

A Comparison of Awareness: The Need for Foreign Language in Japan and the United States

Stephanie Litz

Advisors

Dr. Shigeko Sekine

Dr. Yoshiko Saito-Abbot

Outline

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Significance of the Study

- While studying abroad in Japan, I met students learning English
- Was curious where and what they wanted to do with the language
- Would like to investigate how foreign language needs are different between Japan and America, and what kinds of goals students have to fulfill these needs

Research Questions

1. What are the perceived Foreign Language needs according to foreign language learners at Japanese and American Universities about their respective countries?
2. To what extent do these students have specific goals that meet foreign language needs?

Background Research

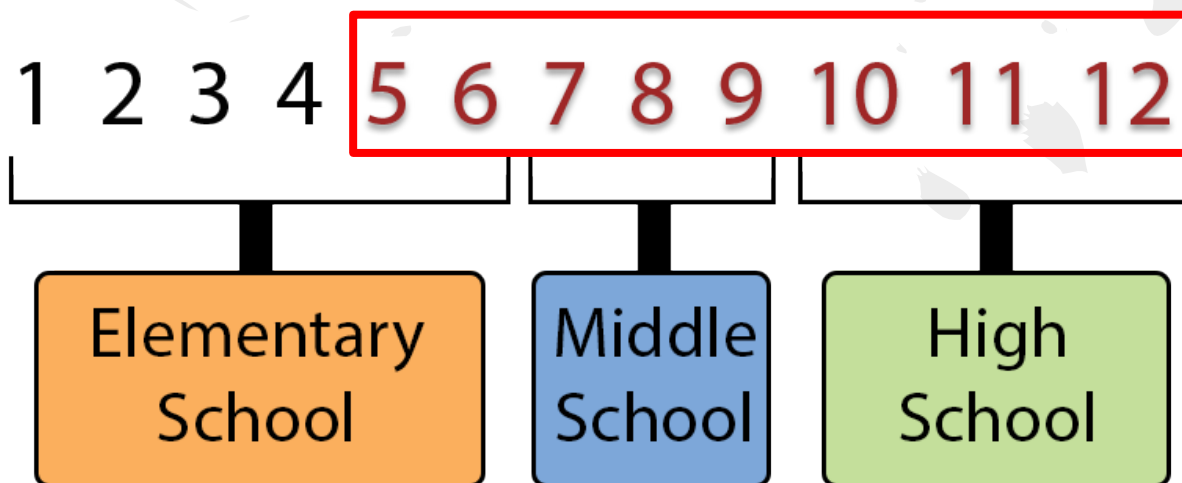
1. Foreign Language Education in Japan and USA
 - a) Japan: English
 - a) National Center Exam
 - b) USA: Spanish, French, German, etc.
 - a) College Admissions
2. What is “Foreign Language Need?”
3. Teaching Theory
 - a) “Goal-Setting Theory”

Foreign Language Education

Japan

- Teaches English, a “Core Subject”
(English Education Reform, n.d.)
- 8 years required

English Core Requirement
Grades 5 -12



National Center Exam for University Admissions

- One goal of English Language Education is preparing students for Globalization
- However, it is also an important component for getting into college
 - “Center Exam” is the common entrance exam (独立, n.d.)
- Topics cover **Core Subjects**: Japanese, Geography, History, Civics, Math, Science, and **Foreign Language**
 - Primarily **English**
 - However German, French, Chinese, and Korean are also present

Foreign Language Education USA

- Foreign Language is a “Core Subject” according to the Federal Government (Title IX, n.d.)
 - In CA, not a “Core Subject,” but an “Elective” (States, 2008)
 - 1 Year of Foreign language or Visual and Performing arts to graduate High School
- Top 3 Foreign Language Taught
 - Spanish
 - French
 - German

(Furman, Goldberg & Lusin, 2010)

College Requirements

- However, Foreign Language is also an important component of getting into California colleges

(HIGH SCHOOL, n.d.)

- e.g. California State University and University of California

What is “Foreign Language Need?”

