

A Review of Studies on L2 Motivational Self System

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Abstract: The Second Language Motivational Self-System (L2 MSS) is the motivation model elaborated in this article. The aim of this article is to review the model, present a summary of research, that empirically analyses the model and its key features, and suggest future research options. In the article, the issue with the model will be addressed one by one. Then, theoretical descriptions of the model will be presented, followed by its empirical investigations and criticism. Theoretical elaboration of the model is based on Gardner's model of motivation, Markus and Nurius' 'possible selves' and Higgins' self-discrepancy theory. Numerous empirical studies examining the model in various contexts around the world found that the ideal L2 self, which associates integrativeness motives and the internalised instrumental, is the strongest component of the model, and the ought-to L2 self, which is relatively less internalised or motivating. The model has been modified to take learning experiences into account. However, unbalanced attention is given to the L2MSS's constituent parts.

Keywords: L2 Motivational Self System, integrativeness, 'possible selves' theory, self-discrepancy theory

1. Introduction

Motivation theories attempt to explain why people behave and think in certain ways. Language preferences, persistence, and intentional efforts can be used to assess motivation [1]. The reasons for language learners' choices, the level of time and effort they are willing to allocate to the activity, and their commitment level are vital when they motivate themselves. Dörnyei asserts that learning a second language necessitates comprehension of the necessary facts and data as well as the contextual and cognitive components of contemporary educational psychology [2]. Motivation for second language acquisition, according to the Second Language (L2) motivation researchers, is argued to be more complex than other scholarly learning tasks. They accepted the ideas and models that connect the L2 to the individual's own "core," which partially index one's identity. L2 motivation is further described by Dörnyei as a combination of general and particular factors that affect learners' learning behaviours [3]. L2 motivation, can be viewed as the cumulative awakening of a person's dynamic changes that create, control, reconcile, supplement, and assess the cognitive and motor process, according to Dörnyei and Ottó [4]. One's first goals and aspirations are chosen, organised, and operated at the same time. To be more precise, Dörnyei in 1994 suggested a three-tiered framework of L2 motivation that included learner level (e.g., individual characteristics), learning environment

level (i.e., situation-specific circumstances), and language level (e.g., culture, community, the intellectual and pragmatic values) [2].

2. Theoretical Elaboration

2.1. Gardner's Motivational System

To better understand L2 learning motivation, it is worthwhile to highlight the pioneer Robert Gardner, a psycholinguist from Canada who started his research on L2 motivation based on the Francophone and Anglophone populations of Canada. Gardner's most influential motivation theory includes integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. The former speaks about the goal of language learners to communicate with the desired and valued community as well as their favourable opinions towards the L2 language group [5]. Dörnyei explains the integrative motivational subsystem as cultural orientation and desire for new stimuli and challenges [6]. The latter, or instrumental orientation, is focused on the potential practical advantages of mastery of L2, like upgrading the work or increasing income [3]. It is the pragmatic side of integrative orientation [3].

Gardner's model, however, overemphasises the social psychological milieu and ignores contextual elements [2]. Given that English has developed into a global language and is used as a lingua franca, Gardner's "integrativeness" frequently comes out as excessively constrained and blunt. As a result, "integrativeness," a key concept in Gardner's socio-psychological study, which denotes an intention to commune with and blend into the English-speaking group and its culture [5], has largely lost significance in Anglophone nations [7, 8]. On the other hand, Gardner's model has another drawback in that it disregards the learning environment.

