Language-Indexed Affective-Motivational Profiles of Japanese Major Undergraduates: A Q Methodology Study

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ABSTRACT

Research on emotions in second-language learning has typically treated affect as a global learner trait and has rarely examined how affective experience is systematically shaped by specific structural and sociopragmatic features of the target language. This study addresses that gap by investigating how affective-motivational configurations in Japanese learning are indexed to distinct linguistic loci: orthographic processing, lexical deployment, clause-level comprehension, and sociopragmatic calibration. Using Q methodology, thirty-three undergraduates majoring in Japanese rank-ordered 45 self-referential statements about concrete linguistic encounters and motivational-evaluative appraisals on a forced quasi-normal distribution. Data were analysed using by-person centroid extraction with varimax rotation and triangulated with post-sort justifications, whereas follow-up interviews were conducted to corroborate interpretations. The analysis reconstructed three structurally independent profiles that together explain 39% of the study-sample variance across three factors. Factor 1 is a Mastery-Oriented Intrinsic Engagement, characterized by translation-free comprehension and orthographic consolidation with minimal social anxiety; Factor 2 is an Affective Overload and Motivational Depletion, marked by linguistic overwhelm under evaluative pressure and depleted persistence; and Factor 3 is a Resilient Persistence with Sociopragmatic Anxiety, exhibiting sustained motivation despite public speaking stress. The findings show how appraisals of control and value are configured around learners' phenomenological encounters with Japanese linguistic features, not only general learning conditions. Overall, the patterns indicate that emotions and motivation in this sample vary with the particular linguistic features engaged rather than reflecting a single global disposition.

Keywords: Q methodology; by-person factor analysis; affective-motivational; Japanese language learning; emotions

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INTRODUCTION

Japanese language learners often face challenges with structural and sociolinguistic features that differ from those in many Indo-European languages. Japanese has a tripartite writing system of logographic characters (*kanji*), and its grammar includes an elaborated honorific system (*keigo*). These features create a demanding acquisitional landscape (Mori & Mori, 2011). Prior research reveals learner difficulties with figurative language (Musaev et al., 2021) and with sociopragmatic conventions such as daily greetings and politeness usage (Mohd et al., 2020). While cognitive load has been studied, how these features configure patterned affect across tasks remains underexplored. A substantial body of second language acquisition research establishes that affect is constitutive of learning (Plonsky et al., 2022; Dewaele, 2013). Early works framed affect as a filter on input processing (Krashen, 1982). Subsequent work treats affect as a primary signal that shapes selection, processing, and consolidation of linguistic material.

Foundational constructs such as Foreign Language Anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014) have yielded valuable insights, yet they are often studied as separate variables. Variable-centred designs can obscure how multiple emotions cohere into patterned subjective realities specific to a particular language. Existing work typically conceptualises learners as globally anxious or motivated individuals and rarely asks which specific properties of the target language elicit particular emotions. This omission is particularly salient in the case of Japanese, where orthographic processing, morphosyntactic operations, lexical deployment, and sociopragmatic performance present qualitatively different challenges. Without specifying which linguistic loci are implicated, affective constructs such as foreign language anxiety and enjoyment remain detached from the very features that learners are appraising.

This study addresses this gap by identifying and explaining language-indexed affective-motivational profiles in Japanese. Rather than contrasting learners with high or low global levels of motivation or anxiety, it examines how configurations of emotions and motivation are organised around concrete linguistic loci in Japanese. The analysis is guided by an integrative framework that treats established theories as explanatory lenses. Self-Determination Theory (SDT: Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2020), Control-Value Theory (CVT: Pekrun, 2006, 2024), and Positive Psychology (PP: Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) are used alongside the constructs of enjoyment and anxiety to explain how appraisals of concrete linguistic tasks produce distinct affective profiles. This study adopts a broad affect set that includes enjoyment, anxiety, pride, frustration, and curiosity, since affective experience in Japanese cannot be reduced to Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) and Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) alone.

Two research questions guided the study:

- RQ1: What distinct affective-motivational profiles emerge from learners' evaluations of language-internal and interactional properties of Japanese, as identified through by-person factor analysis within Q methodology?
- RQ2: How does an integrated theoretical framework account for these profiles by linking appraisals and emotions to those properties?

Q methodology (hereafter Q) was selected to identify shared patterns of subjectivity from participants' own perspectives (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). The by-person design complements variable-centred survey research by recovering integrated configurations that would

otherwise be averaged out. Recent Q studies of L2 emotions and learning experiences (e.g., Thumvichit, 2024; Raksawong et al., 2024; Fraschini, 2022) demonstrate that Q is particularly suited to profiling how multiple emotions, beliefs, and appraisals cohere into situated viewpoints. The present study extends this work by applying Q to language-indexed affordances in Japanese, thereby modelling affective-motivational experience in direct relation to specific linguistic loci.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Over four decades of research have established affect as a central force shaping second language acquisition. Meta-analytic evidence confirms that emotional variables are significant predictors of linguistic performance outcomes (Plonsky et al., 2022; Teimouri et al., 2019). Building on these syntheses, Dewaele (2013) argues that affect functions as a primary signal in cognition and performance, while Li (2024) shows that emotions are dynamic and situated within specific skills and tasks. In line with this turn to situated processes, Dörnyei (2020), Ushioda (2020), and Ryan (2019) foreground person-in-context perspectives, which motivates treating the target language as a structured environment for appraisal. Complementing this perspective beyond the Japanese case, Ross and Stuckler (2025) show that anxiety-related constructs, inhibitory self-beliefs, and linguistic challenges form separable yet overlapping clusters, reinforcing the need for configuration-sensitive profiling. Against this backdrop, the present study shifts analytical focus from general dispositions to the target language as a source of structured affordances and asks how intrinsic properties of Japanese act as triggers that organise affect into recurrent configurations.

At the core of the explanatory architecture are SDT and CVT. SDT proposes that satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs fosters high-quality motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017), with robust links to engagement and well-being in language learning contexts (Noels et al., 2000; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2022; Shelton-Strong, 2025). CVT explains how achievement emotions arise from appraisals of perceived control and task value (Pekrun, 2006, 2024). Task-proximal appraisal is central; MacIntyre et al. (2020) explicitly advocate analysing learners' evaluations at the level of concrete classroom events and tasks. The co-presence of positive and negative states during L2 speaking, documented through per-second, task-embedded evidence (Aubrey, 2022), is consistent with the present focus on Japanese task ecologies. PP adds a resource-oriented lens on how positive emotions broaden thought–action repertoires and build enduring resources (Fredrickson, 2001), and how character strengths, agency, and well-being support language-learning appraisals and motivation (Oxford, 2016; MacIntyre et al., 2016). Recent work in applied linguistics converges on this resource-based view and links need satisfaction to situated task outcomes and engagement (Wang et al., 2021; Alamer, 2022), which aligns with configuration-oriented, person-centred profiling in language-learner research (Morea & Ghanbar, 2024).

