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Examining the Effect of "L2 Motivational Self-System" on L2 Achievement of Students at a Thai University

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Abstract
Motivation plays an important role in second language acquisition. L2 Motivational Self-System (L2MS) was developed by Dörnyei (2009) including three components: ideal L2 self (IS), ought-to L2 self (OS), and L2 learning experience (LE). To my knowledge, only one study employing L2MS was conducted by Outhaichute and Raksasataya, (2014) in Thai secondary level. The present study is a survey research with an aim to examine the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement in Thai tertiary level. G*power was employed to determine the appropriate sample size of 138. L2MS questionnaires adopted from Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) were administered to students at a Thai university. Descriptive analysis was used to describe data sets. Correlation and multiple regression analysis were employed to identify the relationship and effect of IS, OS, and LE on L2 achievement. The findings showed IS and LE had positive and significant relationships with L2 achievement. With an emphasis on the effect, IS self and LE had statistically significant and positive association with L2 achievement while OL had no statistically significant influences. LE was found to be the strongest predictor of L2 achievement. The present study also provided an evidence to support that L2MS may not be good predictors for L2 achievement.

Keywords: *Ideal L2 Self (IS), Ought-to L2 Self (OS), L2 Learning Experience (LE), L2 Achievement*

1. Introduction

Motivation theories have been applied to many fields including second language acquisition. It is known that the role of motivation is crucial in second language acquisition (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Many studies found that motivation promotes English language achievement (Tort Calvo, 2015; Tan, Lin, & Hoe, 2017 Al-Hoorie, 2018). The development of L2 motivation has shifted from socio-educational to cognitive models (Lamb et al., 2019, pp. 34-47). According to Dornyei & Ryan (2015, pp. 75-79), in the early years of L2 motivation many studies were influenced by Gardner's Motivation Theory which appeared to lack the external validity in Asian and Hungarian context and during the periods of cognitive models, cognitive theories were used to study L2 motivation; for example, goal theory, attribution theory, and self-determination theory all of which were not grounded in L2 contexts. In 2005, Zoltãn Dörnyei proposed a reconceptualization of L2 motivation theory called L2 motivational self–system (L2MS) which included three core components, ideal L2 self (IS), ought-to L2 self (OS), and L2 learning experience (EL) (Dörnyei, 2009). According to Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009), Dörnyei's framework was valid across

regions and it provided a better predictor of language achievement than Gardner's Motivational Theory (Kim, 2012).

1.1 L2 motivational self-system

Elaborating from the self-theory, Dörnyei (2009, p. 29) proposed a L2 learning motivation framework called L2 the motivational self-system. The model included two future self–guides in the L2 context, ideal L2 self and ought–to L2 self. The two factors are the core of this L2 motivation framework. Nevertheless, he also added another key factor, associated with L2 learning environment, into the model, L2 learning experience. This model has the following components:

> "Ideal L2 Self, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the 'ideal L2 self' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalized instrumental motives would typically belong to this component.
>
> Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to Higgins's ought self and thus to the more extrinsic (i.e. less internalized) types of instrumental motives.
>
> L2 Learning Experience, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). This component is conceptualized at a different level from the two self-guides and future research will hopefully elaborate on the self-aspects of this bottom-up process."

1.2 L2 motivational self-system and L2 achievement

A number of studies have been conducted in relation to L2MS. Drawing from Al-Hoorie's (2018) meta-analysis, three variables in L2MS were studied as predictors of two outcome variables, intended effort and L2 achievement. The present study focuses only on the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement expecting that understanding this frame work would provide beneficial implication for classroom practices – promoting students' English proficiency in the university. Although, L2MS has been validated by researchers, the findings of studies in examining its effect on L2 achievement appeared to be mixed across regions. For example, in Saudi Arabian context Khan, (2015) found only IS positively and significantly affected L2 achievement while in Malaysia, Tan et al. (2017) found that only LE had positive association with the achievement. Examining the effect of three variables of L2MS, some studies found that IS and LE were key factors that positively influenced L2 achievement (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Tan et al., 2017; Tort Calvo, 2015; Kim, 2012). In terms of OS, some studies (e.g. Darling & Chanyoo, 2018) found it positively affect learner intended effort and achievement while others (e.g. Al-Hoorie, 2018; Tort Calvo, 2015) found it has negative or no impact.

