



L2 Motivational Self System of International Chinese Students Learning English in the University of Leeds

Chenzi Yan

¹ 2025 Woodmont Blvd Apt 215, Nashville TN 37215, USA
chenziemama.yan1996@gmail.com

Abstract. It is inevitable for students to be motivated by specific factors. The researcher had conducted various research to find out the mode which is suitable for explaining the L2 motivations during the process of learning the second language. The first stage mainly focuses on the classroom to explain the phenomenon that learners' self in physiology framework. Then, with the experiments revealed, the L2 Motivational Self System had been used in major studies of language acquisition. However, with the increasing impact of globalization, the model's limitations became apparent, prompting the development of alternative theories such as the L2 Motivational Self System.

The L2 Motivational Self System, constructed by incorporating the traditional L2 motivational system and the psychological concept of 'self,' consists of three key elements: the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the learning experience. Scholars worldwide have conducted various research to examine the power of the L2 Motivational Self System, particularly in Asian countries. However, empirical research in China remains scarce, especially concerning international Chinese students' L2 learning.

This essay addresses the dearth of research on the L2 Motivational Self System in China by conducting a small-scale study focused on international Chinese students at the University of Leeds. The research aims to compare motivational differences between students prioritizing communication with native speakers and those preferring interaction with speakers of their native language. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the most influential element of the L2 Motivational Self System for both groups.

Keywords: L2 Motivational Self System, Ideal L2 Self, motivational differences.

1 Introduction

1.1 Background of motivation for learning

It has been brought to the spotlight many psychologists and educators that some factors could infect the efficiency of learning and teaching. Some scholars believe that differences in the efficiency of accepting new knowledge are based on gene diversity, while another group of researchers has attempted to explain these differences from a psychological perspective. Initially, researchers used the integrativeness/instrumentality model to differentiate the learners' motivations of second language, in order to emphasize the importance of integrative motivation, learners' motivations were classified into two main categories, to communicate effectively with native speakers and to root in the target language society ([5] Gardner, 1985). As research on language learning continues to deepen, researchers have found that the integrated model has certain limitations to explain all cases, therefore scholars tried to look for a more convincing model.

While motivation for learning has been a topic of great interest in research in psychology and education, motivational research for L2 acquisition has a relatively short history. The earliest written account of research on learning motivation can be traced back to the early 20th century, and in the 1960s, the research on learning motivation continued, hence some scholars narrowed down their research on the L2 motivation. The development of L2 motivation can be divided into three parts:

- The social psychological period (1959-1990)

- The cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s)

- The process-oriented period (the turn of the century)

- ([8]Dörnyei, 2005, pp.66-67)

1.2 The L2 motivational system

The L2 Motivational Self System is based on a combination of traditional L2 motivational theory and the psychological concept of "self"([6] Hall, 2019). In the first two phases mentioned above, scholars have proposed many models to try to explain the L2 motivation, in which most of the findings of these models are confined within the classroom discourse, on further observation we can find that these models actually apply more to the theoretical framework of psychology. Based on those findings, the L2 motivation became more complicated. The immigrant's country, such as American and Canada, people who immigrate to those countries are more likely to start their life by learning a second language, which can help them to fit in the target language community. With the development globalization, English, as a lingua franca, more and more students who come from worldwide decide to learn English to communicate with other ESL learners rather than native speakers. This means that traditional learning purpose has changed because there is no longer a target language community, people have to

learn L2 to make useful conversation. With those considerations, Dörnyei wanted to go beyond conventional instrumentality model. The possible selves seem to be a better concept to fit the current circumstance ([7] Dörnyei, 2009).