This study treats FLE and FLA as observable expressions of deeper SDT-CVT dynamics and reads them through Japanese-specific task ecologies. FLE is consistently associated with broadened cognitive engagement and higher performance indicators (Jiang & Dewaele, 2019; Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2024; Wang & Li, 2022), while FLA shows a reliable negative association with achievement across studies (Botes et al., 2020; Teimouri et al., 2019), with experimental syntheses indicating affective malleability in response to task modifications (Xiong et al., 2024). In Japanese, several structural and sociopragmatic features are plausibly relevant for appraisals: orthographic load from *kanji* density and retrieval (Mori & Mori, 2011), morphosyntactic

complexity in particles and verb conjugation, lexical processing demands, and public politeness calibration in interaction. Mohd et al. (2020) document that politeness selection in evaluative public contexts is socially sensitive, which plausibly lowers perceived control and raises anxiety for some learners while producing enjoyment when competence is affirmed. Recent evidence for learners of Japanese also suggests that enjoyment and boredom vary with proficiency, consistent with appraisals that track changing control and value across tasks (Li et al., 2025). Converging evidence from Q-based research in a related East-Asian higher-education context shows that learners' challenge profiles in English-medium instruction engineering combine linguistic, cultural, structural, and institutional pressures alongside both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping (Charoenpornsook & Thumvichit, 2025), reinforcing the need to read affect through multi-component task ecologies. Together these strands support treating language-internal properties as plausible appraisal triggers rather than assuming global, language-general affect.

Applications of the above theories in SLA have often been fragmented, with constructs examined in isolation through large-scale variable-centred designs. Where R-mode surveys estimate relations among variables at the group level, Q-mode analysis estimates relations among persons to recover patterned subjectivities. In the affect domain this distinction is decisive for identifying coherent viewpoints rather than mean trends. A methodological approach is required that models subjectivity as a structured whole while preserving the specificity of language triggers. Q addresses this need by mapping shared viewpoints directly from participant judgements (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). Recent syntheses document the growing use of Q in applied linguistics for systematic viewpoint mapping (Morea & Ghanbar, 2024; Thumvichit, 2024). As Thumvichit (2024) emphasises, best practice involves a transparent pathway from concourse construction to Q sample refinement, purposive P-set selection, forced-distribution sorting with optional post-interviews, and by-person factor extraction and rotation, with validity grounded in procedural clarity. In L2 emotion research, Raksawong et al. (2024) profile unwillingness to communicate into distinct teacher-linked silencing configurations, while Fraschini (2023) and Morea and Ghanbar (2024) corroborate the value of forced sorting and by-person analysis for isolating interpretable viewpoints. Recentring emotions as situated appraisals, specifying Japanese loci that plausibly structure those appraisals, and leveraging by-person Q analysis jointly motivate the present design, which proceeds to map language-indexed affective-motivational profiles and interpret them through an integrated SDT-CVT-PP framework rather than treating emotions as global traits detached from the linguistic ecology of Japanese.

METHODOLOGY

This cross-sectional study used Q methodology to recover shared subjective viewpoints about emotions in Japanese learning. Q models subjectivity through by-person factor analysis and targets coherent configurations of thought and feeling rather than population parameters (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012; Morea & Ghanbar, 2024). The unit of analysis is the emergent viewpoint. Procedural reliability was supported by a standardised instruction script, identical online materials, and consistent administration across participants. Content validity was supported through expert review of the Q sample and a small pilot study.

The study adopts an ecological-phenomenological stance in which affect arises from learner-language interaction. Linguistic affordances are treated as properties that become perceptible in use and are actualised differently across contexts and resources (Gibson, 1979; Van

Lier, 2004; Van Manen, 1990). Q sorts provide a methodological window onto these affordances by reconstructing relatively stable appraisal patterns linked to structural and sociolinguistic features of Japanese, consistent with sociomaterial accounts that treat linguistic properties as evolving through practice (Toohey, 2019; Guerrettaz et al., 2021).

A brief pilot study was conducted with three Japanese-major undergraduates who completed the full online Q sort and commented on statement clarity, instructions, and technical usability. Their data were used only to refine wording and procedures and were not included in the main analysis.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE Q SAMPLE

A Q study begins with a concourse, the broad universe of ideas and feelings surrounding the target phenomenon, from which a smaller Q sample is drawn. In this study, a two-step deductive–inductive protocol produced a 45-item Q sample that maximised theoretical relevance and ecological authenticity.

Statement generation drew on three inputs. First, a focused review of scholarship on L2 emotions, motivation, and Japanese-specific linguistic features informed the thematic coverage and wording of candidate items (e.g., Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Plonsky et al., 2022; Mori & Mori, 2011; Pizziconi, 2011; Thumvichit, 2024; Raksawong et al., 2024). Second, eight semi-structured interviews with Japanese-major undergraduates elicited concrete task experiences involving *kanji*, grammar, vocabulary use, and sociopragmatic performance. Third, the first author's researcher field notes from classroom observations, kept as analytic memos on recurrent emotional reactions to particular tasks and interactional episodes, were used to ensure that the concourse captured situations that regularly arise in the programme. From an initial 154 statements, deduplication and wording consolidation yielded 95 unique items. Two independent specialists reviewed this pool for clarity, redundancy, thematic coverage, and valence balance, and a brief pilot with three learners confirmed comprehensibility and usability. Iterative revision resulted in the final 45 statements (see Appendix A).

The concourse was constructed to represent four language-internal subsystems and use-conditions in Japanese (orthographic processing, morphosyntactic complexity, lexical operations, and sociopragmatic calibration) together with broader motivational evaluative appraisals. No a priori categorical quotas were imposed. Items were retained based on thematic salience and their capacity to elicit comparative judgements, in line with Q's configurational holism, which seeks integrated viewpoints rather than discrete domain scores. Valence was balanced (23 positive, 22 negative), with neutrality handled through central placements on the grid. Since public-facing interaction was especially salient in the concourse, sociopragmatic content is proportionally richer in the final set.

PARTICIPANTS (P-SAMPLE)

The participants are thirty-three undergraduates majoring in Japanese language and linguistics at Universiti Malaya. Consistent with Q's focus on viewpoint diversity rather than statistical representativeness, a purposive, maximum-variation P-sample was used (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012). All participants were undergraduates majoring in Japanese, a theoretically critical group whose sustained, high-intensity engagement supports affective crystallisation and identity investment (Darvin & Norton, 2023; Zhang & Huang, 2024). Eligibility to participate was

restricted to students who were currently enrolled in the course and who reported regular engagement with the core tasks represented in the Q sample.

Within this group, the sample was structured to include students from different years of study in order to capture both the more turbulent affective responses characteristic of earlier stages and the more stabilised patterns associated with later stages. Year of study served as a descriptive indicator in the analysis and, where relevant, was considered alongside self-reported recent task performance and available placement information. It was not included as a variable in the factor analysis itself. The sample size of thirty-three participants lies within the typical range for Q studies (approximately 20 to 40 participants). Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics.

TABLE 1. Demographics of participants (n=33)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Academic Year	1st year	12	36.40
	2nd year	7	21.20
	3rd year	14	42.40
Gender & Ethnicity	Malay Female	22	66.70
	Malay Male	4	12.10
	Chinese Female	4	12.10
	Chinese Male	3	9.10
Age Group	18-20	8	24.20
	21-23	20	60.60
	24-26	3	9.10
	>27	2	6.10

Q SORTING PROCEDURE

Data collection took place in individual online sessions using EQ Web Sort 6.0 (Banasick, 2023a). Participants first read standardised instructions describing the task and the response anchors. They then rank-ordered the 45 statements on a fixed quasi-normal distribution grid from −5 ("most unlike my view") to +5 ("most like my view") range. This self-referential framing is standard in Q and prioritises subjective salience over propositional agreement (Brown, 1980; Watts & Stenner, 2012).

The sort proceeded in three steps. First, participants sorted statements into preliminary piles ("more like me", "neutral", "less like me"). Second, they placed all items onto the forced distribution grid with the specified column counts (see Appendix B). Third, they reviewed and adjusted placements as needed. A brief nine-item practice sort on an unrelated topic familiarised participants with the procedures and anchors. The completion time was 20 to 30 minutes.