- A country’s “need” for foreign language **speakers** to effectively communicate:
 - Within the country
 - Immigrants, heritage speakers
 - Outside the country
 - Working abroad, politics
- No common scale or test

(Maurer, 2010)

Teaching Theory: “Goal-Setting Theory”

- Setting concrete, challenging goals = higher rates of achievement & satisfaction
- Focuses on reasons for goal (Locke & Latham, 2006)
 - To **Learn** (linked with *intrinsic motivation*)
 - Primarily seeks **mastery** of a skill
 - e.g. Drawing
 - To **Perform** (linked with *extrinsic motivation*)
 - Primarily seeks **results** of a skill
 - e.g. Work to receive money
- The two often link/overlap
 - e.g. Enjoy gardening, also gain produce

(Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008)

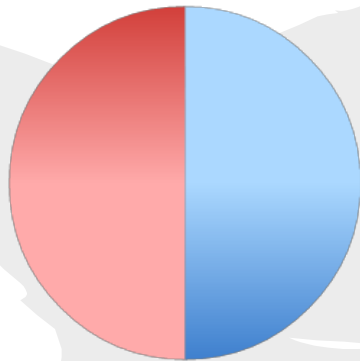
Research Method

- Participants of the Study
 - Demographics
 - 45 University Students
 - 25 Japanese Students
 - » 20 Female, 5 Male
 - » Studying at various Universities in Japan
 - 20 American Students
 - » 10 Female, 10 Male
- Research Instruments
 - Online Survey (Japanese – English)
 - Google Docs

Student Demographics

20 Responses

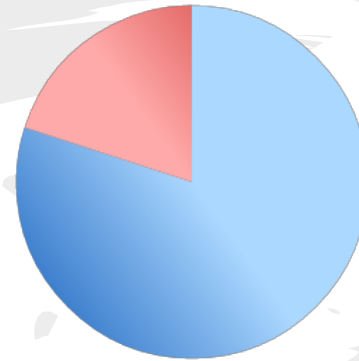
Americans



Female
Male

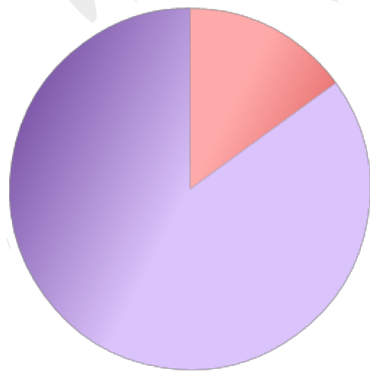
25 Responses

Japanese



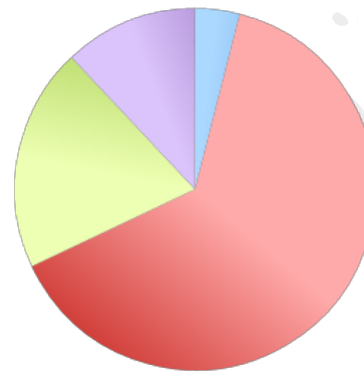
Female
Male

American Grade Level



Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior

Japanese Grade Level



Freshman
Sophomore
Junior
Senior

Research Findings 1

Research Question 1: What are the perceived Foreign Language needs according to foreign language learners at Japanese & American Universities about their respective countries?

Top 3 Areas Needing Foreign Language

To what degree do you think foreign language speakers are NEEDED in the following areas of your country's society?

USA "A Great Deal" and "A Lot"	Japan "A Great Deal" and "A Lot"
Politics (93.8%)	Politics/Education (85.7%)
Education/Work (85.7%)	Work (81.0%)

Over 80% of American & Japanese participants see important language needs in **Work, Education, and Politics.**

Meeting Foreign Language Need

To what degree do you think your country is MEETING the need for foreign language speakers in society?

	USA “Always,” “Often,” and “Sometimes”	Japan “Always,” “Often,” and “Sometimes”
Work	72.2%	85.7%
Education	44.4%	47.6%
Politics	44.4%	76.2%