Higgins ([3] 1987) made the definitions of selves by three categories as ‘actual self’, ‘ideal self’ and ‘ought self’. The actual self refers to the attributes that someone believes you possess. The ideal self is something you ideally believe you can possess. The ought self, representation of the attributes that someone believes you should or ought to manage ([3] Higgins, 1987). During the learning process of a second language, the learning experience is very active and exist in every part of this process, which means it can directly influence learner's imagination and desire to their ideal self and ought-to self ([9] Teimouri, 2013). Based on the definitions and research, Dörnyei added learning experience into ‘self’ and formed the three elements of L2 motivational self-system. The L2 Motivational Self System is based on a combination of traditional L2 motivational theory and the psychological concept of ‘self’ ([6] Hall, 2019). There are two main theories which support the advancement of L2 Motivational Self System correspond to the study of L2 motivation which often apply by the traditional integrative-ness/instrumentality model, and the theories of ‘self’ ([7] Dörnyei, 2009). Many research had been conduct to verify the L2 Motivational Self System. This model included three elements:

- The Ideal L2 Self: the ideal person learner would like to be in the future;
- The Ought-to L2 Self: the person should be or others expectation for them;
- The learning experience: the events and experiences influence motivational behaviors and learning achievements.

([8] Dörnyei, 2005)

Through the L2 learning the Self System are linked by above elements, in which it sometimes can help teachers to develop learners’ potential study achievement. For example, the learners usually have a gap between actual self and ideal self, when the learners tried to imagine their future achievement by ideal self perspective, they will pay more attention to their learning performance and make a progress. Furthermore, a personal characteristic can undergo a transformation by the influence of Ought-to L2 Self and surrounding factors. Finally, the learning experience from the learners’ former study or peers’ experience in certain subject continually influence motivational behaviors and learning achievements ([1] Katalin, 2013).

1.3 Literature review

Motivational Self System. A research which conducted by Dörnyei in Hungary gathered information from L2 learners to investigate the difference between motivation in a native speaking based environment (e.g. English acquisition in US) and a second language acquisition environment (e.g. English acquisition in Hungary), in which the desire to integrate into native society is outstanding, which reflects the learners would probably influenced by Ideal L2 Self. Similar to Dörnyei study, one research of Taguchi, Magid, and Papi ([4] 2009) gathered 5000 feedbacks from Japan, China, and Iran. According to the research, the data collected from three different Asian countries

to test the correctness of L2 Motivational Self System, the author combined the culture factor to reveal the key of Ought-to L2 Self and Ideal L2 Self in Asian society.

Islam, Lamb, and Chambers ([2] 2013) take survey into 1000 Pakistan undergraduate students' L2 motivational self system. They found that in Pakistan context, learning experience and Ideal L2 Self could predict the motivational effort. The students with an international perspective are more likely to have a higher motivation in English study than average students. After reading those empirical studies in other countries, the L2 motivational self system was prove reliability. The research method used in these researches were provide useful guidance for this essay.

This essay conducted a small scale research mainly focus on four international students who study in the university of Leeds and identified with a different lifestyle in Leeds. They were encouraged to talk about their moods and attitudes on their L2 Self Motivation. Based on the theoretical framework, and the limitation of research environment, international students who study in the UK are easy to choose to develop a social circle when they have opportunity to know about native speakers and their first language speaker. The subjects were divided into two groups depends on their frequency of using their L2. One group of two students have more opportunity to communicate with native speaker, such as living together or having a long-last relationship, furthermore, the other pair of subjects are more likely to develop their social life by their first language. To make gender equal, two groups both contain with a female and a male student. All of them agreed to record the interview.

Therefore, the goal of this research was to test whether there were differences in English proficiency under the L2 motivational self system. Apart from this, there were still other two essential research questions:

1. Are there any differences of the L2 motivational self system between international Chinese students more focus on communicate with native speakers and students who prefer to communicate with their L1 speakers?
2. Among the three elements of L2 motivational self system, which one is the best predictor of L2 motivation for two groups.

Through the questions above we can know the students' current learning condition. By analyzing the differences and beat predictor for students, we could have a better understanding of Chinese international students' L2 motivational self system. After the interview, we analyzed the recording according to the L2 motivational self system.