Uniform instructions were provided on screen, and the platform enforced compliance with column counts, preventing incomplete sorts. Clarification support was available via chat for procedural questions only; no guidance was given on content. Immediately after sorting, participants wrote short justifications for each statement placed at the extreme ranks (+5 and −5). Follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants selected for maximum variation based on preliminary factor loadings and the extremity and symmetry of their arrays. Interviews lasted 15 to 20 minutes and probed reasons for extreme placements. Written justifications and interviews were used solely to triangulate and refine factor interpretations. Illustrative post-sort interview questions are shown in Appendix C.

DATA ANALYSIS

The 33 completed Q sorts were analysed in Ken-Q Analysis 2.0 (Banasick, 2023b). A correlation matrix of all Q sorts was computed, factors were extracted using centroid analysis and rotated to simple structure with orthogonal varimax, defining sorts were flagged, idealised factor arrays were computed as weighted average z-scores and reconverted to the −5 to +5 scale, and distinguishing and consensus statements were identified using standard-error tests on differences between factor arrays.

A Q sort was flagged as defining when its loading exceeded the $p < .01$ threshold of |0.385| on a single factor and did not exceed this threshold on any other factor. This criterion followed Brown's (1980) standard-error formula, with 45 items giving SE = $1/\sqrt{45}$ = 0.149 and 2.58 × SE = 0.385. Q sorts that met this threshold on more than one factor were treated as confounded and excluded from interpretation. Centroid extraction followed by varimax rotation yielded a three-factor solution that met converging retention criteria: eigenvalues greater than 1, compliance with Humphrey's rule (at least two significant defining sorts per factor), a clear scree elbow after the third factor, and interpretability relative to the study aims. Two-factor and four-factor alternatives merged distinct viewpoints or produced factors with too few defining sorts.

The three retained factors together explained 39 percent of the total person correlation variance. Factor characteristics and interfactor correlations appear in Table 2, and the full set of distinguishing statements, loading matrices, and factor arrays is provided in Appendices D, E and F.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The Q methodological analysis addressed two research questions. Sections 4.1 to 4.3 answer RQ1 by shaping three distinct affective-motivational profiles. Section 4.4 provides the empirical contrasts across linguistic loci that set up the conditions for answering RQ2. The theoretical interpretation that directly answers RQ2 is presented in Section 5.

The three factors jointly explained 39 percent of person correlation variance. Factor 1 accounted for 21 percent (eigenvalue 7.01, 13 defining sorts), Factor 2 for 11 percent (eigenvalue 3.60, 9 defining sorts), and Factor 3 for 7 percent (eigenvalue 2.41, 4 defining sorts). Composite reliability indices and standard errors are acceptable for all arrays, with the larger standard error for Factor 3 reflecting its smaller number of defining sorts. Factor characteristics are summarised in Table 2, and low interfactor correlations in Table 3 support interpreting the three factors as substantially independent viewpoints.

TABLE 2. Factor characteristics

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Eigenvalues	7.0101	3.5953	2.4147
No. of Defining Sorts	13	9	4
% explained variance	21	11	7
Cumulative % explained variance	21	32	39
Avg. Rel. Coef.	0.8	0.8	0.8
Composite Reliability	0.981	0.973	0.941
S.E. of Factor Z-scores	0.138	0.164	0.243

Note. *Composite reliability and standard errors calculated in Ken-Q using Brown's (1980) formula with single-sort reliability assumption ρ = 0.80.*

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TABLE 3. Factor score correlations

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Factor 1	1	0.1488	0.0426
Factor 2	0.1488	1	0.0593
Factor 3	0.0426	0.0593	1

In line with Q logic, factors are treated as shared viewpoints reconstructed from distinguishing placements at array extremes, supported by post-sort written justifications and follow up interviews. Linguistic affordances are indexed by item wording: references to *kanji* mark orthographic processing, spontaneous use of new vocabulary marks lexical uptake, translation free understanding marks clause level integration, and references to public speaking or native speaker judgement mark sociopragmatic evaluation. Items that mention difficult topics or grammar are read as morphosyntactic or semantic complexity unless justifications specify a narrower domain, which preserves ecological validity by aligning analysis with participants' phenomenological categories.

Appendix D lists distinguishing statements for each factor, which are interpreted in Sections 4.1 to 4.3. Appendix E presents the factor loading matrix with defining sorts, and Appendix F provides complete factor arrays for all 45 items, which underlie the cross factor contrasts in Table 4 and the consensus classification in Section 4.4.

FACTOR 1: MASTERY-ORIENTED INTRINSIC ENGAGEMENT

Factor 1 (13 sorts, 39% of the P-sample, eigenvalue=7.01, 21% variance) defines a mastery-oriented profile where positive affect arises from comprehension, lexical use, and orthographic mastery, while negative affect centres on social evaluation and peer comparison.

The positive pole is anchored by Item 38 ("*I feel satisfied when I understand Japanese without translating*") at rank +5 (z = 1.68, distinguishing at p < .01), the summit of the Factor 1 array. Post-sort justifications emphasise "*recognising meaning directly in Japanese*" and "*feeling like thinking in Japanese*". Item 2 ("*I feel happy when I use new Japanese words in conversation*") occupies rank +4 (z = 1.35, distinguishing at p < .01). At rank +3, three items cluster: Item 39 ("*I feel proud when I master a hard Japanese topic*"), Item 9 ("*I feel amazed when I understand difficult Japanese topics*"), and Item 23 ("*I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it's hard*"), all distinguishing at p < .01. Item 37 ("*I feel proud when I learn difficult kanji*") is at +2 and distinguishes Factor 1 from Factors 2 and 3, where *kanji* pride is rejected. Other positive items relate to achievement (task completion, pride), optimism about speaking skills, and cultural interest.

The negative pole is anchored by Item 17 ("*I feel discouraged when I think Japanese might not help me in the future*") at rank −5 (z = −2.03, distinguishing at p < .01), the most strongly rejected item in the Factor 1 array. At rank −4 are Item 11 ("*I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes*"), Item 16 ("*I feel ashamed when I make mistakes speaking Japanese in class*"), and Item 13 ("*I feel embarrassed when my classmates speak Japanese better than me*"), all distinguishing at p < .01. Item 45 ("*I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me*") appears at −3, contrasting with its positive placement in Factor 3. Item 42 ("*I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought*") is at −3, indicating anticipated difficulty and distinguishing Factor 1 from Factor 2, where it is neutral. Item

10 ("*I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I'm improving*") is at −2; its rejection in F1 contrasts sharply with its endorsement in F2 and F3.

Two distinguishing items are neutral: Item 4 ("*I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress*") and Item 8 ("*I feel connected to Japanese culture when I understand its traditions*"). Their neutrality reflects this factor's core focus on competence.

Positive affect in Factor 1 arises from competence-building tasks like direct comprehension, lexical use, and orthographic mastery, while strongly rejecting social-evaluative concerns. Its distinct profile is evidenced by sharp cross-factor contrasts on key items (see Table 4).

FACTOR 2: AFFECTIVE OVERLOAD AND MOTIVATIONAL DEPLETION

Factor 2 (9 sorts, 27.3%, eigenvalue=3.60, 11% variance) depicts a profile of affective overload, where frustration and anxiety cluster around assessment and cognitive demands, while intrinsic persistence and cultural curiosity are rejected.