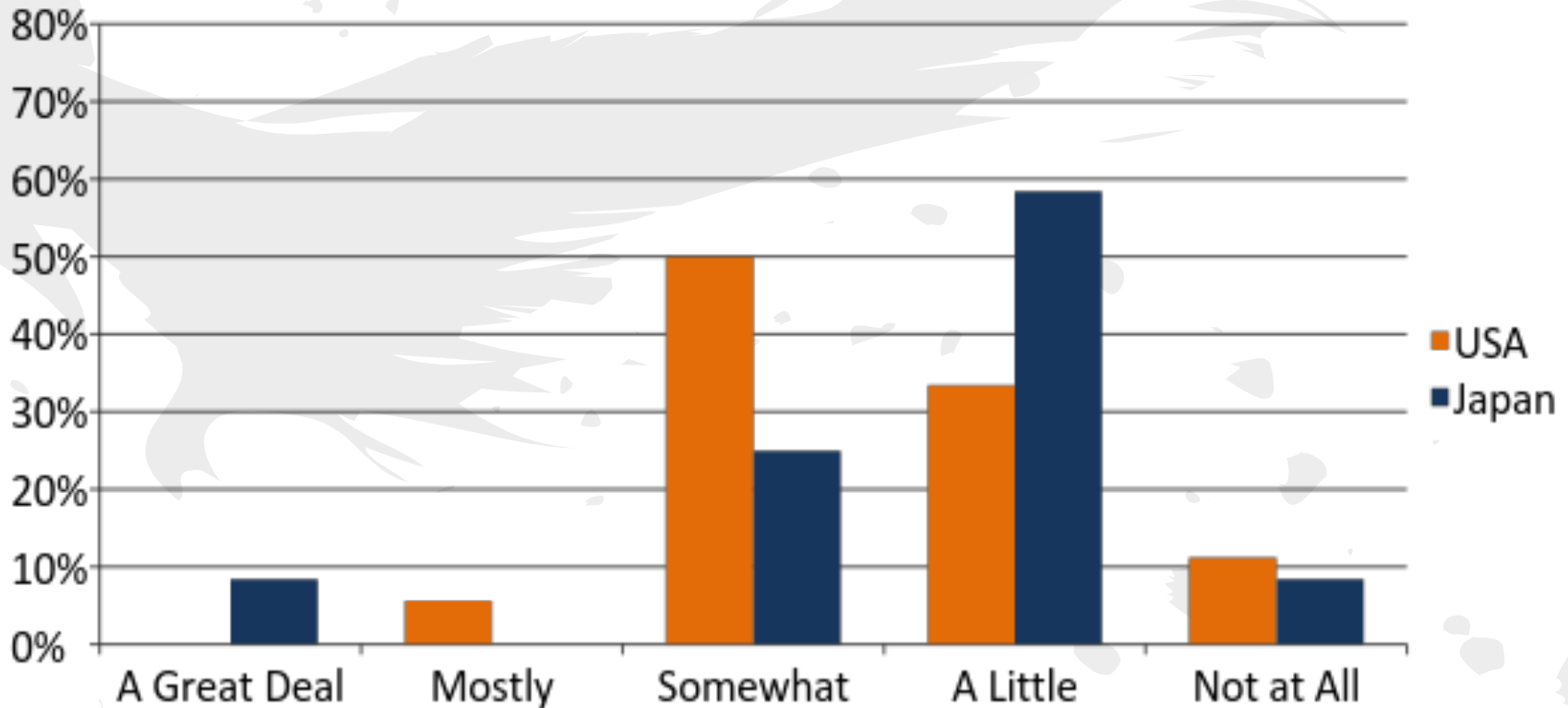
Over 80% of Americans & Japanese think **Work** needs are being met, *despite a strong need for FL*, as well as in Japanese **Politics**. Less than 50% of participants think FLNs in **Education** are being met.

Top 3 Areas Needing to be Addressed

To what degree do you think your country needs to ADDRESS the following, in order to fulfill it's foreign language needs?

