and maintaining support systems that enable foreign care workers to fully demonstrate their abilities and sustain motivation to learn high-quality care practices is effective [5]. Thus, it is necessary to clarify the mechanisms underlying foreign care workers' motivation to continue learning.

The learning undertaken by foreign care workers can be divided into two main domains: nursing care knowledge and Japanese language learning. Among these, Japanese language learning plays an especially important role throughout the transition from training facilities to workplaces. In a survey conducted by the Care Association, 30% of international students enrolled in nursing care welfare training facilities reported having considered withdrawing from their programmes [6]. The primary reason for this was anxiety about being able to keep up with the study of Japanese and specialised nursing care knowledge.

Based on this background, this paper focuses on the Japanese language learning of foreign care workers. Its aim is to develop support measures that enhance learning motivation. By focusing on the issue of improving the intention of foreign care workers to continue working, this study seeks to clarify the process through which their motivation for learning Japanese changes over time.

1.2. About the system

1.2.1. Status of residence - nursing care

As the shortage of nursing care workers in Japan's ageing society is considered an urgent issue, the acceptance of foreign nursing care workers has been actively promoted. The MHLW states that foreign long-term care workers can be accepted through four pathways: (1) Foreign Long-Term Care Welfare Candidates under the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), (2) the technical internship system, (3) the Specified Skilled Worker system, and (4) the "Nursing Care" status of residence [7]. These systems differ in terms of working conditions, the number of workers they can accept, and the length of stay. Furthermore, facilities select the most appropriate system based on their specific needs and circumstances.

Among these pathways, the "Nursing Care" status of residence, established in September 2017, is considered effective for securing skilled human resources in a medium- to long-term and systematic manner, particularly from the perspectives of expertise and workforce retention in the nursing care sector [8]. The "Nursing Care" status of residence allows international students who have graduated from a care worker training facility in Japan and obtained the national qualification of care worker to engage in nursing care or provide guidance to other care workers in Japan [9].

According to the Care Association, the number of international students enrolled in long-term care facilities has increased rapidly [10]. In 2017, out of a total of 7,258 students, 6,667 were Japanese students, and 591 were international students. By 2021, the number of Japanese students had decreased to 4,994, while the number of international students had increased to 2,189, out of a total of 7,183 students. The pathway through which international students obtain the Nursing Care status of residence is summarised in Figure 1, based on the MHLW's *Establishment of Nursing Care*. International students initially enter Japan under a student-related status of residence.

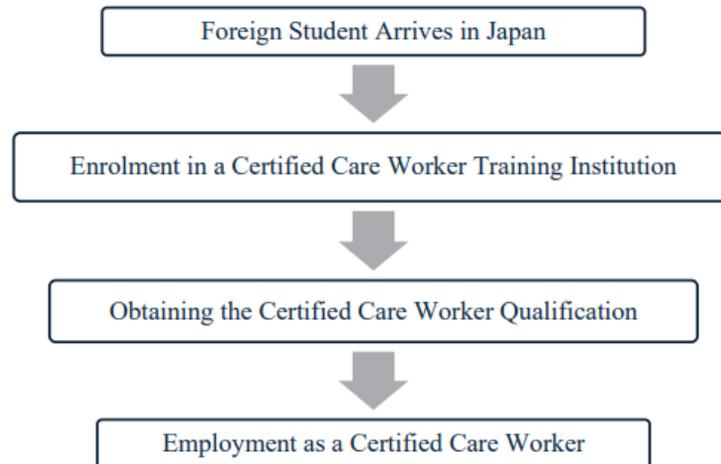


Figure 1. Framework of the nursing care (Source: the MHLW, "establishment of nursing care" [11])

1.2.2. Japanese education and requirements

A certain level of Japanese language proficiency is required to enrol in a care worker training facility and to obtain the Nursing Care status of residence. According to the *Guidelines for Accepting International Students* published by the Care Association, the required level of Japanese proficiency for long-term care students is defined as having "received Japanese language education for at least six months at a Japanese language educational institution announced by the Minister of Justice, and who have been confirmed to have a Japanese language proficiency test N2 (level 2) or higher at each school that conducts Japanese language proficiency selection." The N2 (Level 2) level is defined by the Japanese Language Proficiency Test Committee as the ability to understand Japanese used in everyday situations [12].

2. Previous research

This section organises prior research on Japanese learning methods and the motivations of foreign care workers, as well as studies on the relationship between second language learning and motivation. The purpose is to clarify changes in the process of continued Japanese language learning among foreign care workers.

2.1. Japanese language learning by foreign care workers

2.1.1. Necessity

In recent years, while there has been growing expectation that the "Nursing Care" status of residence will help develop nursing care personnel, language barriers have emerged as a significant psychological burden for foreign care workers.