The positive pole is anchored by Item 14 ("*I feel frustrated when I work hard but do not do well in tests*") at rank +5 ($z = 1.65$, distinguishing at $p < .01$). This is the highest-ranked item in the Factor 2 array and does not appear at the positive pole in the other factors. Two items occupy rank +4: Item 4 ("*I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress*") and Item 10 ("*I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I am improving*"), both distinguishing and both contrasting with their ranks in Factor 1. Item 18 ("*I feel overwhelmed when there is so much to learn in Japanese*") is at +3, with comments such as "too many verb forms, too many *kanji*, too many particles". Item 32 ("*I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles*") is at +2, indicating that shared struggle offers some social buffering. Additional moderately positive items relate to performance anxiety, social validation, achievement pride, and optimism about speaking skills.

The negative pole is anchored by Item 45 ("*I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me*") at rank −5 ($z = -2.31$, distinguishing at $p < .01$), the most strongly rejected item in the Factor 2 array. Two items occupy rank −4: Item 33 ("*I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team*") and Item 23 ("*I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it is hard*"), the latter providing a defining contrast with Factors 1 and 3. At rank −3, distinguishing items include Item 22 ("*I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress*") and Item 35 ("*I feel part of a team when we practise Japanese in groups*"). At rank −2, three cultural items cluster: Item 7 ("*I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture in class*"), Item 29 ("*I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture while studying"),* and Item 40 ("*I feel proud when I explain Malaysian culture in Japanese*"), all distinguishing and all negative. Additional negative ranks include determination after mistakes and cultural curiosity.

Three items are statistically distinguishing at rank 0: Item 11 ("*I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes*"), Item 42 ("*I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought*"), and Item 26 ("*I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese*"). Unlike in other factors, the neutrality of grammar surprise suggests unmet expectations. Similarly, native-speaker judgment stress is neutral here because this factor's distress is focused on assessment and cognitive overload instead.

In summary, Factor 2 is characterized by affective overload from assessment frustration and cognitive demands, coupled with a reliance on external validation. This profile is marked by the motivational depletion of intrinsic persistence and the rejection of coping strategies, creating a sharp structural divergence from the other factors.

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FACTOR 3: RESILIENT PERSISTENCE WITH SOCIOPRAGMATIC ANXIETY

Factor 3 (4 sorts, 12.1%, eigenvalue=2.41, 7% variance) represents a profile of resilient persistence, defined by the co-occurrence of high motivation and sociopragmatic anxiety, alongside a confrontational rejection of coping strategies and incremental feedback.

The positive pole is anchored by Item 23 ("*I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it is hard*") at rank +5 ($z = 2.18$, distinguishing at $p < .01$), the highest z-score recorded across the three arrays. Post-sort justifications emphasise that difficulty increases determination. Two items occupy rank +4: Item 10 ("*I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I am improving*") and Item 11 ("*I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes*"), both distinguishing and sharply contrasting with their negative ranks in Factor 1. Item 27 ("*I feel curious to learn more about Japanese language and culture*") is also at +4 and contrasts with its negative rank in Factor 2. Item 45 ("*I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me*") is at +3, further distinguishing Factor 3 from Factor 2. Other slightly positive items include collaborative study, group practice, and motivation from progress.

The negative pole is anchored by Item 22 ("*I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress*") at rank −5 ($z = -2.19$, distinguishing at $p < .01$). Comments indicate a preference to "push through" rather than use relaxation techniques. Three items occupy rank −4: Item 12 ("*I feel anxious when I do not have enough time to prepare for homework*"), Item 34 ("*I feel satisfied when my group works together to solve problems*"), and Item 42 ("*I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought*"), all distinguishing. At rank −3, distinguishing items include Item 33 ("*I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team*") and Item 20 ("*I feel hopeful that I will become more confident speaking Japanese*"), whose negative placement is notable given the high placement of anxiety items. At rank −2, distinguishing items include Item 5 ("*I feel excited when I understand Japanese texts better than before*"), Item 19 ("*I feel bored when lessons repeat topics I already know*"), and Item 26 ("*I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese*").

Four distinguishing items hold neutral ranks: Item 43 ("*I feel happy when I understand Japanese conversations without practice*"), Item 32 ("*I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles*"), Item 24 ("*I feel rewarded when my hard work gives me good grades*"), and Item 3 ("*I feel proud of how much I have learned in Japanese*"). The neutrality of grade rewards and pride, which were positive in other factors, indicates that this viewpoint's motivation is not driven by incremental feedback.

Factor 3 reveals a profile of resilient persistence, where motivation thrives on challenge and anxiety is concentrated in sociopragmatic evaluation. This paradoxical coexistence is underscored by a confrontational stance that rejects coping strategies and a future-oriented drive, creating a distinct viewpoint.

CROSS-FACTOR CONTRASTS AND CONSENSUS STATEMENTS

The three factor arrays exhibit distinct polarity patterns. Table 4 presents cross-factor contrasts on 12 items selected from the complete 45-item arrays (Appendix F) based on three criteria: high cross-factor variance (ranking variance > 0.4), representation of the four linguistic loci operationalised in the Q sample (orthography, lexis, clause-level comprehension, sociopragmatics), and extreme factor placements (ranks ≥ |4|), which anchor factor poles. An audit of extreme placements (±4, ±5) within this subset shows that Factor 1 concentrates on orthography and comprehension, Factor 2 has a single sociopragmatic extreme, and Factor 3 concentrates on

sociopragmatics. Item 23 (motivational persistence) shows the widest cross-factor divergence, while Items 10 and 11 exhibit bipolar patterns across factors. Item 22 (coping strategies) shows progressive rejection from F1 to F3. Item 42 (grammar surprise) is rejected in F1 and F3 but neutral in F2, indicating differential expectation patterns.

TABLE 4. Cross-factor contrasts on selected distinguishing items (extracted from Appendix F)

Item	Statement (abbreviated)	F1	F2	F3	Interpretation
	Orthographic Processing				
37	Proud when I learn difficult *kanji*	+2*	−1	−1	Salient only in F1 (mastery pride)
	Lexical Uptake				
2	Happy when I use new words in conversation	+4*	+1	+2	Highest in F1 (spontaneous production valued)
	Clause-Level Comprehension				
38	Satisfied when I understand without translating	+5*	+2	+2	Defining summit of F1 (direct meaning access)
9	Amazed when I understand difficult topics	+3*	0	−1	High in F1 (complexity as achievement)
	Sociopragmatics (*keigo* / public speaking)†				
10	Nervous about public speaking/*keigo* , even if improving	−2*	+4*	+4*	Rejected in F1, central to F2 and F3 anxiety
11	Stressed when native speakers might judge *keigo* /politeness mistakes	−4*	0*	+4*	Sharply rejected in F1, highest in F3
	Morphosyntactic Complexity				
42	Surprised grammar is harder than I thought	−3*	0*	−4*	Rejected in F1 and F3; neutral in F2 (unmet expectations)
18	Overwhelmed by so much to learn	−2	+3*	−1	Defining overload in F2
	Motivational Persistence				
23	Motivated to keep learning, even when hard	+3*	−4*	+5*	High in F1 and F3, collapsed in F2
	Coping and Regulation				
22	Calm when I use strategies to manage stress	−1*	−3*	−5*	Rejected in F3 (confrontational coping)
	Assessment Affect				
14	Frustrated when hard work does not yield good test results	−1	+5*	−2	Defining frustration in F2 (effort–outcome discrepancy)
	Instrumental Doubt				
17	Discouraged when Japanese might not help in future	−5*	−1	−1	Sharply rejected in F1 (intrinsic engagement)

Note. Ranks use the −5 to +5 Q scale. Asterisks indicate statistically distinguishing items ($p < .05$), including neutrally-ranked items with significant cross-factor differences. Locus labels derive from item wording; extreme rank counts refer to ±4/±5 placements. Phonological pressures are captured within sociopragmatic items (10-11).