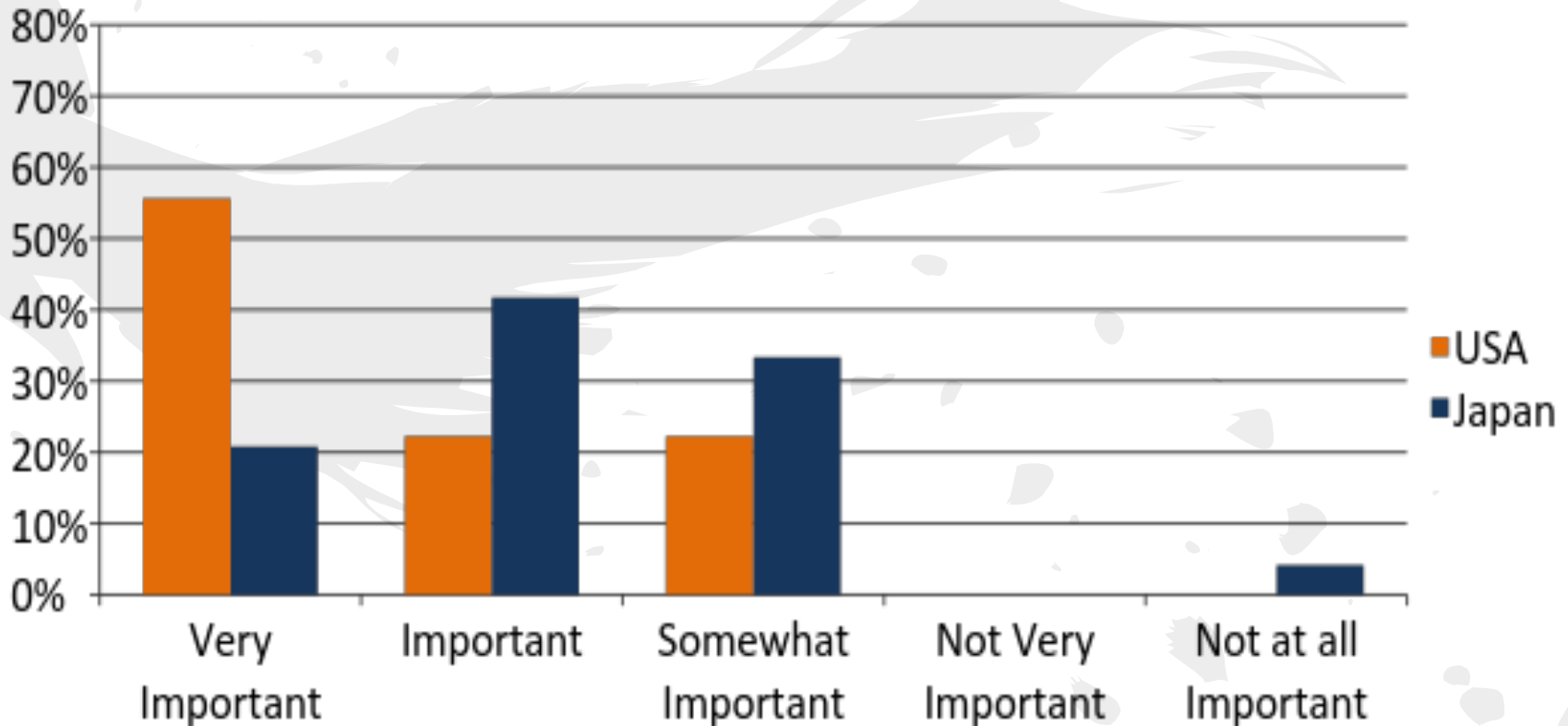
USA "A Great Deal" and "A Lot"	Japan "A Great Deal" and "A Lot"
Education/Politics (93.8%)	Education (90.5%)
Work (93.8%)	Politics (85.7%)
---	Work (81.0%)

Fulfilling Foreign Language Need



50% of Americans think the USA is **somewhat** fulfilling needs. In contrast, 58% of Japanese think Japan is only fulfilling **a little** of FLNs.

How Important is Fulfilling a Country's' Foreign Language Need



Foreign Language Students in **both countries** feel contributing to their countries' FL need is **important**, with 56% Americans responding with "Very Important," and 42% Japanese responding with "Important."

Research Findings 1 Summary

- In both countries the primary areas with foreign language needs are **Work, Education, and Politics**
- **Americans & Japanese** think their country is doing well to fulfill foreign language needs at **Work**, but still want more
- Despite early foreign language **Education**, **Japanese** still feel it needs to be addressed, suggesting a desire for **Quality** over Quantity
- Students from both countries show a **desire to contribute** to fulfilling their countries' needs