Guo conducted a survey to examine the interpersonal relationships of 16 Chinese care workers employed at a care facility, including three Chinese care workers with the "Nursing Care" status of residence [13]. The study found that communication difficulties in daily work arose due to both the workers' Japanese language limitations and the conditions of elderly care recipients, such as dementia. In addition, three Chinese care workers with the "Nursing Care" status of residence reported that not only the elderly but also their colleagues often used local dialects, creating further communication challenges. As a result, they expressed a desire for further training on dialects.

Luo interviewed care workers working under the "Nursing Care" status of residence regarding the challenges they face in their workplaces and local communities [14]. The findings indicate that although these international workers are expected to remain in Japan long-term and provide high-quality nursing care with advanced expertise and skills, addressing daily challenges requires support in understanding labour-related laws and regulations, as well as improving Japanese language skills.

Sawada and Yamato conducted a nationwide survey of nursing homes, highlighting the importance of supporting foreign care workers in learning Japanese [15]. They argue that improving Japanese language skills is a key factor in creating a secure and supportive work environment. The authors also identify the need for organisational and social support systems, as well as the evaluation of support outcomes, as important future issues.

Overall, existing research demonstrates the necessity of Japanese language support in the workplace to improve foreign care workers' working conditions, daily communication, and the development of trust-based relationships with colleagues and care recipients.

2.1.2. Learning methods of Japanese learning

Analyses of Japanese language learning methods among foreign care workers can be broadly divided into two stages: the period as an international student enrolled in a care worker training facility, and the period of employment at a care facility. Each stage presents distinct characteristics and difficulties in learning Japanese.

Aprilliana et al. conducted a questionnaire survey examining Japanese language learning among international students from Indonesia seeking to become care workers [16]. The results showed that the most challenging areas were "talking and communicating," "knowledge about diseases and medicines," "mechanisms of health," and "practical skills in elderly care (assistance with eating, bathing, changing clothes)." Regarding educational resources, 51.4% of respondents reported the need for e-learning media in addition to textbooks. These findings suggest the importance of utilising diverse learning resources for international students aspiring to become care workers.

With respect to Japanese language learning during employment, Luo interviewed a foreign care worker (L) holding the "Nursing Care" residence status and found that learning decreased significantly after entering the workforce [14]. Although L had learned the terminology related to nursing care during training, he reported difficulty recalling and applying this knowledge in actual work situations, which made him aware of his insufficient continued learning. Similarly, Kameyama surveyed foreign care workers employed at 36 care facilities in Japan for more than six months and found that busy work schedules limited opportunities for Japanese language learning [5].

In summary, whilst a variety of learning resources are needed during the international student period [16], learning time and opportunities tend to decrease once foreign care workers begin full-time employment [5].

2.1.3. Motivation for learning Japanese among foreign care workers

To provide more effective support for the continued Japanese language learning of foreign care workers, it is first necessary to clarify their motivation for learning. This is because motivation is considered to be "the force that triggers, directs, and sustains human behaviour" [17].

Numerous studies have examined the factors that inhibit learning motivation. One major inhibiting factor is the difficulty of learning content. Hiruma investigated Vietnamese nursing care students to identify effective study methods for improving their Japanese language skills and passing the national examination for care workers [18]. The study revealed that many of the participants struggled to read the exam questions and study materials. In particular, it was revealed that there are many problems that cannot be solved by self-study, making it difficult for learners to maintain motivation. The study further found that group learning and

continuous instructional support for students were effective in maintaining motivation, suggesting that such learning support systems can reduce learners' feelings of loneliness and lead to improved motivation.

In contrast, few studies have examined the factors that promote or facilitate Japanese language learning motivation among foreign care workers. As a result, the mechanisms that support sustained learning among international care students remain insufficiently understood.

2.2. Research on Japanese language learning and motivation

The process by which foreign care workers acquire and use Japanese language skills is equivalent to the acquisition of a second language [19].

Regarding motivation in second language acquisition, Dörnyei introduced the concept of the "self" and focused on how an individual's self-image, such as their future vision and expectations, affects the motivation of second language learners. Based on this perspective, he proposed the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) in second language learning [17]. The L2MSS consists of three components:

1. Ideal L2 Self: An image of oneself speaking a second language fluently.
2. Ought-to L2 Self: Motivation arising from external pressure or a sense of duty.
3. L2 Learning Experience: Specific learning situations and experiences that influence motivation in the learning process.