1.4 Research method

In this essay, a semi-structured interview will be used to interview four students. The semi-structured interview meant that there were some fixed questions prepared before the interview. The questions will be used in the process of the interview but without a fixed order. And the interviewer and interviewees could talk about other topic related to the L2 motivation during the interview. Each student needed to spend about 10 minutes on the interview, and the interview was conducted in Chinese and transferred in English. Some students took a face-to-face interview, some of them chose voice chats via Wechat apps from which the conversation can be recorded and preserved. With the

agreement of these students, the interview was recorded. The fixed questions were in below:

- Why do you study English? Do you enjoy it or not?
- As long as you are studying at the University of Leeds, do you feel like to create a chance to communicate with native speakers?
- Have you ever felt any pressure to communicate with native speakers?
- Is your present motivation similar to or different from your motivation before you come to the UK? If it has changed, which aspect changed?
- Do you think your English improve during your study in the University of Leeds?

This study utilized the rootedness theory to qualitatively analyze the data through 3 steps of open coding, spindle coding and selective coding, and the theoretical saturation test to ensure the validity of the study. According to the proportion of one-third, this study did two independent coding of the interviews separately, without affecting each other. Firstly, without affecting each other, the transcripts of the interview transcripts were studied and analyzed alone, and the sentences that were closely related to the content of the study were selected to be conceptualized and the concepts were classified to be further categorized. Finally, the respective codes were compared one by one to find out the two independent codes, the same and different code contents, adopt the same code contents, and read and compare the different codes for in-depth thinking. On the basis of a large number of papers, the comparison will be made, and in this process, concepts with less than two occurrences will be excluded from the categorization.

2 Conclusion

2.1 Open coding analysis

Open coding refers to the process of decomposing, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing the collected data at the beginning of the study, that is, a process of operationalizing a large amount of data according to certain principles by breaking it up, assigning concepts to it, and then reassembling it in a new way ([10] Glaser and Strauss, 2000). Its purpose is to discover the same or similar types from the collected primary data, and at the same time name the types in order to determine the concepts and dimensions of the types. Open coding consists of 3 steps: (1) conceptualization, extracting the contents from the original comments, breaking them into independent sentences, and extracting coding elements from these sentences, which in turn leads to the transformation of generalized language to refined language and the formation of preliminary concepts; (2) concept categorization, optimizing, analyzing, and filtering the concepts, aggregating concepts in the same category of genera, and analyzing the connections between words to form concept clusters belonging to the same category; (3) categorization, further abstracting and naming the concept clusters. We utilized the free coding function of Nvivo 11.0 to code and label the collected interview data word by word

without any researcher's preconceptions and biases, to generate initial concepts and discover conceptual categories from the original data. The results of open coding are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Open coding for interview transcript

Interview content	Scope of open code extraction	Frequency
S1: Because English is included in China's nine-year compulsory education and college entrance examination subjects, when I was a child, I learned English to get the ideal university. Later, because English was the threshold for studying abroad, I learned English to get an IELTS score.	Getting into the desired school	5
S1: I am afraid to admit that English never is an interesting subject to me. Especially, when I study in China. All my thoughts about English is passing exams.	Passing exams	7
S2: Well, I have to pass the IELTS exam. I was pay to a institution to have session on IELTS. I was not thinking too much that time. Because I want to get a better job after graduation, the experience of learning abroad will help me.	Getting a quality job	2
LL: Ok, why do you study English? Do you enjoy it or not? S3: The most significant reason why I study English is the influence from my childhood. I was keep involved in the English lessons with a foreign teacher. Uhh, I have to say the lessons made have a stronger desire in learning English than my other classmates. I want to know more about the culture abroad.	Learn about foreign cultures	2
LL: Well, that is a great start. S3: Yes, another reason is that my English score is higher than other subject. My teacher always trust that I can have a good score in English. My parents think a have talent because my high score.	Strive for talent	2