Research Findings 2

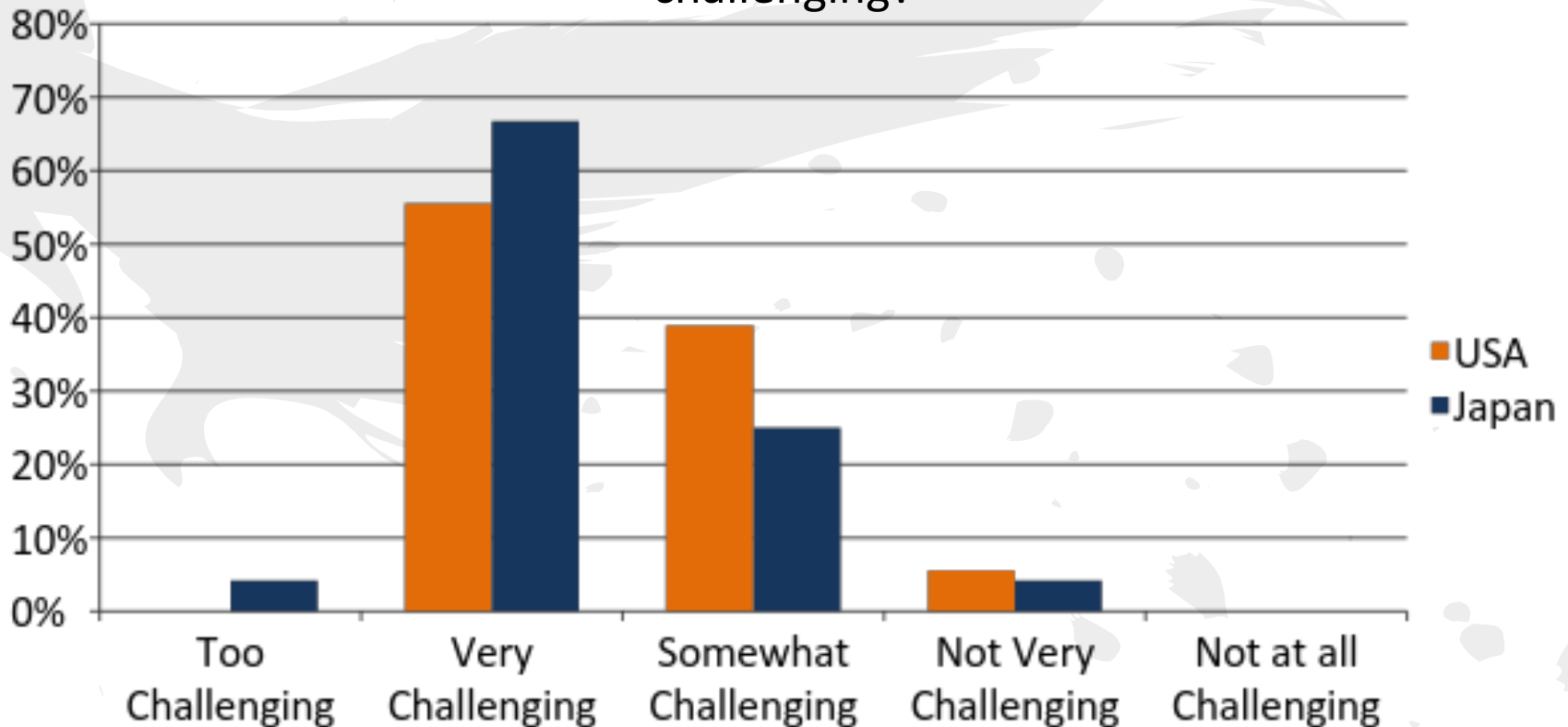
Research Question 2: To what extent do these students have specific goals that meet foreign language needs?

Top Foreign Language Goals

	USA	Japan
1	Listening & understanding the foreign language	For increased job opportunities
2	For increased job opportunities	Working abroad
3	To translate/interpret	Speaking like a native speaker Or Listening & understanding the foreign language

Challenging Language Goals

To what degree do you think completing your foreign language goal is challenging?



Major of Students from both countries think their goals are **Somewhat-to-Very Challenging**.