According to Dörnyei, the Ideal L2 Self is closely related to intrinsic motivation, and learners are more likely to learn autonomously as they pursue their own goals [17]. The clearer the learner's ideal self-image, the stronger the motivation to achieve it. The Ought-to L2 corresponds to extrinsic motivation, which is mainly driven by the desire to avoid negative outcomes or to gain recognition from others. In addition, L2 Learning Experience refers to positive experiences in the learning process (e.g. interesting lessons or appropriately challenging material) and is an important factor in maintaining and enhancing motivation. Because this type of motivation arises directly from learning experiences, it is reinforced by the sense of enjoyment and achievement gained through successful learning.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of the L2MSS, Al-Hoorie compared learner motivation across different countries and cultural backgrounds [20]. His findings indicate that:

4. The Ideal L2 Self is the most powerful factor in increasing the motivation of bilingual learners.
5. The Ought-to L2 self is relatively less influential, and external pressure is less effective in maintaining long-term motivation.
6. L2 Learning Experience plays an important role, and its influence varies depending on the learner's environment and learning context.

2.3. Summary and problems of previous research

Kameyama and Yanagi found that the presence or absence of care worker qualifications has a significant impact on the long-term employment intentions of foreign care workers, suggesting that those who hold qualifications are more likely to intend to remain in long-term employment than those who do not [4]. However, as Kameyama et al. and Luo have pointed out, even foreign care workers with high long-term work intentions face issues related to Japanese language learning, such as reducing their learning time and difficulty securing learning opportunities after obtaining a care worker qualification [5, 14]. In addition, learning Japanese for foreign care workers was found to be important because it is effective in bridging language barriers [13-15].

Furthermore, previous research on Japanese language learning among foreign care workers in the nursing care industry has mainly focused on workers from Southeast Asia, including Vietnam and Indonesia [16]. Few

studies have focused on Chinese students and care workers who have graduated from care worker training facilities, particularly with regard to their Japanese language learning. Therefore, there remains scope for further research on the motivation for learning Japanese among Chinese students.

Kobayashi also points out that when examining the motivation of adolescent international students in Japanese language learning, it is necessary to consider not only classroom-related motivation but also long-term perspectives such as self-image and future aspirations [21]. From this perspective, given that foreign care workers experience a period as international students, it is important to focus on the formation of learners' self-images in order to analyse the process of continued Japanese language learning and the changes in motivation associated with it.

Therefore, this paper aims to analyse the changes in motivation associated with the continuous learning of Japanese by foreign care workers, based on Dörnyei's L2 Self Motivational System [17], which emphasises the role of self-image.

3. Research objectives and research topics

Based on the above discussion, this study aims to clarify the changes in motivation among Chinese care workers during their continuous learning of Japanese, from before entering a care worker training school to the present. The specific research questions are as follows:

1. What is the process of continued Japanese language learning for Chinese care workers?
2. What factors promote or hinder the continued learning of Japanese by Chinese care workers?
3. How do Chinese care workers' motivations, beliefs, and values related to learning Japanese change over time?

4. Research outline

This study was conducted following ethical review approval by the Research Promotion Committee of the Graduate School of Humanities, Osaka University. The research participant was informed of the study's purpose and content both orally and in writing in advance. In addition, it was clearly explained that participation was voluntary, that there would be no disadvantage from participation, and that all data would be handled anonymously and appropriately. Written informed consent was obtained from the participant.

4.1. Investigation participant

This study analyses the process of continuing Japanese language learning for a Chinese care worker in Japan who graduated from a Japanese care worker training school. Basic participant information is shown in Table 1. The aim of this study is to clarify the relationship between learning continuity and motivation. To enable in-depth analysis with an emphasis on individual characteristics, the study was conducted with a single participant. The reasons for this approach are explained in more detail in section 4.2.

Table 1. Overview of the research participant (at the time of interview)

Participant	A
Gender	Female
Nationality	China (Chinese)
Japanese Learning Experience	Approximately 5 years
Japanese Proficiency	Advanced
Affiliation	Facility for people with intellectual disabilities in Osaka

4.2. Data collection methods

To examine the process of continuing Japanese language learning among Chinese care workers in Japan, this study employed a semi-structured interview method. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they provide an environment in which participants can respond comfortably and allow researchers to obtain detailed insights into complex issues and sensitive topics [22].

Regarding interview questions, Heckhausen and Heckhausen summarised the universal process of human behaviour into the following elements: self, goal, action, outcome, and consequences [23]. Roohi et al. also reported that learning motivation decreases with age [24]. Based on these perspectives, this study developed interview questions designed to clarify when and how the participant's motivation for learning Japanese language changed over time. The questions also reflect the elements of the human behaviour process (situation, self-situation, goal, behaviour, result, and impact) proposed by Heckhausen and Heckhausen [23] and aim to explore how each element affects learning motivation. These questions seek to provide a detailed understanding of the entire learning process of the target audience and to provide a comprehensive analysis of motivational transformation.