Consensus statements are defined as items that do not significantly distinguish any factor at two-tailed $p < .05$. Four items meet this criterion: Items 6, 28, 36, and 44 (ranking variance 0.047–0.067 in Appendix F, far below the 0.4 threshold used for Table 4 selection). These occupy mid-range ranks across all factors and do not contribute to differentiation. Their consensus status

indicates shared affective baselines rather than viewpoint-specific configurations. Patterns match prior reports on *keigo*-related evaluative load and FLE competence links (Thumvichit, 2024; Raksawong et al., 2024). Extreme-counts localise competence appraisals to orthography and clause integration in Factor 1 and situate perceived control under social evaluation at sociopragmatics in Factor 3, anticipating the SDT-CVT reading in Section 5.

DISCUSSION

The empirical patterns established in the Results and Analysis section reveal three structurally independent configurations that emerge from learners' encounters with Japanese. This discussion treats these three viewpoints as appraisal pathways anchored in specific linguistic loci rather than as stable learner types. Using an integrated SDT, CVT, and PP framework, it examines how orthographic consolidation, morphosyntactic retrieval under evaluation, and sociopragmatic calibration give rise to profiles of competence satisfaction, affective overload, and resilient persistence.

JAPANESE LANGUAGE-INDEXED AFFECTIVE-MOTIVATIONAL PROFILES

FACTOR 1: MASTERY-ORIENTED INTRINSIC ENGAGEMENT

Factor 1 concentrates positive feelings when progress is clearly and personally experienced during clause integration, sustaining interest in translation-free comprehension, spontaneous vocabulary use, and *kanji* mastery while rejecting performance anxiety and doubts about the task's value. This corresponds to autonomous competence satisfaction in SDT terms (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2017) and high-control, high-value appraisals in CVT terms (Pekrun, 2006, 2024). Direct meaning access without translation signals that clause-level integration renders competence immediately legible to the learner.

The salience of *kanji*-related competence satisfaction aligns with research documenting script consolidation as a developmental threshold in Japanese (Mori & Mori, 2011): when orthographic processing achieves automaticity, cognitive load transforms into perceived competence rather than anxiety. This distinguishes F1 from F2 and F3, which both reject *kanji* -related competence satisfaction. In F2, affect concentrates instead on assessment frustration and cognitive overwhelm, leaving orthographic mastery outside the affective core. In F3, rejection reflects forward-oriented, persistence-focused motivation, where retrospective satisfaction in incremental skill consolidation is down weighted relative to challenge engagement. The subsystem-specificity of *kanji* affect demonstrates that the same linguistic property affords different appraisal pathways depending on engagement context.

The rejection of social-evaluative items indicates that errors are processed as informational feedback rather than face threats, aligning with mastery-approach goal orientations in which competence is self-referenced rather than normatively evaluated (Elliot & Church, 1997). When difficulty is anticipated rather than surprising, it reflects realistic expectations that help buffer against frustration. This autonomy-supportive profile links needs satisfaction to task-proximal feedback, specifically successful decoding, spontaneous retrieval, and content mastery, rather than external validation (Noels et al., 2000; Oga-Baldwin et al., 2022), and it specifies domain-level

accounts of foreign language enjoyment by locating enjoyment in concrete linguistic operations within Japanese (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Jiang & Dewaele, 2019).

FACTOR 2: AFFECTIVE OVERLOAD AND MOTIVATIONAL DEPLETION

Factor 2 concentrates affect around assessment frustration, cognitive overwhelm, and external validation, while rejecting intrinsic persistence, competitive motivation, and cultural curiosity. This corresponds to thwarted competence needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2020) and low-control, high-value appraisals that elicit anxiety and frustration in achievement contexts (Pekrun, 2006, 2024).

The co-placement of test frustration, overwhelm, and speaking anxiety creates a triple bind: learners perceive difficulty across morphosyntactic consolidation, orthographic retrieval under time pressure, and oral performance evaluation. Post-sort justifications document effort-outcome discrepancy despite intensive study, echoing meta-analytic findings that FLA reliably predicts lower performance outcomes, with evaluative contexts amplifying effects (Teimouri et al., 2019; Botes et al., 2020; Xiong et al., 2024). For Japanese learners, this arises from managing a dense inventory of linguistic forms under high-stakes, timed evaluation, where retrieval exceeds consolidation and depresses control appraisals (Pekrun, 2024).

Neutral placement of the "grammar surprise" item signals unmet difficulty expectations that amplify overload via expectation-violation dynamics (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), in contrast to Factors 1 and 3, where anticipated difficulty buffers frustration. This pattern aligns with research showing that cumulative rule exceptions sustain perceived difficulty in typologically distant systems (Li, 2024).

F2 is distinguished from F1 and F3 by the collapse of intrinsic persistence. In CVT terms, repeated experiences of low control, such as retrieval failure under audit or effortful study that yields poor outcomes, deplete perceived value over time (Pekrun, 2024). In SDT terms, thwarted competence shifts regulation from autonomous to controlled, creating dependence on external validation. The down weighting of cultural items suggests that when competence is chronically thwarted, neither integrative nor instrumental motives sustain engagement, contrasting with Gardner's (1985) prediction that cultural identification buffers difficulty.

FACTOR 3: RESILIENT PERSISTENCE WITH SOCIOPRAGMATIC ANXIETY

Factor 3 exhibits a defining paradox: maximal motivational persistence coexists with elevated public speaking anxiety and native-speaker judgment stress. This challenges the assumption that anxiety necessarily depletes motivation. Post-sort justifications document challenge-as-fuel appraisals, aligning with grit research (Duckworth et al., 2007) and findings that some learners maintain mastery-approach goals under sustained threat (Mercer & Ryan, 2010).

Anxiety is concentrated in face-threatening public interactions, while other achievement-related affects such as *kanji* pride, task-completion satisfaction, and homework time-pressure anxiety are downweighted, indicating that motivation in F3 is sustained by confrontation with challenge rather than incremental feedback. Post-sort interviews indicate that this anxiety concerns sociopragmatic accountability rather than linguistic competence per se: learners worry about honorifics, sentence-final particles, and indirect refusals because errors have social consequences. This aligns with Muftah and Alhazmi's (2024) finding that positive and negative emotional states can be active simultaneously in second language speaking.

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The rejection of coping-strategy items reveals a confrontational regulation stance: anxiety is endured autonomously as proof of commitment rather than reappraised away. Post-sort justifications suggest that generic coping techniques are perceived as incompatible with autonomous mastery pursuit. Suppression can function differently when paired with high self-efficacy and mastery goals, although this pattern is unlikely to generalise across contexts (Gross, 2015). The rejection of statements expressing hope that speaking confidence will grow suggests that F3 learners do not expect anxiety to diminish over time but instead treat it as an enduring feature of high-stakes sociopragmatic performance.