Learning Motivations

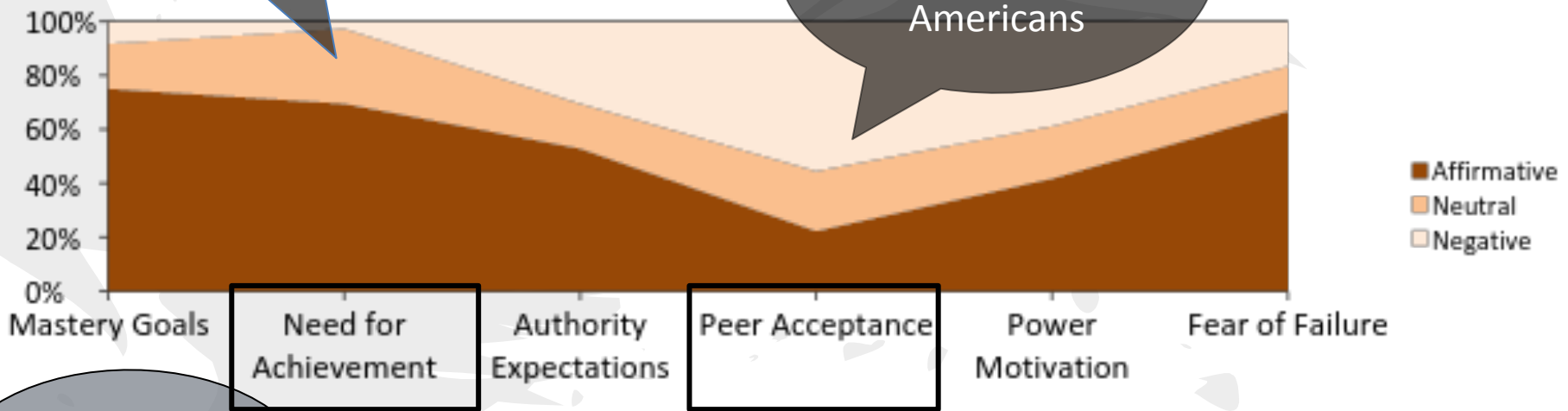
- Respondents answered a series of questions regarding to what degree they related to a variety of situations to gauge the following types of motivations:
 - Intrinsic: Mastery Goals, Need for Achievement
 - Extrinsic: Authority Expectations, Peer Acceptance, Power Motivation, and Fear of Failure
- Affirmative responses indicate a tendency toward the specific motivation
- Negative responses indicate a tendency to not follow the specific motivation