<p>LL: Besides learning, are there anything else help you?</p> <p>S3: Making friends I think. One of my friends who is native speaker, she told me not to worry grammar when I speak. And I tried to keep connect with them to get involved in their social activities. My oral is a lot better than it used to be.</p>	Motivated by teachers	1
<p>S3: Well, after I came to the University of Leeds, I have learned more teaching methods. And I have met many friends who are native speakers, I start to know about their thoughts. And I began to think my future. I may prefer a job as a teacher but with high salary.</p>	Parenting style	4
<p>LL: She is not good at teaching?</p> <p>S2: Her English was good. But she did not know the method to teach. Her classroom is complicate. And she left us with boring homework</p>	Teacher's teaching style	7
<p>LL: A career in UK? How dose those social activities help you?</p> <p>S4: Uh, I would like to practice English in our school's different club, people in there are very nice. And this may be a chance for me to know more about the social cultural. To find a job in UK is not easy, I am studying engineer and I want to be an engineer after my graduation, communication with native speakers can help me learn the way local people social. I think so.</p>	Promoting work development	1
<p>LL: As long as you are study in the University of Leeds, do you feel like to create chance to communicate with native speakers?</p> <p>S2: Yes, when I came Leeds, I think it will be necessary be have communication with native speakers. And I thought the communication like that will improve my English.</p>	Improvement of English Proficiency	4
<p>S1: Yes, although English is hard for me, but I cannot avoid use it here. I mean that I prefer to talk to the friends who speak Chinese, but I cannot avoid use English to buy things and finish my homework.</p>	Not worried about making mistakes	2

<p>S1: I do not like to create chances to communicate with native speakers. Somehow, I like to speak English with my classmates. They come from different countries, we use English to communicate.</p>	<p>Not much pressure</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>LL: Do you feel pressure when you speak with native speaker? S1: Definitely, like I say that above that I afraid to make mistake and they will judge me in some certain ways.</p>	<p>Fear of making mistakes</p>	<p>3</p>
<p>LL: Do you feel pressure when you speak with native speaker? S1: Definitely, like I say that above that I afraid to make mistake and they will judge me in some certain ways.</p>	<p>Being judged by outsiders</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>S1: As you know, I do not take too much social activities with native speakers. My speaking is not good. Writing may have some progress, because of the massive reading have influence.</p>	<p>Poor speaking skills</p>	<p>2</p>
<p>LL: How is that communication going? S2: Not very well. My classmates are most Chinese, we even can no help speak English in group talk. And I feel the native speakers do not like to speak with me when I have trouble in expressing something.</p>	<p>Difficulty in expressing oneself</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>LL: How is that communication going? S2: Not very well. My classmates are most Chinese, we even can no help speak English in group talk. And I feel the native speakers do not like to speak with me when I have trouble in expressing something. LL: Do you have example? S2: It is hard to say. The teacher and foreign classmates are patient. But in the real life, when I repeat something to make my opinion clear, the people here seem confused to talk. This made me not like to communicate with them.</p>	<p>Being ostracized</p>	<p>1</p>

LL: How is that communication going? S2: Not very well. My classmates are most Chinese, we even can no help speak English in group talk. And I feel the native speakers do not like to speak with me when I have trouble in expressing something.	Stress	5
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This paper utilized open coding to obtain 23 initial categories with a total of 64 nodes, of which the top ten with more frequency are Getting into the desired school, Passing exams, Making friends, Parenting style, Improvement of English Proficiency, Fear of making mistakes, Stress, Gaining a sense of pride, Strive for talent, Planning for one's own future.

The Teacher's teaching style are significant factor in the analysis, which refers the Ideal L2 Self can give them a clear and flat image of the ideal person he or she wants to be or just the predicational future lives that they want to have. Therefore, four students in two group have different attitudes to communicate with native speakers, because of their separate Ideal L2 Self. When the S4 describe his teacher, he looks like remember some details that his teacher inspired him by teaching. The image of his teacher become S4's Ideal L2 Self, which engendered his moods to root in the native language society and encouraged S4 to acquire L2 as much as possible.