Regarding sample size, Arakawa et al. note that interviewing a single participant allows researchers to explore the depth of an individual's experience [25]. While diversity may emerge from interviews with approximately four participants and broader patterns from nine people, this study focuses on the detailed experiences of one person. Since this study aims to analyse the transformation of learning motivation and the formation of self-image, concentrating on one participant was considered appropriate to enhance the accuracy and depth of analysis related to learning continuity and motivational change.

4.3. Data analysis methods

This study employed a qualitative research method known as the Trajectory Equifinality Approach (TEA) to analyse changes in motivation and behaviour among caregivers learning Japanese.

TEA is characterised by its ability to depict the diversity, multiplicity, and potential of life trajectories influenced by culture and society on two axes: time and possibility [26]. This feature makes TEA particularly suitable for the present study, which aims to analyse the process of continuous Japanese language learning from the perspective of individual behaviour shaped by environmental factors. Therefore, TEA was considered an effective analytical framework for this research. According to Yasuda et al., TEA consists of three components: (1) the Trajectory Equifinality Model (TEM), (2) the Three Layers Model of Genesis (TLMG), and (3) Historically Structured Inviting (HIS) [27].

Yasuda et al. define the first layer of TLMG as "behaviour", the second layer as "symbols", and the third layer as "beliefs and values" [26]. Their model explains the mechanism through which an individual's

behaviour (first layer) changes when a new facilitator (second layer) emerges, and how such changes can subsequently lead to a change in beliefs and values (third layer).

Based on Sato [28] and Yasuda et al. [26], this study positioned Japanese language learning behaviour, from the initiation of learning to its continuation, within the first layer. The second layer focuses on analysing the meanings of "facilitating symbols" that encourage behaviours guiding the participant's judgments and actions. The third layer presents the participant's beliefs and values, with analysis emphasising the interaction between beliefs, values, and learning behaviour. Since motivation is defined as "the power to trigger, direct, and sustain human behaviour" [17], it can be regarded as a "facilitative signal." Therefore, this study describes changes in motivation primarily within the second layer of the TLMG.

The TEM and TLMG were created following the procedures outlined by Arakawa et al. and Hosono [25, 29]. The analytical process consists of the following steps:

1. Setting the Equifinality Point (EFP) and the Polarised EFP (P-EFP).
2. Drawing the arrow representing irreversible time.
3. Carefully reading and categorising the interview data.
4. Identifying behaviour, emotions, and perceptions and positioning them within the TEM.
5. Determining Bifurcation Points (BFPs) and Obligatory Passage Points (OPPs).
6. Drawing Social Direction (SD) and Social Guidance (SG).

Table 2 presents definitions of key TEM concepts used by Sato et al. [30], along with their specific applications in this study.

Table 2. Terminology of the Trajectory Equifinality Model (TEM) and their meanings

Term	General Meaning	Meaning in This Study
Equifinality Point (EFP)	A point at which similar outcomes are reached despite following different trajectories	Continuing Japanese language learning
Polarised Equifinality Point (P-EFP)	A point that represents the opposite outcome of the equifinality point	Not continuing Japanese language learning
Bifurcation Point (BFP)	A point at which trajectories diverge toward different equifinality points	Triggers that led to changes in motivation for Japanese language learning BFP-1: Deciding to study abroad in caregiving BFP-2: Retaking the JLPT N2 BFP-3: Wanting to understand conversations of care recipients BFP-4: Changing jobs
Obligatory Passage Point (OPP)	A point that most individuals inevitably experience due to logic, systems, norms, or consequences	OPP-1: Enrolling in a Japanese language school OPP-2: Participating in caregiving training OPP-3: Starting work at a caregiving facility

5. Results

As a result of analysing the interview data, 72 intercepts were identified from Participant A's interview. Among these, 35 categories were classified as "Narratives of Action", and 32 were classified as "Narratives of Influence." Subsequently, based on the TEM diagram constructed from the interview data, this study describes

the participant's process of learning continuity, factors that promote or hinder learning continuity, and changes in motivation over time. As shown in Table a, the symbols used in the TEM diagram are defined and explained. Based on these symbols, A's TEM diagram (Figure a) and TLMG diagram (Figure b) illustrate the temporal process and motivational dynamics of continuous Japanese learning.

5.1. The learning continuation process of A

The following is a description of A's Japanese learning continuation process, with contextual details supplemented by the "path obtained from narration" in the TEM diagram. The label "path obtained from the narrative" in the TEM diagram is written.