2.2. Self-Frameworks

There are also other motivational theories at that time, like what Gardner put forward, which typically emphasises how and why people do something, instead of investigating the motivational sources of that action. In other words, there are other ways to probe into L2 motivations, like those irrational, simultaneous, and task/goal-based, which leads to the focus of self-framework in L2 motivation. The concept of 'self' is another theoretical underpinning for the L2 motivational self-system due to the correlation between the self-system and motivational behaviours. The mechanism 'Possible selves' clarifies and illustrates how the self directs behavior by establishing expectations and goals [3, 9]. It denotes self-dimension, assumes from the individual's experience, and is concerned with how people imagine their untapped potential, as such, it also incorporates aspirations, imaginations, and hopes. Nonetheless, 'possible selves' (i.e., 'future self-guided') is not overall equipped with a guiding function. By contrast, the learner's ideal self is particularly important from the perspective of acting as academic self-guides, which is a topic that has been the focus of extensive research by Tory Higgins and his colleagues. Higgins' theory of self-discrepancy can be categorised as two domains and two standpoints, of which the domains that might be viewed from both one's own and other perspectives were the ideal and ought selves [10-12]. In his theory of self, Higgins put forwards the ideal and ought-to self: the ideal self is a depiction of the characteristics that one would most like to have (i.e., a hope, aspiration, or wish), whereas the ought-to self is a representation of the characteristics that one believes they should possess [12,13]. Higgin also adopts his theory of refractory focus to specialize the selves. Accordingly, the ideal self emphasises the positive aspects of the language learning process with a promotion focus; by contrast, the ought-to self has a prevention focus, which emphasises the negative issues and individuals who are prevention-focused seek for more security [12].

3. L2 Motivational Self-system

Theoretical arguments that influence a revision of how L2 motivation is understood as a component of the learner's self-system have been covered thus far in the article. The emergence of L2MSS can be traced back to Dörnyei and Csizér's investigation of L2 Motivation in the (monolingual) Hungary nation and its focus on the 'integrativeness' concept [14, 15]. The study concludes that integrativeness is important in both settings (i.e., Canada and Hungary). Dörnyei and Csizér incorporated self-concept into the understanding of the learner's identification process due to the limitations of integration into L2 society [14, 16]. There is also contemporary research on L2 motivation from the standpoint of self and identity theories: Yashima highlights the international contexts of Japanese English learners instead of the English-speaking community; Lamb discovered that teens in Indonesia have a bicultural identity (i.e., motherland and the global), etc [7,17]. Consequently, Dörnyei and Csizér reinterpret the integrativeness with the concept of self-identification of the L2 and propose the model in 2005.

L2MSS explores relationships between cognition, fantasy, and motivation by building on the concepts of 'Possible Selves' and 'Self-discrepancy'. It integrated "possible selves" with self-discrepancy. For instance, it discussed how people conceptualize their own potential selves—what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are scared of becoming—as well as the differences between these selves. Figure 1 demonstrates the construction of Dörnyei's motivational model of second language learning.

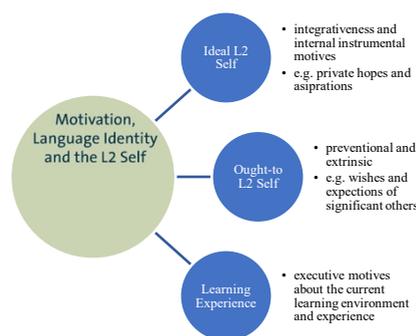


Figure 1: Dörnyei's L2MSS Model [2, 3,18]

According to Dörnyei, the L2MSS consists of 3 major constituents:

1) Ideal L2 Self refers to the idealised self-image within the framework of the L2 motivational system and acts as a strong motivator for L2 learners by their desire to narrow the disparity between one's realistic and idealised self. In other words, it is the combination of integrativeness and internalised instrumental motives (e.g., private hopes and aspirations).

2) Ought-to L2 Self refers to the attributes that one believes one should have so as to attain the expected outcome or standards and prevent potentially adverse outcomes. This aspect is in accordance with Higgins' ought self and thus extrinsic and prevention in nature (e.g., wishes and expectations of significant others).

3) L2 Learning Environment, which focuses on leaders' motives related to the present-day educational learning atmosphere and experience, including attitudes towards the activities that take place in the classroom [3].

Dörnyei has listed requirements for ideal L2 self functioning in the learning process: (i) an elaborate, vivid and accessible future self; (ii) the plausibility that can be perceived; (iii) harmonies among the central constructs; (iv) that necessary activation/priming has occurred; (v) that a necessary procedural strategy goes hand in hand with an ideal self, and (vi) that an ideal self is balanced by a feared self [3], which denotes the feasibility and dynamic nature of ideal L2 self.