Factor 3 therefore challenges uni-directional models that treat anxiety as uniformly depleting motivation. Standard FLA accounts predict that elevated anxiety reduces motivation (Horwitz et al., 1986; Teimouri et al., 2019), yet F3 documents sustained intrinsic motivation despite chronic anxiety. This supports dynamic, task-proximal models (Li, 2024) and shows that anxiety is localised to sociopragmatic calibration under native-speaker evaluation rather than distributed across linguistic subsystems, which challenges global-trait accounts. In this profile, affective experience in *keigo* selection and register calibration is governed by appraisals of social accountability rather than by competence in form retrieval per se. Future experimental designs might manipulate audience presence and evaluative stakes to test whether anxiety attenuation occurs when sociopragmatic tasks are decoupled from native-speaker judgement.

CROSS-FACTOR INTEGRATION

The three profiles differ in where, within the Japanese learning ecology, learners compute control and value. F1 locates control in clause integration and orthographic consolidation. F2 experiences control loss at the evaluation–inventory interface. F3 exhibits context-dependent control, high in private preparation and low in public sociopragmatics.

This subsystem-specificity refines prior applications of SDT and CVT, which often treat competence, control, and value as global learner characteristics (Noels et al., 2000; Pekrun, 2006). The findings demonstrate that such classifications obscure within-learner variability: the same individual may experience high competence in *kanji* recognition yet low control in *keigo* selection. This challenges trait-based framings of motivation and anxiety (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994) and supports situated, task-proximal models (Li, 2024; Dörnyei, 2020).

The cross-factor contrasts document this specificity. Item 23 (persistence) shows maximum divergence across factors, revealing that difficulty functions as fuel in F1 and F3 but as depletion in F2, depending on whether control is perceived as recoverable. Item 10 (speaking anxiety) is rejected in F1 yet central to F2 and F3, while motivation collapses in F2 but persists in F3, signalling that anxiety does not uniformly predict depletion and that its impact depends on whether value remains intact.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The cross-sectional, single-site design necessitates longitudinal Q sorts and multi-site replications. While post-sort justifications provided initial insights, extended phenomenological interviews would offer richer detail on appraisal processes during specific linguistic tasks. Testable predictions emerge: fostering clause-integration fluency should promote F1-like appraisals; manipulating evaluative stakes in dense modules should differentially impact F2 versus F1; and gradually introducing audiences should reduce F3's sociopragmatic anxiety without undermining

its persistence. Future work incorporating objective performance measures is needed to validate self-reported profiles against actual competence and to determine the conditions under which anxiety impairs or potentially facilitates performance.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that emotions in Japanese language learning are not global traits but patterned responses to specific linguistic affordances. Using Q, the study identified three structurally independent, language-indexed configurations: mastery-oriented engagement rooted in clause integration and orthographic consolidation; affective overload with motivational depletion at the evaluation-inventory interface; and resilient persistence co-occurring with sociopragmatic anxiety.

These profiles clarify the specific loci of key emotions. Enjoyment crystallizes around successful clause integration and orthographic mastery. Anxiety localizes to evaluation-indexed retrieval and high-stakes sociopragmatics. Persistence manifests as either mastery-driven when control is recoverable or challenge-driven when continuing despite chronic anxiety. Through SDT and CVT frameworks, the findings reveal that competence and control appraisals operate at identifiable linguistic loci rather than at a global level.

The study makes two main contributions. Theoretically, it proposes the concept of an affective-motivational mosaic as a heuristic for describing how emotions and motivations cluster around identifiable language features. Instead of treating affect as a single global disposition, the mosaic highlights how enjoyment, anxiety, and persistence attach to particular affordances such as clause integration, *kanji* retrieval, and *keigo* selection. The contrast between a mastery-oriented profile and an overload-oriented profile, for instance, motivates the hypothesis that learners in the former configuration will show greater persistence on tasks requiring intensive *kanji* retrieval or rapid politeness calibration than learners in the latter configuration. Such profile-based hypotheses can be tested in future experimental and longitudinal designs.

Methodologically, the study demonstrates how by-person Q analysis can model the subjective dimension of a target language with explicit links to its structural and sociopragmatic properties. Mapping items to orthography, morphosyntax, lexis, and sociopragmatics yielded a language-indexed patterning in which affective-motivational experience organises around distinct loci within Japanese. Future work could examine whether manipulating specific linguistic affordances induces predictable shifts among the three profiles, and whether profile membership predicts objective performance indicators. Such extensions would clarify when anxiety in sociopragmatic encounters primarily impairs performance and when it may coexist with productive, persistence-supporting engagement.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study followed Universiti Malaya ethical guidelines for research with human participants. All students gave written informed consent, participation was voluntary with the option to withdraw, data were anonymised and stored securely, and no vulnerable populations or sensitive personal information were involved.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The dataset for this study is available on the Open Science Framework (https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/BGW5Z). The repository includes an Excel workbook with the full analysis, allowing for complete replication of the results.

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APPENDIX A

Q STATEMENTS

No.	Statement	Valence
1	I feel motivated when I see my Japanese getting better.	Positive
2	I feel happy when I use new Japanese words in conversation.	Positive
3	I feel proud of how much I have learned in Japanese.	Positive
4	I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress.	Positive
5	I feel excited when I understand Japanese texts better than before.	Positive
6	I feel happy learning Japanese with my classmates.	Positive
7	I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture in class.	Positive
8	I feel connected to Japanese culture when I understand its traditions.	Positive
9	I feel amazed when I understand difficult Japanese topics.	Positive
10	I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I'm improving.	Negative
11	I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes.	Negative
12	I feel anxious when I don't have enough time to prepare for homework.	Negative
13	I feel embarrassed when my classmates speak Japanese better than me.	Negative
14	I feel frustrated when I work hard but don't do well in tests.	Negative
15	I feel unsure when I can't express my ideas clearly in Japanese.	Negative
16	I feel ashamed when I make mistakes speaking Japanese in class.	Negative
17	I feel discouraged when I think Japanese might not help me in the future.	Negative
18	I feel overwhelmed when there is so much to learn in Japanese.	Negative
19	I feel bored when lessons repeat topics I already know.	Negative
20	I feel hopeful that I will become more confident speaking Japanese.	Positive
21	I feel determined to improve, even when I make mistakes.	Positive
22	I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress.	Positive
23	I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it's hard.	Positive
24	I feel rewarded when my hard work gives me good grades.	Positive
25	I feel confident when my teacher explains things step by step.	Positive
26	I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese.	Positive
27	I feel curious to learn more about Japanese language and culture.	Positive
28	I feel interested when I see a new Japanese word.	Positive
29	I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture while studying.	Positive
30	I feel eager to use Japanese in my daily life.	Positive
31	I feel less nervous when I prepare for exams with classmates.	Positive
32	I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles.	Positive
33	I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team.	Positive
34	I feel satisfied when my group works together to solve problems.	Positive
35	I feel part of a team when we practice Japanese in groups.	Positive
36	I feel inspired when I learn Japanese with classmates.	Positive
37	I feel proud when I learn difficult *kanji* .	Positive
38	I feel satisfied when I understand Japanese without translating.	Positive
39	I feel proud when I master a hard Japanese topic.	Positive
40	I feel proud when I explain Malaysian culture in Japanese.	Positive
41	I feel proud when classmates notice my efforts.	Positive
42	I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought.	Negative
43	I feel happy when I understand Japanese conversations without practice.	Positive
44	I feel focused and lose track of time when practicing Japanese.	Positive
45	I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me.	Positive