When A was unsure about her career path after graduating from high school, she learned about a policy that allowed her to go to Japan, and as a result, she decided to study abroad in nursing care. After that, A [started learning Japanese] and [came to Japan]. Immediately after A entered the Japanese language school, she took the N2 exam. A, who failed the N2, retook the N2 and eventually passed. Then, A [took the N1 exam], but [failed N1]. After that, A began to prepare for the entrance exam for a nursing school.

After entering nursing care school, A had to participate in nursing care practice. At that time, A wanted to understand the stories of the care recipients when interacting with them, so she learned Japanese with a friend. Next, A started working part-time. After that, A [started working at a nursing home] and [learned Japan through work]. However, A [became accustomed to the job, and her motivation to learn Japanese decreased]. Currently, A is planning to change jobs, and because she needs to learn Japanese for work-related purposes, so plans to continue studying Japanese.

5.2. Factors that promote or damage learning continuity

The following section analyses the Social Support (SG) and Social Direction (SD) depicted in the TEM diagram as facilitators and inhibitors of the continuation of Japanese learning by the research participant. SD and SG in the TEM diagram are written.

Taheri et al. divide the factors affecting students' learning motivation into three categories: personal factors (attitudes), academic and family factors (economic situation), and environmental factors (cultural and social values) [31]. This study classified the factors that promote and inhibit A's learning continuity in accordance with this framework.

As a result of the classification, the factors that promote A's continued learning include personal, academic, family, and environmental factors. Regarding personal factors, feelings such as "anxiety about her career" and "frustration" caused by not being able to pass the examination contributed to maintaining learning motivation. Next, in terms of academic and family factors, experiences such as "not understanding nursing care content" and "daily office work" tended to promote motivation to learn Japanese. In addition, "being supported by my father," "supporting my friends," "supporting my family," and "supporting my friends" served as strong sources of encouragement in A's process of continuing to learn Japanese.

On the other hand, the factors that hinder A's continued learning include personal and academic factors. Among these, being "tired of school life" hindered A's performance in the Japanese Proficiency Test N2; however, as a result, they retook and passed the N2, which may have ultimately contributed to their continued learning. In addition, after starting part-time work at a facility, A tended to temporarily suspend her Japanese learning due to "mental fatigue" and "physical fatigue."

5.3. A's change in motivation

Next, TLMG was used to analyse the changes in beliefs and values from the perspective of "motivation for learning Japanese." Based on the mandatory passing points obtained from the TEM diagram, [enrolling in a Japanese school], [participating in nursing care training], and [starting work at a nursing care facility], A's Japanese learning history is divided into four periods: I. study abroad preparation period, II. language intensive period, III. nursing care training period, and VI. work stability period. In addition, the motivation shown in the TLMG diagram is indicated using 「」, and beliefs and values are expressed using <>.

First, during the preparation period, A's decision to study abroad in nursing care was largely influenced by the "advantages of the long-term care study abroad system." At the turning point BFP-1 [Deciding to study abroad in nursing care], there was a divergence between whether or not to [study abroad in nursing care]. During this period, the facilitating symbol 「I want to work in Japan」 emerged, as reflected in narration (1). In addition, the narration (2) indicates the emergence of 「I want to continue living in Japan」. During this preparation phase, A is considered to have held the belief and value that .

1.211 A: "(略)但国内的专科看来就是没有什么前途 所以权衡利弊之下就选择了来日本. ((omitted) Junior colleges seem to have no future in China, so I chose to come to Japan after weighing the pros and cons)."

2.075 A: "嗯 就是想在日本长期生活下去 (yes, I want to continue living in Japan for a long time). 他这个签证就是有一个专门的介护签 你有介护福祉士之后 他就一次可以给你更 3 年 然后是他不是在日本 10 年就可以拿到永驻 (this visa is special; there is a long-term care visa. If you are qualified as a care worker, you can obtain that care visa, which may be renewed for three years at a time. If you live in Japan for 10 years, you will be able to apply for permanent residency)."

During II. language intensive period, affected by the turning point BFP-2 [N2 retake], A developed the facilitating sign [I want to obtain a qualification]. This motivation is evident in narration (3), which shows that passing the qualification examination and [entering a nursing school] were closely linked. At this stage, A held the belief and value that < effort would lead to success>. Furthermore, narration (4) suggests that the Japanese learning environment influenced A, leading to the emergence of the facilitating symbol "I want to understand Japanese better".

3.223 A: "(Omitted) 下次不能只差一分 要尽量过好多分 (next time, so that there is no such thing as a 1 point difference, I wanted to pass with a comfortable margin) 然后就抓紧学习 就那种感觉 确实 挺难受的 真的就差一点 你明明就差一点.(I studied desperately. The feeling at that time was really painful. It was almost there)."