Also, Dörnyei assumes that proficiency as the measuring standard of L2/target language is included in the ideal or ought-to L2 self. This refers to the fact that one of the strong motivations of the language learner is to reduce the differences between selves (current and possible) [3]. And the powerful motivation for the discrepancy declination influences the efforts that language learners invest in their language learning process.

4. L2 Motivational Self-system

Following the revision of the L2MSS's integrativeness, research efforts have shifted from looking at prospective applications to obtaining empirical support for the fundamental ideas. In order to validate the hypothesis, Ryan developed scales to assess one's symmetrical self [19]. While being asymmetrical and having both viewpoint and refractory focus concerns, Taguchi's scales for L2MSS components and intended efforts measurement are also significant [20]. The researchers utilised structural equation modelling to assess the process and effects of the model's elements affected anticipated effort after collecting questionnaire responses from more than 5,000 participants. According to the correlation results, in Japan, the ideal L2 Self explained 7% and ought-to self explained less than half that; in China, the ideal L2 Self explained 19% with approximately one in five ought-to self proportion; and 10% in Iran of the variance in intended effort with one in 10 ought-to proportion. Taguchi and colleagues, on the other hand, developed the most prevalent questionnaire in the quantitative studies of L2MSS.

In order to validate the model's suitability, Papi, and his colleagues test international students from America, and find out the different roles of 'Selves' play in the learning process from multiple regression analysis, which suggests that the former inclines to be strategic and the latter inclines to be attentive [20]. The motivational study's reliance on L2MSS causes widespread inquiries that yield information for the meta-analysis. According to Al-Hoorie, this analysis demonstrates a substantial relationship between the three model constructs and the criterion variable of expected effort ($r_s = .61$ for the ideal L2 self, $.38$ for the ought-to L2 self, and $.41$ for the L2 learning experience) [21, 22]. Also, in the meta-analysis of 32 investigations, containing 39 studies, 39 distinct cases, and 32,078 participants of language learning, he discovered the variation in motivation: ideal L2 self takes up 37% in the intended efforts and ought-to L2 self takes up 14%

Papi and his colleagues rethought L2MSS research in 2019, proposed and tested 257 international students learning L2 in Northern America by regression test with a 2x2 model of L2 self-guides based on the self-discrepancy theory [19]. They found out that Ought L2 self/own is tested by multiple regression as the most accurate driving force for motivated behaviour prediction; with ought L2 self-other, ought L2 self-own, and ideal L2 self-other coming in second through fourth in terms of predictive power [21].

5. Criticism of L2MSS

Criticism towards L2MSS has been drawn from both conceptual and measurement angles. Criticism of conceptual problems highlights the model's insufficiency of self-related components. MacIntyre, Mackinnon, and Clément imply the too limited investigation of the model on possible selves and argue the necessity to expand the focus on 'self' roles, rather than just ideal/ought-to self; Taylor argues that little attention on the actual self for better understanding of the self-discrepancy theory, etc. [23,24]. Regarding the measurement concerns, Al-Hoorie argues the limited current related studies' achievement-related variables as intended efforts and suggests the linguistic outcome and actual efforts as helpful variables to investigations [22].

To be specific, in the aspects of components of the model, Papi argues the imbalanced emphasis of the model construction [21], which refers to the exclusion of ought-to L2 self. That refers to the

fact that the powerful motivational ideal L2 self in language achievement and proficiency and the insufficient ought-to L2 self construction due to external or social influences like age, city-rural differences, etc. Whereas the prominence of the ought-to L2 self is more common in collective countries than the ideal L2 self, which suggests sufficient consideration of it.

6. Conclusions

Traditionally speaking, the L2MSS model is the combination of integrativeness and self frameworks. In other words, under the theories of Gardner and other motivational researchers, and based on 'self' mechanisms, Dörnyei develops his L2MSS model. The model has been the most popular theoretical framework for the investigation of L2 motivation over the previous ten years. It served as an alternative to Gardner's motivational theories, not only helping in thinking more clearly and comprehending the problems with motivation for language learning in the contemporary globalized multilingual world. Regarding future research directions, researchers could focus on the relationship between the L2 learning environment and L2 motivation on a temporal aspect (e.g., past, present) and explore the relations between self and experience. Additionally, learning variables can focus on individual differences for future research topics.

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