During the interview, the subjects made some reviews about their surrounding factors which usually face by individual. All of four subjects said that the only reason for them to learn English as L2 is to achieve a good score in their tests, they did not want to fail in any exam. And for the most of Chinese students, passing the exams and get the qualification for English to graduate are the aim of learning English. Instead of communication with native speaker, they do not know what they can do with English expect having a good score. Moreover, there are two students pointed out that peer pressure take account for their learning motivations, when their Chinese friends boost a friendship with native speakers, the peer pressure appears. They feel obligations to act like the others to make friends with native speakers.

From the example, we assumed that the students used to learn English to pass their exams before university which made them not pay attention to the motivation of their English study. From the interview, we can know that the Chinese international students used to have a high academic goal in English study, during the years they spend in junior and high school, before university they may hardly realize the motivation for L2 learning. Some students choose domestic university to further their education which means that they receive courses through their mother language, they do not have chance to communicate with foreigners. They sometimes use translate application to help them with the reading in second language. When some students decide to study abroad, the proficiency of using L2 become a necessary, they are more like the perceive the importance of L2. In other words, if a student had a strong Ought-to L2 Self, he or she could still achieve a higher L2 proficiency. As an English major student, S3 often is asked by her friends or parents to translate some random things from the international news or products. "Could you understand this?", when someone is using English in TV, she will translate the information to their parents. The people who know her usually

have the assumption of S3 that understanding English is her ability. Under this kind of pressure, they have a different Ought-to L2 Self-image than the other major students, S3 study hard because she did not disappoint their families or herself.

The learning experience could help learners concentrate on S2 learning and help them to find the problem they have. The learning experience often guides learners to choose proper learning methods. Most students agree that learning experience was significant because it brings both positive and negative effects on L2 acquisition. The confident may be built up in their positive learning experience, students usually perform better with confidence, and the better performance in a class could increase their confidence in return.

2.2 Axial coding

An open-ended coding of the text, line by line and sentence by sentence, is a process through which concepts and their characteristics and dimensions can be identified and developed. The steps involved naming and categorizing similar events and situations to form categories, resulting in a list of coded codes and categories. ([11] Welsh, 2002)In the open coding process, which is illustrated by table 2, a total of 23 original utterances and concepts were generated, and concepts with less than 2 frequencies were removed, based on which 5 main categories were obtained using axial coding, namely Motivation to learn English, Influencing factors, Motivation to communicate with native speakers, Motivation to communicate with non-native speakers, and Factors that interfere with motivation.

Table 2. Axial coding based on open coding result

Main categories	Counterpart Scope	Connotation of categories
Motivation to learn English	Getting into the desired school Passing exams Gaining a sense of pride Getting a quality job Study abroad Learn about foreign cultures Strive for talent Make friends Tools for Life	Students' motivations for learning English include Getting into the desired school Students' motivations for learning English include Passing exams Students' motivations for learning English include Gaining a sense of pride Students' motivations for learning English include Getting a quality job Students' motivations for learning English include Study abroad Students' motivations for learning English include Learn about foreign cultures

		<p>Students' motivations for learning English include Strive for talent</p> <p>Students' motivations for learning English include Make friends</p> <p>Students' motivations for learning English include Tools for Life</p>
Influencing factors	<p>Motivated by teachers</p> <p>Planning for one's own future</p> <p>Parenting style</p> <p>Teacher's teaching style</p> <p>Promoting work development</p>	<p>Factors that influence students to learn English include Motivated by teachers</p> <p>Factors that influence students to learn English include Planning for one's own future</p> <p>Factors that influence students to learn English include Parenting style</p> <p>Factors that influence students to learn English include Teacher's teaching style</p> <p>Factors that influence students to learn English include Promoting work development</p>
Motivation to communicate with native speakers	Improvement of English Proficiency	Students' motivation for choosing to communicate with native speakers is the ability to improve their English language proficiency
Motivation to communicate with non-native speakers	<p>Not worried about making mistakes</p> <p>Not much pressure</p>	<p>Students' choice to communicate with non-native speakers is motivated by the lack of fear of making mistakes</p> <p>Students' choice to communicate with non-native speakers is motivated by the lack of stress</p>
Factors that interfere with motivation	<p>Fear of making mistakes</p> <p>Being judged by outsiders</p> <p>Poor speaking skills</p> <p>Difficulty in expressing oneself</p> <p>Being ostracized</p> <p>Stress</p>	<p>Factors that affect students' ability to communicate actively in English are fear of making mistakes</p> <p>Factors affecting students' ability to communicate actively in English include being evaluated and instructed by outsiders</p> <p>Factors affecting students' ability to actively communicate in English include their own poor speaking skills</p> <p>Factors that affect students' ability to communicate actively in English are difficulties in utilizing English expressions</p>