225 A: "就想 就感觉自己就只差一点 然后就想更努力 然后就对学的更努力了 嗯 (I just wanted to feel that I was only a little bit closer, and then I wanted to work harder, and then I worked harder on my studies)."

4.215 A: "然后有时候看见他们说的挺好的 然后嗯自己虽然跟他们学的也一样 但是没他们说的好 然后就想着再加油一点学习 (Then sometimes I saw that they said it very well, and then I learned the same thing as them, but it wasn't as good as they said, but then I thought about learning a little more)."

During III. the nursing care training period, the turning point BFP-3 [I want to understand the story of the nursing care subject] emerged. A chose the path of "I want to understand the story of the Japanese person being cared for" due to the facilitating signs of "I want to make my communication proceed smoothly" and "I want to have confidence in my work." Through this process, the belief and value that it's possible to < improve by using language > were formed, as illustrated in narrations (5) and (6).

5.193 A: "有些老人 他就是会有那种 HeHe 的 那种音的嘛 然后他们说话咬字不清 然后就更听不清 (Some elderly people will have that kind of HeHe, that kind of sound, and then they will speak unclearly, and then they will be even more unclear). 我就想着如果我日语再好一点就好了 嗯 那时候我就这么想的 然后

我就要好好学习 (I thought it would be nice if I could improve my Japanese, well, that's what I thought at that time, but then I had to study hard)."

6.058 A: "有时候嗯,确实他们是口齿不清的 我觉得多听这个就比较好的 多加练习的话 就能听懂了 (There were times when I didn't speak it clearly, but as I listened to it repeatedly and got used to it, I gradually came to understand)."

Finally, during VI. a stable period of work, A continued to maintain the facilitating sign of "I want to make Japanese communication proceed smoothly" in 「daily office work」. At the turning point BFP-4 [Changing jobs], the promoting sign of "I want to have confidence in my work" reappeared. As a result, A continued to hold the belief that < effort leads to success >, as reflected in narration (7).

7.295 A: "嗯 我觉得在这个状态下我会学日语 Well, I think I will learn Japanese in this state 就是比如说我就是我 我对象他们那边那个民宿稳定了 然后我过去帮忙 (for example, I go to help with the homestay of the partner) 然后需要人过去帮忙我 然后我发现,我的日语可能跟那些其他的 gyousha 沟通不清楚 然后那个时候我会再去精进一下我的日语 (when I interact with the contractors in the homestay business, I feel that my Japanese skills are lacking, and I would like to study more Japanese at that time)."

6. Investigation

6.1. Transformation of the learning motivation continuation process

An analysis of the changes in A's motivation to continue learning Japanese indicates that her motivation in the early stage was primarily supported by extrinsic motivation, while in the middle stage it gradually shifted towards intrinsic motivation. Sheldon and Krieger argue that extrinsic motivation can negatively impact academic performance and psychological health [32]. Specifically, they state that motivation driven by a sense of duty or external expectations tends to weaken intrinsic motivation and impair the enjoyment and interest in learning.

However, in A's case, extrinsic motivation, such as the desire to obtain work and professional qualifications, served as an effective factor supporting the continuation of learning during the initial stages. Subsequently, through work experience in nursing care settings and the increasing need for communication with care recipients, A's motivation shifted towards intrinsic motivation, which contributed positively to the maintenance of her learning motivation over time.

In addition, A's motivation to learn Japanese was greatly promoted by the support of family and friends, as well as connections with others. Compared with the difficulty of self-study identified in Hiruma's study [18], A's experience suggests that emotional and practical support from family and friends during the examination preparation stage played a crucial role in sustaining her motivation. Furthermore, interactions with care recipients were found to enhance her learning motivation by complementing extrinsic motivation and fostering the development of intrinsic motivation. In the later stage, A's motivation to "have confidence in her work" temporarily declined due to external environmental factors. However, after changing jobs, this motivation re-emerged as a result of changes in her work environment, which again promoted her motivation to learn Japanese.

Overall, A's motivation to continue learning Japanese confirms Hosono's observation that motivation has a multi-layered and hierarchical structure, and that motivation does not simply arise and accumulate from initial motives but also exhibits a characteristic of "recurrence," whereby a previously diminished motivation can re-emerge in a similar environment [29].

6.2. L2 Consideration of Japanese learning motivation

Based on the results of this study, A's learning motivation can be interpreted through the framework of the L2 Motivational Self System, particularly the Ideal L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience.

According to Dörnyei, the ideal L2 self closely corresponds to intrinsic motivation, as learners become more autonomously motivated when pursuing meaningful goals [17]. The clearer the learner's ideal self-image, the stronger their motivation to achieve it. Mimura's survey of Indonesian technical intern trainees found that even when learners formed an Ideal L2 ideal Self, they did not necessarily engage in language learning if they perceived the feasibility of that self-image to be low [33].

