The L2 Motivational Self System and National Interest: A Pakistani perspective

Muhammad Islam*, Martin Lamb, Gary Chambers

University of Leeds, School of Education, Hillary Place, Leeds LS2 9JT, UK

Abstract

This paper reports a study of Pakistani undergraduate students' motivation to learn English, using Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System as the main theoretical framework, while including some context-specific factors. The purpose of the study was both to contribute to the ongoing validation of Dörnyei's model for describing contemporary L2 motivation and to capture motivational factors which were salient in this under-researched global context. A survey was designed and administered to over 1000 undergraduates in various institutions in the Pakistani province of Punjab. Correlation and regression analyses of the data provide considerable empirical support for the validity of the L2 Motivational Self System and its relevance in the Pakistani context, with attitudes to the learning experience and the Ideal L2 self again found to be the strongest predictors of learning effort. However, a proposed new construct – National Interest – made a strong contribution to the Ideal L2 self, highlighting the need to understand the association of English with the national identities and interests of learners.
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Keywords: Motivation; L2 Motivational Self System; Attitudes to Learning English; Ideal L2 self; Ought-to L2 self; National Interest

1. Introduction

One notable feature of globalization is the 'deterritorialization' of language – the 'perception and attribution of values to language as something which does not belong to one locality' (Blommaert, 2010, p. 46). This notion has been taken on board by contemporary theorists of second language (L2) motivation, whose arguments against the validity of the construct 'integrativeness' are based on the fact that English, the most mobile of all languages, is losing its association with the people and culture of the major Anglophone nations, and that therefore learners' identification with those nations becomes less relevant to their desire to learn the language. Instead their motivation is better understood in terms of self-identification processes, and particularly how they relate the language to their own imagined personal futures, whether in their home country or abroad (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009).

By virtue of the same processes of economic and cultural globalization, however, English is assuming an ever larger role *within* nations, often serving many domestic purposes – to educate, to market and sell goods, to control

entry to certain professions, interalia. It is also used to mediate their relations with other countries, both in official points of contact, such as international organizations (e.g. the United Nations), and through more informal channels (e.g. reporting in the media). It therefore seems reasonable to assume that how people feel about their own country — their sense of national allegiance, as well as their self-positioning within local society — will affect their motivation to learn English. We explored this issue in Pakistan, using the 'L2 Motivational Self System' (Dörnyei, 2009) as the main theoretical framework but also hoping to uncover other factors that might be relevant to learners' motivation in this particular under-researched national context.

2. Literature review

2.1. Developments in L2 Motivation Theory

In recent times, L2 motivation research has gone through a major re-conceptualization which was largely triggered by dissatisfaction with the traditional socio-psychological model of L2 motivation (See Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Ryan, 2009). Researchers have argued that 'integrativeness' — a central component of socio-psychological research representing the desire to identify and mix with English-speaking people and their culture (Gardner, 1985) — has lost much of its relevance in a globalized world where English is perceived as an international lingua franca and is no longer associated with Anglophone societies (Lamb, 2004; Coetzee-Van Rooy, 2006). Instead it was proposed that the motivationally important identification processes are internal, relating to future English-using versions of the self (Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005). Dörnyei (2005) developed this idea using concepts from 'possible selves' (Markus and Nurius, 1986) and 'self-discrepancy' theory (Higgins, 1987, 1998) to build his L2 Motivational Self System. This model has three components: the Ideal L2 self, Ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). The Ideal L2 self is a person's vision of a future L2-using self and, embodying private hopes and aspirations, is hypothesized to motivate people to invest effort in learning the L2 in order to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal selves. The Ought-to L2 self by contrast is a vision of a future self that embodies the wishes and expectations of significant others, and is thus extrinsic and preventional in nature. The third component, the L2 learning experience 'concerns situated "executive" motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, p. 82).

The L2 Motivational Self System has already been tested empirically in a range of EFL contexts including Japan, China and Iran (Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009), Hungary (Csizér and Kormos, 2009), Chile (Kormos et al., 2011) and Indonesia (Lamb, 2012). These studies have mostly confirmed the tri-partite structure of the model, though the Ought-to L2 self has sometimes been difficult to measure (Kormos and Csizér, 2008; Lamb, 2012). The Ideal L2 self has been found to subsume integrativeness and internalised instrumental motives, as predicted, and is often the strongest component of L2 Motivational Self System, 'typically explaining more than 40% of the variance [in the criterion measure of motivated learning behaviour], which is an exceptionally high figure in motivation studies' (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, p. 87). By contrast, the Ought-to L2 self tends to correlate with less internalized instrumental motives, and contributes less to motivated learning behaviour, though there is some regional variability in results. This led Taguchi et al. (2009) and Kormos et al. (2011) to question whether this construct may operate differently in Asian contexts where parents or other family members may be more influential in learners' motivational thinking.

However, we are also becoming more aware of the complexity of possible relationships among the model's three components, and their links with other motivational factors. Dörnyei (2009) has emphasized that the Ideal self is only likely to motivate if certain conditions are met, such as it being an 'elaborate and vivid future self image' (p. 19), seeming plausible, being regularly primed at home or school, and having an accompanying plan of action. Papi (2010) found that the effect of Iranian learners' Ideal L2 selves on motivated learning behaviour was mediated by their attitudes to the learning experience, suggesting that their future self-image as English-speakers had to be nurtured at school for it to be an effective motivator. Meanwhile Lamb (2012) found suppressed results for the Ideal L2 self among Indonesian junior high school learners of English, and argued that this could be because Ideal selves in early adolescence tended to be vague and idealistic and therefore less likely to promote effortful learning behaviour.

To recognize better the complexity of L2 motivation, Kormos et al. (2011, p. 511) have extended the L2 Motivational Self System to produce an interactive, hierarchical model of their own which allows for learner goals, socio-contextual factors and instructional setting to be included. They see these three elements as being important but as