		Factors affecting students' ability to communicate actively in English include rejection by native English speakers Factors affecting students' ability to actively communicate in English Useful English communication is stressful
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From the table 2, it shows that the motivation to learn English as second language mainly derived from getting into the desired school and passing exams. The influence factors are also significant in teacher styles and parenting expectation for students.

For the second question mentioned in the introduction, each student in this research has a different attitude to their L2 learning. From the interview, we can find that learning experience was the most important factor for deliberate efforts. During the interview, four participants review their learning experiences which influence them for an extended period, even control their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. A good learning experience is more likely to set s positive Ideal L2 Self in the long term. When the interviewer asked students whether their motivation changed with time, three of four students agree that their motivation was different in each period, and the motivation for each period depends on individual situations.

2.3 Selective coding

Selective coding continues with axial coding at a higher level of abstraction, the purpose of this step is to identify the core categories around which other proposed categories can be merged and integrated to form a complete "story line". ([12] Leech, 2011) In table 3, two core categories were obtained by selective coding, namely Factors Affecting Motivation and Analysis of differences in motivation.

Table 3. Selective coding

Main Category	Sub Category	Frequency
Factors Affecting Motivation	Motivation to learn English	28
	Influencing factors	15
Analysis of differences in motivation	Motivation to communicate with native speakers	4
	Motivation to communicate with non-native speakers	4
	Factors that interfere with motivation	13

Through the table 3, the motivation of learning English has been talked through the interview. And the subjects can identify their motivation by different factors mentioned in table 2. The factors interfere with motivation is obvious that students who tends to communicate with native English speakers have a stronger motivation to acquire the English.

However, the differences of the L2 Motivational Self System between the students who pay more attention on having social life with native speaker and students who like

to stay in the L1 environment is obvious. The subjects who prefer to have deep communication with native speakers about their life and study got more chances to have specific Ideal L2 Self. The Ideal Self is the essential factor for deliberate efforts. Four students in two group have different attitudes to communicate with native speakers, because of their separate Ideal L2 Self.

2.4 Research limitation

There are limitations for this essay. At first, the sample of this essay was small, and all of the participants were from the same university, the University of Leeds. As a consequence, the recognition of their lifestyle maybe link to the real situation for them, and the result of this research cannot represent the whole position of all international Chinese students.

3 Result Discussion

By analyzing the interview transcriptions, this essay got several findings which can answer the research question. The first one, there were differences of the L2 Motivational Self System between the students more focus on communicate with native speakers and students who prefer to communicate with their L1 speakers. The student who likes to talk with native speakers is more likely to have specific Ideal L2 Self. It can be the image of the person he or she wants to be or just the expectations for their future lives. Ought-to L2 Self is mainly differed by the surroundings of an individual. The peer pressure is mentioned by two students during the interview when their Chinese friends make a new friend with native speakers. They feel the needs to be like them. The learning experience means different to each student; everyone may have their explanation about learning experiences. For those students who are brave and fond of communicating with the native speaker, they are more likely to have a positive learning experience.

For the second question, each student in this research has a different attitude to their L2 learning. From the interview, we can find that learning experience was the most important factor for deliberate efforts. During the interview, four participants review their learning experiences which influence them for an extended period, even control their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. A good learning experience is more likely to set a positive Ideal L2 Self in the long term. When the interviewer asked students whether their motivation changed with time, three of four students agree that their motivation was different in each period, and the motivation for each period depends on individual situations.

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