In contrast, during the early preparation stage for studying abroad, A placed importance on financial stability and envisioned a future in which she could participate in nursing care study abroad and secure stable employment. Because A perceived this future as attainable through the long-term care study abroad system, her Ideal L2 Self was clearly defined and perceived as feasible, which encouraged her to begin learning Japanese at an early stage.

Subsequently, A maintained a work-oriented Ideal L2 Self and gradually developed a new Ideal L2 Self centred on communicating "smoothly in Japanese," driven by intrinsic motivations such as the desire for effective communication. During the period of stable work (VI.), A's motivation to continue learning Japanese temporarily declined following the achievement of her work-oriented Ideal L2 Self. However, her motivation was reactivated when she sought to regain confidence in her work, indicating the formation of a renewed Ideal L2 Self.

This phenomenon suggests that while motivation may weaken after achieving a concrete goal, sustained motivation can be maintained when learners pursue subjective and evolving goals, such as fluency in speaking a new language. In this sense, A's establishment of both short-term goals and longer-term goals associated with lifelong learning contributed to the continuation of her Japanese language learning.

7. Conclusion

This study aimed to clarify the changes in motivation of Chinese care workers as they transition from international care students to professional care workers, focusing on the continuous learning of Japanese from before entry into a care worker training school to the present. Specifically, the study examined (1) the process of continued Japanese language learning, (2) the factors that promote and hinder the continuation of Japanese language learning by Chinese care workers, and (3) changes in motivation, beliefs, and values related to Japanese language learning.

Using a semi-structured interview with A, a Chinese care worker, this study analysed her Japanese learning trajectory and obtained the following results. First, A's motivation in the early stages was primarily driven by extrinsic factors, such as the desire to work in Japan and secure stable employment. Through work experience in caregiving, this motivation gradually shifted towards intrinsic motivation, such as the desire to understand Japanese better. This process confirms that while extrinsic motivation is important for a certain period of time, intrinsic motivation is essential for sustaining long-term learning.

Second, family and social support were found to play a significant role in maintaining learning motivation, particularly when compared with the difficulties faced by students in self-study. In particular, support from family and friends was found to have acted as a factor in sustaining learning continuity.

Third, A's motivation did not develop in a linear or cumulative manner. Instead, motivations that had once diminished were later reactivated, demonstrating the recurrent nature of motivation. This finding aligns with

the multi-layered and hierarchical nature of motivation and highlights "recurrence" as a key characteristic of learning motivation.

Finally, while this study focused on a care worker who continued learning Japanese, future research should include comparative analyses with care workers who did not continue learning in order to deepen our understanding of motivational changes and belief formation. In addition, since this study is a qualitative study based on a single case, further quantitative research is necessary to generalise the findings regarding changes in motivations, beliefs, and values, and to develop concrete strategies for supporting foreign care workers' Japanese language learning.