Validating the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement has been rarely evidenced in the Thai context. To my knowledge, there was only one study employing the framework of L2MS conducted the in Thai context that identified its effect on L2 achievement. The study was conducted by Outhaichute and Raksasataya, (2014) with Thai secondary school students. Their findings revealed that IS, OS, and LE had a statistically significant influence on L2 achievement, and academic achievement. Grades in an English basic course were used as measurement of L2 achievement in Outhaichute's and Raksasataya's study. Nevertheless, the present study employed a different measure of L2 achievement which was English proficiency test score. In addition, the present study was conducted at a Thai university in order to identify the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement at Thai tertiary level.

2. Objective

The present study aimed to examine the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement in Thai tertiary level.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

The participants in the present study were students at a public university in Bangkok, Thailand. The total number of students enrolled in 2020 semester was 3,410 and each faculty had numbers of students as follows: Education (1,324, 38.8%), Management Science (888, 26%), Humanity and Social Sciences (800, 23.5%), and Science and Technology (398, 11.7%).

G*Power program (Faul et al., 2009) was used to determine the appropriate sample size. In order to detect a Pearson's correlation coefficient of r = .30 with 95% power (alpha = .05, two-tailed), G*Power suggests 138 samples needed. The program estimated 119 samples that sensitive to medium effect ($f^2 = .15$) with 95 % power (alpha = .05, one-tailed) for multiple regression with three independent variables. Thus, the appropriate sample size in the present study was 138. Participants were randomly selected from four faculties thus the numbers of representatives from Education, Management Science, Humanity and Social Sciences, and Science and Technology were 54, 36, 32, and 16 respectively.

3.2 Instruments

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire, adopted from Taguchi, Magid and Papi, (2009), includes 16 items associating, IS (5 items), OS (7 items), and LE (4 items). The scales used in the questionnaire contain "strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), neutral (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5)". Initially, the questionnaire was translated into Thai by the researcher. In order to ensure the content validity, the questionnaire was revised as suggested by a Thai language teacher and a teacher in educational psychology and then translated back to English language by two English teachers to confirm the translated version equivalent to the original version of Taguchi, Magid and Papi, (2009). The questionnaire was tried out with 30 samples which yielded the Cronbach alpha of the three variables as the followings, IS (.93), OS self (.92), and LE (.92).

3.2.2 Proficiency test

The English proficiency test was developed by the university. It is mandatory that students must achieve the test score at least 41 points out of 100 in order to complete their degree of study. The test comprises three parts, listening, structure, and reading. The score is relevant to Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) in the following: A1 (0-25), A2 (26-40), B1 (41-60), B2 (61-78), C1 (79-90), and C2 (91-100). This test score is used as a mean to measure L2 achievement.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The online questionnaire was generated using Google Forms and then administered to the students who had taken the proficiency test. Data was collected within 2 weeks in March 2021 analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were employed to describe IS, OS, LE and L2 achievement. Pearson Correlation was used to study the relationship between variables. Examining the causal effect of L2MS, multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the influence of IS, OS, and LE on L2 achievement.

4. Results and Discussion

The average L2 achievement illustrated that English proficiency of the students appeared to be around B1 (M = 43.45, SD = 11.43). The descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 showed the mean score and standard deviation of the variables of L2MS as the followings, IS (M = 3.49, SD = .96), OS (M = 3.37, SD = .78), and LE (M = 3.27, SD = .99). Elaborating on L2 achievement, Table 2 presented English proficiency and L2 achievement in relation to L2MS. It appeared that English proficiency of most students were between A2 and B1which accounted for approximately 31% and 54% of the total samples respectively while about 12%, 5%, and 2% were accounts of students who had B1, A1, and C1 proficiency respectively. The result showed no students at C2 level.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Studied Variables.