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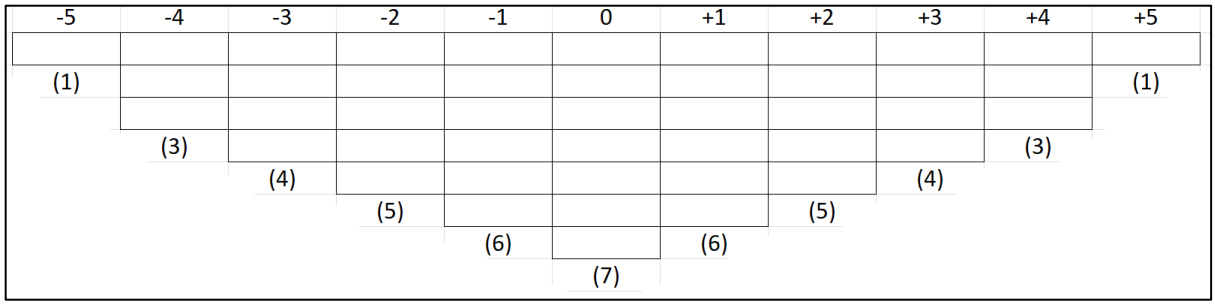
APPENDIX B

Q SORTING DISTRIBUTION GRID



APPENDIX C

ILLUSTRATIVE POST-SORT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions represent key areas explored during the semi-structured post-hoc interviews, which aimed to elicit deeper insights into participants' Q sorts and their emotional experiences related to learning Japanese:

1. **Overall Emotional Journey:**
   Reflecting on your experience, what were some of your prominent emotions when you started learning Japanese, and how have they evolved?
2. **Key Emotional Experiences: Challenges and Accomplishments:**
   Can you describe a specific moment or situation during your Japanese studies that made you feel particularly frustrated or anxious? What contributed to this feeling?
   Conversely, can you recall a moment of significant pride, joy, or accomplishment in your Japanese learning journey?
3. **Social and Interactional dynamics:**
   How do interactions with your classmates and the general interactional environment influence your emotions related to learning Japanese (e.g., feeling supported, pressured, or competitive)?
   In what ways does your facilitator's approach affect your emotional state (e.g., reducing anxiety, fostering enjoyment, or otherwise)?
4. **Engagement with Language and Culture:**
   How do you feel about learning Japanese culture alongside the language? What kind of emotions does this evoke (e.g., curiosity, enjoyment, confusion)?
5. **Motivation, Perseverance, and Emotional Fluctuations:**
   What keeps you motivated to continue learning Japanese, especially when facing difficulties?
   Can you describe how your emotions might shift or coexist during the learning process (e.g., experiencing both excitement and nervousness)?

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APPENDIX D

DISTINGUISHING STATEMENTS

FACTOR 1

Threshold	*Z score*	Q Sort Value	No.	Statement
P < 0.005	1.68	5	38	I feel satisfied when I understand Japanese without translating.
P < 0.005	1.35	4	2	I feel happy when I use new Japanese words in conversation.
P < 0.0001	1.07	3	39	I feel proud when I master a hard Japanese topic.
P < 0.0001	1.02	3	9	I feel amazed when I understand difficult Japanese topics.
P < 0.0001	1.02	3	23	I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it's hard.
P < 0.0001	0.99	2	26	I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese.
P < 0.005	0.98	2	3	I feel proud of how much I have learned in Japanese.
P < 0.005	0.95	2	20	I feel hopeful that I will become more confident speaking Japanese.
P < 0.0001	0.83	2	37	I feel proud when I learn difficult *kanji* .
P < 0.001	0.6	1	27	I feel curious to learn more about Japanese language and culture.
P < 0.01	0.4	0	4	I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress.
P < 0.001	0	0	8	I feel connected to Japanese culture when I understand its traditions.
P < 0.05	-0.18	0	33	I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team.
P < 0.001	-0.49	-1	35	I feel part of a team when we practice Japanese in groups.
P < 0.05	-0.56	-1	32	I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles.
P < 0.05	-0.66	-1	22	I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress.
P < 0.005	-0.67	-2	12	I feel anxious when I don't have enough time to prepare for homework.
P < 0.0001	-0.76	-2	15	I feel unsure when I can't express my ideas clearly in Japanese.
P < 0.0001	-1.09	-2	10	I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I'm improving.
P < 0.0001	-1.12	-3	45	I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me.
P < 0.05	-1.36	-3	42	I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought.
P < 0.0001	-1.59	-4	16	I feel ashamed when I make mistakes speaking Japanese in class.
P < 0.0001	-1.62	-4	13	I feel embarrassed when my classmates speak Japanese better than me.
P < 0.0001	-1.76	-4	11	I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes.
P < 0.0001	-2.03	-5	17	I feel discouraged when I think Japanese might not help me in the future.

FACTOR 2

Threshold	*Z score*	Q Sort Value	No.	Statement
P < 0.0001	1.65	5	14	I feel frustrated when I work hard but don't do well in tests.
P < 0.0001	1.55	4	4	I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress.
P < 0.05	1.32	4	10	I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I'm improving.
P < 0.0001	1.3	3	18	I feel overwhelmed when there is so much to learn in Japanese.
P<0.01	0.83	2	32	I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles.
P < 0.0001	0.8	1	12	I feel anxious when I don't have enough time to prepare for homework.
P < 0.005	0.46	1	41	I feel proud when classmates notice my efforts.
P < 0.05	0.36	1	3	I feel proud of how much I have learned in Japanese.
P < 0.005	0.25	1	20	I feel hopeful that I will become more confident speaking Japanese.
P < 0.005	0.15	0	26	I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese.
P < 0.005	0.13	0	30	I feel eager to use Japanese in my daily life.
P < 0.0001	0.05	0	11	I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes.
P < 0.0001	-0.04	0	42	I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought.
P < 0.05	-0.23	-1	21	I feel determined to improve, even when I make mistakes.
P < 0.0001	-0.43	-1	27	I feel curious to learn more about Japanese language and culture.

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P < 0.005	-0.73	-2	29	I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture while studying.
P < 0.0001	-0.85	-2	7	I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture in class.
P < 0.0001	-1.1	-2	40	I feel proud when I explain Malaysian culture in Japanese.
P < 0.05	-1.16	-3	22	I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress.
P < 0.001	-1.22	-3	35	I feel part of a team when we practice Japanese in groups.
P < 0.05	-1.54	-4	33	I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team.
P < 0.0001	-1.71	-4	23	I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it's hard.
P < 0.0001	-2.31	-5	45	I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me.

FACTOR 3

Threshold	***Z score***	**Q Sort Value**	**No.**	**Statement**
P < 0.0001	2.18	5	23	I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it's hard.
P < 0.05	1.91	4	10	I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I'm improving.
P < 0.0001	1.77	4	11	I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes.
P < 0.001	1.56	4	27	I feel curious to learn more about Japanese language and culture.
P < 0.0001	1.15	3	45	I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me.
P < 0.0001	0.53	1	31	I feel less nervous when I prepare for exams with classmates.
P < 0.001	0.45	1	35	I feel part of a team when we practice Japanese in groups.
P < 0.005	0.24	1	1	I feel motivated when I see my Japanese getting better.
P < 0.0001	0.18	0	43	I feel happy when I understand Japanese conversations without practice.
P < 0.05	0.03	0	32	I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles.
P < 0.005	-0.22	0	24	I feel rewarded when my hard work gives me good grades.
P < 0.05	-0.25	0	3	I feel proud of how much I have learned in Japanese.
P < 0.01	-0.37	-1	4	I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress.
P < 0.05	-0.48	-1	25	I feel confident when my teacher explains things step by step.
P < 0.005	-0.68	-2	26	I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese.
P < 0.05	-0.72	-2	19	I feel bored when lessons repeat topics I already know.
P < 0.0001	-0.83	-2	5	I feel excited when I understand Japanese texts better than before.
P < 0.05	-0.88	-3	33	I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team.
P < 0.0001	-1.21	-3	20	I feel hopeful that I will become more confident speaking Japanese.
P < 0.005	-1.51	-4	12	I feel anxious when I don't have enough time to prepare for homework.
P < 0.0005	-1.53	-4	34	I feel satisfied when my group works together to solve problems.
P < 0.05	-1.93	-4	42	I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought.
P < 0.0005	-2.19	-5	22	I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress.