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Appendices

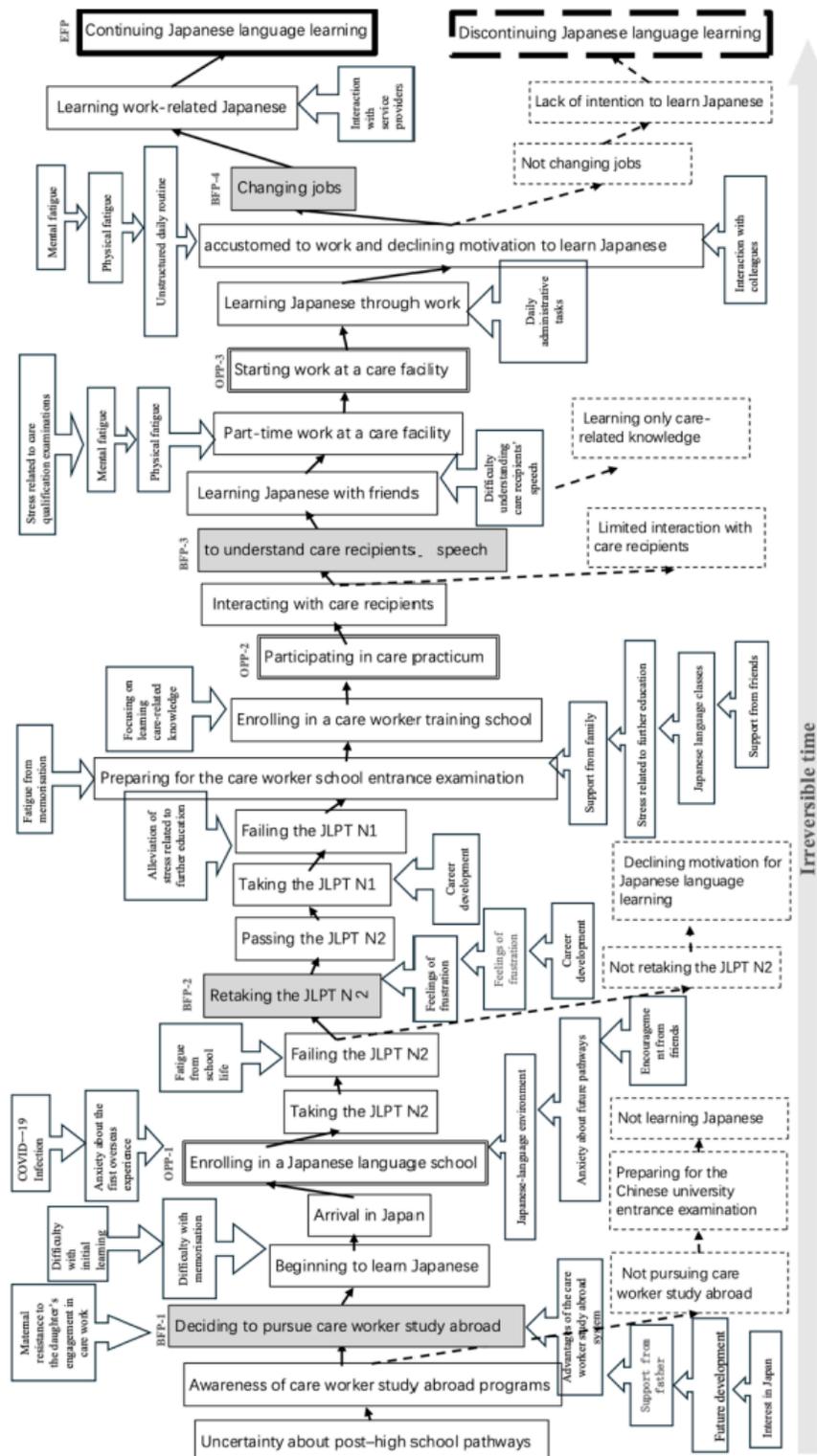


Figure a. A's TEM diagram

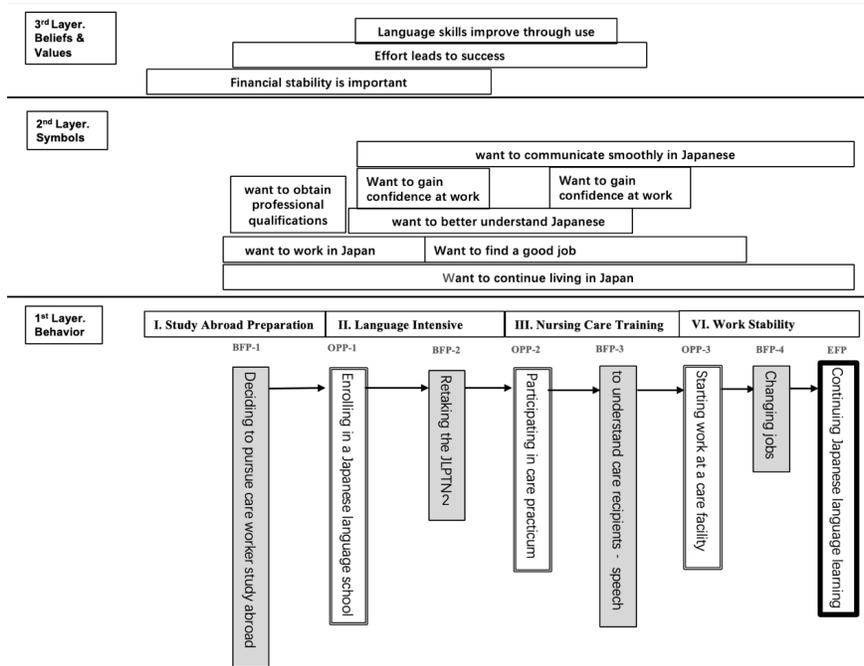


Figure b. A's TLMG diagram

Table a. Symbols in TEM diagram

Symbol	Description	Symbol	Description
	Equifinality Point (EFP)		Recognised behaviours, affect, cognition
	Polarised Equifinality Point (P-EFP)		Possible behaviours, affect, cognition
	Obligatory Passage Point (OPP)		Social Direction (SD)
	Bifurcation Point (BFP)		Social Guidance (SG)
	Path derived from narratives		Possible path