Most Japanese high school teachers of English keep the following points in mind while teaching: How has the students' awareness toward English learning changed since junior high school? What are they interested in doing in English? What are the students' expectations of English? What effects and influence does English learning have on the students?

In order to answer the above questions, it is important to focus on the students' desires, interests, goals, etc. More important is the difference between the students' actual performance and their internal desires.

I work at a correspondence high school which has a unique system. Our students can choose their subjects and they are free to decide which classes to attend based on their personal schedule. Different students taking the same subject often end up going to different classes, therefore I can't obtain necessary information about the points shown above all at once.

Most of our students have personal experiences that led them to the decision to enter our school rather than a regular high school. Some of them failed to pass and go on to the next year; some were expelled due to a lack of credits; some couldn't fit in with peer groups; and some suffered from emotional and psychological problems. Although our students have had these experiences, problems involved in these phenomena are not exclusive to our students only they are more or less common to all high school students in Japan. Thus, in a sense, our students are no exception and are typical of Japanese high school students.

Because of the inability to get information from all our students at once, I decided it would be more feasible to focus only on the students who wanted to study in Canada. By doing this, I was able to get the information needed from them before, during, and after their study-abroad program.

This thesis consists of five chapters. In Chapter 1, I discuss the current situation of our students and present issues to be examined in the thesis. I also present the goals of the thesis.

In Chapter 2, I review the relevant research on motivation. I especially refer to goal-setting expectancy-value theory, self-determination theory, and Dörnyei & Öttó's (1998) process model, which have had a strong influence on motivation research. I also explain the motivation aspects necessary for examining the students. These motivation aspects are essential in order to look at the changes in the students' consciousness and actions, and the effectiveness of learning English.

In Chapter 3, I delineate the six participants in this study and explain the procedure. The six students were all girls in the second or third grade. They were enrolled in our school at different times in 2006. I called them S1-S6. They decided to take part in a study-abroad program in Canada for one or two months. Except for S6 who was expelled from her previous school due to poor attendance, all of them felt like they didn't fit in at their schools. Though their goals were varied and their levels of English were different, they had
a strong desire to study abroad.

The research is divided into three phases: before, while, and after studying abroad. First, I interviewed the students individually before they left, focusing on the motivation aspects, and I analyzed the information using the KJ method. After they came back to Japan, I collected information about their experiences during and after studying abroad, always keeping in mind the important aspects of motivation in my research. I also made note of the changes in the students before and after studying abroad and the relationship between the changes and their motivation for learning English.

Chapter 4 describes, in detail, the six students’ information in three phases: before studying abroad, while studying abroad, after studying abroad. I sum up the findings of each student in order, which are presented here in three pairs of students having similar characteristics. S1 and S2 were worried about their relationships with others before studying abroad. They thought that the experience in Canada might be a positive thing for them. They could not get out of the doldrums for about three weeks in Canada but, little by little, they became aware of their self-empowerment and felt more confident, and they could get over their worries. S1 hated English and had no goals in English, but she could overcome her problems through English learning. She saw how effective even simple words could be. S2 felt her progress in English and was influenced by the positive attitudes of the other students toward studying English.

S3 and S6 were interested in only English conversation. Although they didn’t put any effort into studying English as a subject at school before studying abroad, they wanted to speak with others in English. They believed that studying abroad would be the best and fastest way to study English, and so they did their best and tried to study English in Canada. They could see themselves progressing gradually and became very happy. They were sure that it was very important to study English in such an environment. In addition, they started to think about the future. However, they couldn’t find it in themselves to study English after studying abroad.

S4 and S5 were worried about their relationships with others, but they were very interested in English and tried to study it. Their goals in Canada were to study English, to think about their future, to overcome their own troubles, and so on. They challenged themselves and made a great effort to achieve their goals and they became more interested in English. In addition, they were satisfied with the progress in English and as people they gained through their experiences in Canada.

In Chapter 5, the results of this study are presented by commonalities and differences between students. The six students were all able to achieve their goals and set new goals for the future. They were all delighted with learning English and became aware of the changes that resulted from the experience. They also realized that self-determination was important. In addition, they were grateful to the others for inspiring them and they were able to become more aware of their own abilities. However, although half of them were able to maintain a positive attitude after coming back to Japan, the others could not. Therefore, since all students were subject to the same learning experience abroad, these different attitudes must be the result of individual personality characteristics.

In conclusion, I confirmed that learning English enabled the students to build character. Their positive actions in studying English by themselves led to their awareness of their potential, and their experiences promoted them to set new goals in English and in life.