Learning Motivations

Highest Motivator for Americans

Lowest Motivator for Americans

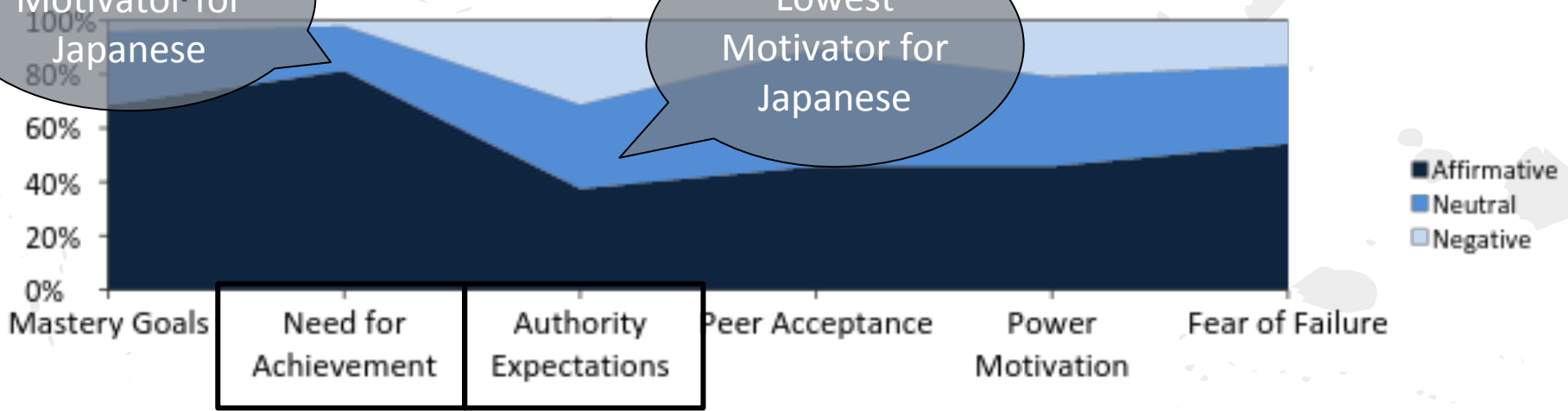
American Students



Highest Motivator for Japanese

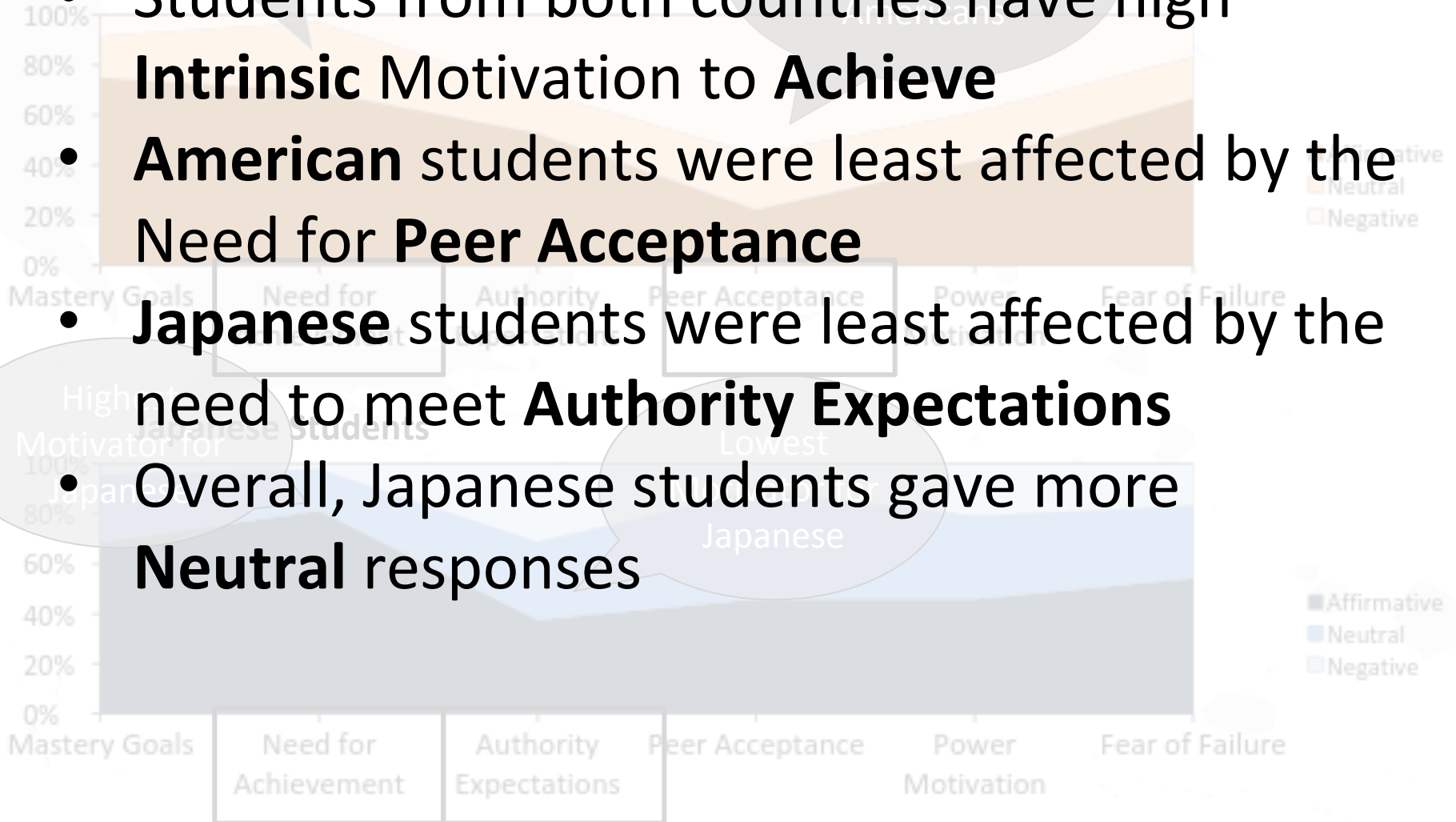
Lowest Motivator for Japanese

Japanese Students



Learning Motivations

- Students from both countries have high **Intrinsic Motivation to Achieve**
- **American** students were least affected by the **Need for Peer Acceptance**
- **Japanese** students were least affected by the need to meet **Authority Expectations**
- Overall, Japanese students gave more **Neutral** responses