APPENDIX E

FACTOR LOADINGS AND CONSENSUS/DISTINGUISHING SUMMARIES

Legend: Loadings ≥ |0.385| at p < .01 (Brown, 1980; threshold = 2.58 × 1/√45) are flagged as Defining when not simultaneously significant on another factor. Confounded = significant on ≥2 factors. Non-sig. = not significant on any factor. MM - Malay male; MF – Malay female; CM – Chinese male; CF – Chinese female

E1. Factor loading matrix with flagged defining sorts

Q sort ID	F1	F2	F3	Status
32_CM	0.801	0.212	0.146	Defining F1
20_MF	0.796	0.16	0.062	Defining F1
5_CF	0.747	0.152	−0.096	Defining F1
3_CF	0.709	−0.179	0.036	Defining F1
15_MF	0.669	0.339	0.148	Defining F1
9_MF	0.653	0.028	0.099	Defining F1
17_CM	0.603	0.057	−0.068	Defining F1
18_MF	0.598	0.189	−0.027	Defining F1
21_MM	0.583	0.055	0.35	Defining F1
29_MF	0.571	0.077	−0.150	Defining F1
28_MF	0.531	0.359	0.092	Defining F1
23_MM	0.47	0.12	0.336	Defining F1
27_MM	−0.449	0.101	0.061	Defining F1 (reflected)
30_CF	0.381	0.3	0.337	Non-sig.
11_MM	−0.348	0.769	−0.141	Defining F2
22_MF	0.139	0.765	0.044	Defining F2
13_MF	−0.119	0.603	0.066	Defining F2
8_CM	0.068	0.571	0.078	Defining F2
25_CF	0.165	0.532	0.232	Defining F2
19_MF	0.094	0.53	−0.062	Defining F2
14_MF	0.277	0.526	−0.049	Defining F2
1_MF	−0.353	0.52	0.165	Defining F2
10_MF	0.115	0.516	−0.144	Defining F2
2_MF	0.189	0.339	0.063	Non-sig.
12_MF	0.141	0.336	0.279	Non-sig.
4_MF	0.137	0.326	0.019	Non-sig.
16_FM	0.107	0.322	0.665	Defining F3
6_MF	0.237	0.207	−0.589	Defining F3 (reflected)
7_MF	0.237	0.207	−0.589	Defining F3 (reflected)
33_MF	0.284	0.116	0.419	Defining F3
24_MF	0.287	0.306	0.373	Non-sig.
31_MF	−0.026	−0.087	−0.328	Non-sig.
26_MF	0.025	0.217	−0.327	Non-sig.

Footnote E1 (identical sorts). Q sorts 6_MF and 7_MF are identical across all 45 placements (r = 1.00). In Q methodology this is permissible and simply increases the weight of that viewpoint in the intercorrelation matrix. Interpretation is based on the idealized arrays rather than participant counts; conceptual conclusions are unaffected.

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APPENDIX F

COMPLETE FACTOR ARRAYS: Q SORT VALUES FOR ALL STATEMENTS

Nm	Statement	F. 1	F. 2	F. 3	Ranking var.
28	I feel interested when I see a new Japanese word.	1	1	2	0.006
6	I feel happy learning Japanese with my classmates.	0	0	1	0.047
44	I feel focused and lose track of time when practicing Japanese.	-2	-3	-3	0.052
36	I feel inspired when I learn Japanese with classmates.	0	-2	0	0.067
19	I feel bored when lessons repeat topics I already know.	-3	-4	-2	0.129
38	I feel satisfied when I understand Japanese without translating.	5	2	2	0.13
21	I feel determined to improve, even when I make mistakes.	1	-1	1	0.131
25	I feel confident when my teacher explains things step by step.	1	0	-1	0.169
2	I feel happy when I use new Japanese words in conversation.	4	1	2	0.171
8	I feel connected to Japanese culture when I understand its traditions.	0	-2	-3	0.183
30	I feel eager to use Japanese in my daily life.	3	0	3	0.192
41	I feel proud when classmates notice my efforts.	-1	1	-2	0.228
24	I feel rewarded when my hard work gives me good grades.	1	2	0	0.249
3	I feel proud of how much I have learned in Japanese.	2	1	0	0.251
1	I feel motivated when I see my Japanese getting better.	4	3	1	0.271
29	I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture while studying.	0	-2	0	0.273
37	I feel proud when I learn difficult *kanji* .	2	-1	-1	0.278
34	I feel satisfied when my group works together to solve problems.	-1	-1	-4	0.292
33	I feel better when my teacher says we are learning as a team.	0	-4	-3	0.311
32	I feel closer to my classmates when we face the same struggles.	-1	2	0	0.325
43	I feel happy when I understand Japanese conversations without practice.	4	4	0	0.328
9	I feel amazed when I understand difficult Japanese topics.	3	0	-1	0.355
22	I feel calm when I use strategies to manage my stress.	-1	-3	-5	0.405
40	I feel proud when I explain Malaysian culture in Japanese.	0	-2	1	0.413
26	I feel happy when I complete a hard task in Japanese.	2	0	-2	0.461
35	I feel part of a team when we practice Japanese in groups.	-1	-3	1	0.469
39	I feel proud when I master a hard Japanese topic.	3	-1	0	0.482
7	I feel excited to learn about Japanese culture in class.	1	-2	2	0.491
4	I feel thankful when my teacher notices my progress.	0	4	-1	0.622
42	I feel surprised when learning Japanese grammar is harder than I thought.	-3	0	-4	0.626
31	I feel less nervous when I prepare for exams with classmates.	-3	-3	1	0.635
27	I feel curious to learn more about Japanese language and culture.	1	-1	4	0.657
17	I feel discouraged when I think Japanese might not help me in the future.	-5	-1	-1	0.676
5	I feel excited when I understand Japanese texts better than before.	2	2	-2	0.681
18	I feel overwhelmed when there is so much to learn in Japanese.	-2	3	-1	0.8
20	I feel hopeful that I will become more confident speaking Japanese.	2	1	-3	0.811
15	I feel unsure when I can't express my ideas clearly in Japanese.	-2	3	3	0.911
12	I feel anxious when I don't have enough time to prepare for homework.	-2	1	-4	0.917
14	I feel frustrated when I work hard but don't do well in tests.	-1	5	-2	0.952
13	I feel embarrassed when my classmates speak Japanese better than me.	-4	3	2	1.475
16	I feel ashamed when I make mistakes speaking Japanese in class.	-4	2	3	1.505
10	I feel nervous about speaking Japanese, even if I'm improving.	-2	4	4	1.68
45	I feel motivated when I see my classmates learning faster than me.	-3	-5	3	2.053
11	I feel stressed when I think native speakers might judge my mistakes.	-4	0	4	2.074
23	I feel motivated to keep learning Japanese, even when it's hard.	3	-4	5	2.651

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