	Mean	SD.
L2 achievement	43.14	11.43
IS	3.49	.96
OS	3.37	.78
LE	3.27	.99

Table 2. English Proficiency and L2 Achievement in Relation to L2 Motivational Self-System

English Proficiency	Frequency	Percentage	IS	OS	LE	L2A
A1	5	3.62	2.76 (.30)	3.49 (.81)	2.95 (.27)	21 (4.24)
A2	43	31.16	3.22 (.80)	3.33 (.78)	3.04 (.93)	33.93 (4.03)
B1	75	54.35	3.54 (.97)	3.32 (.77)	3.29 (1.01)	45.08 (4.66)
B2	12	8.70	4.15 (1.17)	3.61 (.88)	3.77 (1.12)	65.92 (4.58)
C1	3	2.17	4.33 (.97)	3.76 (.86)	4.50 (.25)	72.67 (8.96)

L2A: L2 achievement

Pearson's correlation was performed to identify the relationship between IS, OS, LE and L2 achievement. The findings presented in Table 3 revealed IS, OS, and LE had a positive relationship with L2 achievement however only IS and LE were found to have statistically significant relationships $r(136) = .364$, $p < .01$ and $r(136) = .367$, $p < .01$ respectively. The significance of these relationships was found to be consistent with Khan's (2015) and Subekti's (2018) studies. Among three variables of L2MS, LE appeared to have the strongest relationship with L2 achievement.

Table 3. Correlation between Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, L2 Learning Experience, and L2 Achievement

	1	2	3	4
1. L2A	1			
2. IS	.364**	1		
3. OS	.120	.415**	1	
4. LE	.367**	.579**	.410**	1

L2A: L2 achievement
** $p < .01$

In order to examine the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement, the multiple regression analysis was employed. Since, OS had no significant relationship to L2 achievement, it was excluded from the multiple regression equation. Multiple regression analysis was performed using enter method, a significant regression equation was found ($F(2, 135) = 13.764$, $p < .000$) with an adjust R^2 of .157, indicating that at least one of two predictors in this model had association with L2 achievement. The results of the analysis were presented in Table 4. The unstandardized coefficients indicated increasing scores of IS and LE by one would increase English proficiency test scores by 2.697 and 2.698. The standardized coefficients of IS ($\beta = .228$, $\rho < .05$), and LE ($\beta = .236$, $\rho < .05$) revealed their statistical and significant impact on L2 achievement. The multiple regression model explained 15.7 percent of variance in L2 achievement.

Table 4. The Influence of IS and LE on L2 Achievement

Variables	B	SE B	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	24.921	3.604		6.914	000
IS	2.697	1.140	.228	2.365	.019
LE	2.698	1.103	.236	2.447	.016

$r2 = .169;\ adj.r2 = .157;\ SE = 10.495;\ p < .0$

The finding of the multiple regression analysis seemed be consistent with Al-Hoorie's (2018) meta-analysis and Subekti's (2018) study that the L2MS appeared to be a weak predictor of L2 achievement since the model could explain approximately 15 percent of variance in L2 achievement, indicating there might be other variables other than IS, OS, and LE that had association with L2 achievement. Although the effect of IS and LE were found to be weak, they had significant effect on L2 achievement that needed to be considered. Based on the findings, English instructors, especially in the context of the present study, should help students construct their ideal L2 self, e.g. Safdari (2021) found the implementation of vision based intervention could promote both IS and OS. The present study provided further evidence underpinning the importance of the L2 learning experience as the most powerful predictor of criterions measures (Dornyei, 2019). Thus, it is important for teachers to recognize that students' motivation in relation to the learning environment plays an important role in their language achievement. Regarding Dornyei (2009), students' motives were tied to the learning situation or experience that resulted from the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, etc. and these aspects were controllable and exist inside and outside the classroom. For classroom practice, English instructors are suggested employing variety of teaching pedagogies e.g. game-based approach could promote students' learning experience (Licorish et al., 2017). Instructors may need to consider appropriate tasks or teaching pedagogies that focus on learning experience that occurs out of classroom to keep learners motivated, and such practices may promote ideal L2 self as well.

5. Conclusion

The present study aimed to explore the effect of L2MS on L2 achievement. The findings revealed IS, OS and LE had positive relationships with L2 achievement but only IS and LE had statistically significant relationships. It found that IS and LE had statistically significant and positive impact on L2 achievement.

Theoretically, the present study confirmed LE seemed to be the most important variables of L2MS. However, the overall model appeared to be a weak predictor of achievement. In terms of implications, the study suggests that English instructors recognize the importance of the IS and LE for both in and out of classroom practices.

The limitation of this study was that it may not be generalized to all universities in Thailand but particularly is specific to the context of the university in the present study. For future studies, longitudinal approaches are suggested to explore the changes of L2 motivational self-system and its impacts. Qualitative approaches may be needed to explore

the extent of L2MS in the Thai context and experimental design research should be conducted to develop effective treatments that could promote L2 learning experience.

6. The Author

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