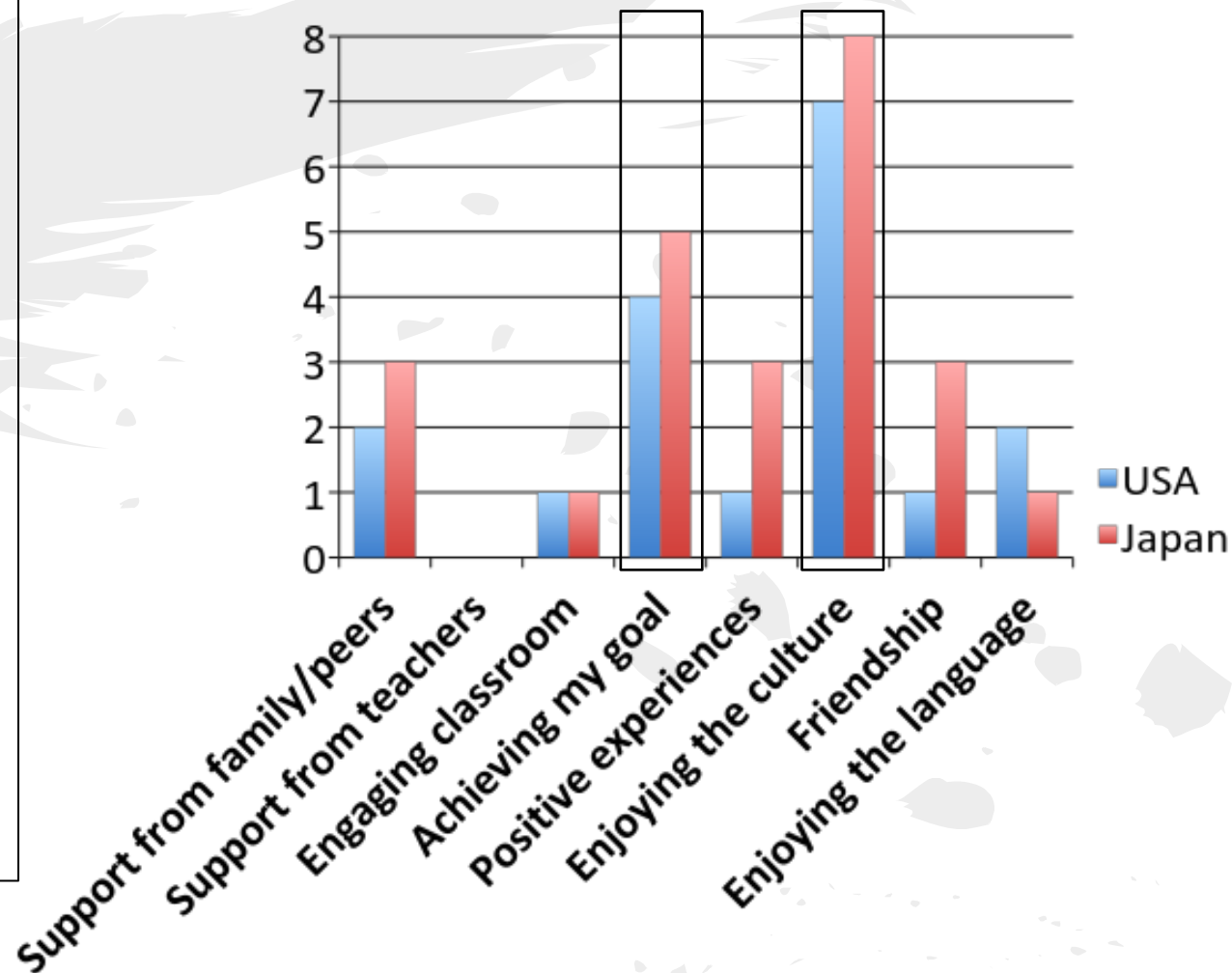


Students' Primary Motivators

What primarily motivates you to pursue your goal with a foreign language?

Students from both countries are primarily motivated by

- **enjoying the culture, and**
- **the thought of achieving their goal.**



Research Findings 2 Summary

- Student goals vary, but **Job Opportunities** and **Language Comprehension** are most commonly shared
- Students feel these goals are **Challenging**
- Students from both countries scored high in Intrinsic, or **Internally motivated** goals
 - Supported by a large number saying they're primarily motivated by **Culture** and their **Goals**
 - High Intrinsic motivation suggests students will continue to improve language skills and contribute to FLNs

Conclusion

- Among Foreign Language students, both countries think there is an even greater need for Foreign Language speakers in **Work, Education, and Politics**
- In both, the desire **to contribute** to Foreign Language needs is high
- **Students' Goals** reflect their desire to contribute, suggesting positive future effects

Limitations & Future Study

- Limitations of the Study
 - Only college students learning a foreign language were the target of the survey
 - Their opinions do not necessarily represent the opinions of people in their countries
- Future Areas of Study
 - Contrast the Opinions of:
 - Foreign Language Students vs. The General Public
 - Foreign Language Students vs. Other Students

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