

A Multidimensional View of L2 Motivation in Southeast Spain: Through the ‘Ideal Selves’ Looking Glass

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ABSTRACT: This article presents the main quantitative findings in a study that applied the tenets of Zoltán Dörnyei’s (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self-System (L2MSS) to explore the L2 motivation of over 500 undergraduate students in the Region of Murcia, Spain. We used the lens of the ideal and ought L2 selves to gain insight into participants’ intentions to invest effort in learning the L2, the variables affecting their decision and their current involvement in L2 acquisition. We also explored the role of the somewhat fuzzy concept of the L2 learning experience within the L2MSS distinguishing past from present learning experiences. The ideal L2 self emerged as the strongest variable in relation to intentions to learn across the sample. Regarding external influences on the self, instrumentality prevention appears to be more relevant to motivated behavior than an ought L2 self. Quite negative past learning experiences were detected in the sample along with a lack of parental encouragement in learning the L2 leading us to conclude that these factors may have had a detrimental effect on English learning and acquisition among the sample observed.

Keywords: L2 Learning Motivation, L2 Selves, Ideal L2 Self, L2 Learning Experience, Ought L2 Self, International Posture

Una visión multidimensional de la motivación en la L2 en el sureste de España: A través del espejo del ‘yo ideal’

RESUMEN: En este artículo se presentan los resultados principales de un estudio empírico en el que se aplica la teoría del Sistema Motivacional del Yo L2 (SMYL2) (Dörnyei 2005, 2009) para analizar la motivación para el aprendizaje de la L2 (inglés) en una muestra de más de 500 estudiantes universitarios en la Región de Murcia, España. De un total de 14 variables incluidas en el estudio, analizamos en mayor detalle el papel (todavía algo ambiguo) del tercer componente del SMYL2—la experiencia de aprendizaje L2—estableciendo una distinción entre experiencias pasadas frente a las experiencias más actuales. El yo ideal L2 resultó ser la variable más influyente de todas las examinadas en relación con las intenciones futuras de los participantes. En lo que se refiere a influencias externas, la variable de instrumentalidad en su dimensión preventiva resultó tener mayor relevancia que un yo L2 deóntico o de obligación. Por último, detectamos cierta negatividad en cuanto a las experiencias pasadas de aprendizaje de inglés además de un nivel bajo de apoyo familiar, aspectos que posiblemente hayan tenido un efecto negativo sobre la competencia comunicativa de la muestra estudiada.

Palabras clave: Motivación en el aprendizaje de la L2, Yo Ideal L2, La experiencia de aprendizaje de la L2, El yo deóntico, Visión internacional

1. INTRODUCTION

In different global contexts, L2 motivation is high in the research agenda for very different reasons. A recent macro-review of articles published on this trending topic (Boo, Ryan & Dörnyei, 2015) analyses a surge in empirical work in the domain since 2005, the year of the publication of the L2 Motivational Self System theory (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). The authors point to the emergence of this novel construct as a rationale for the uptake in theoretical and practical studies in this very current psychological domain of language learning as well as an attraction to the applicability of psychological concerns to understand language learner behaviour. One fact that the authors do highlight is that the proliferation of L2 motivation studies in observed Eastern as opposed to Western contexts could be owing to concerns over a lack of EFL achievement in Asian populations. However, in our Spanish context a lack of EFL achievement is essentially the rationale behind the study described in this paper.

In Spain L2 learner behaviour and foreign language achievement are currently particularly relevant, not only because of some concern over a shortage of EFL skills in the adult population which we comment further below, but also given the country's idiosyncratic linguistic landscape which involves several bilingual communities with official languages other than Spanish. Lasagabaster and colleagues (e.g. Lasagabaster, 2011; Lasagabaster, Doiz & Sierra, 2014) explore L2 and L3 motivation in bilingual education in The Basque Country. The Balearic Islands, another bilingual community, is the setting for Moratinos-Johnston, Ballester Brague, Juan-Garau & Salazar Noguera's 2018 study employing the L2 motivational self system to analyse, among other aspects, the effect of Catalan as a L1 on the learning of English.

It is a fact that Spain in general, although improving, is not high in EU rankings as an English speaking nation. Lasagabaster (2011: 5) echoes many voices in claiming that English language teaching in compulsory education in Spain has been seen as lacking in terms of efficaciousness: "...students' language skills at the end of compulsory education are far below the desired level of competence, and this low command often puts them off from taking subjects taught through English at university level". Taking the English First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI) as an instance, Spain has, over the past years, consistently ranked along with France and Italy at the lower end of the European scale. In the 2018 EPI, globally, Spain is ranked behind India and China. Within Spain, the same EPI studies, situate the Region of Murcia, the geographical context we are concerned with in this study, at the lower end of the proficiency scale of the communities of the Spanish peninsula. This lack of EFL skills in the working population undoubtedly leaves the country and the Region at a disadvantage in the arenas of politics, business and education given the *de facto* use of English to communicate in these areas. In order to address this linguistic deficit, recent governmental intervention has involved a flurry of activity to bring the younger generation up to scratch in foreign language competence. As a result, all autonomous communities in Spain are being encouraged to implement a bilingual education system — largely English-Spanish — at all levels of compulsory education. The requisites for bilingual teacher qualifications vary in the different autonomous communities (see Guadamillas Gómez & Alcaraz Mármol, 2017, for an overview of requisites for primary education). However, essentially, in-service teachers of bilingual subjects now face a mandatory foreign language

certification requirement (generally from a B2 to C1 CEFR) in order to teach a subject on the bilingual syllabus. Some of the autonomous communities of the country have applied a FL certification requisite to third level institutions requiring graduates to certify a B1 level of a foreign language (e.g. Andalusia). This is not the case in the Region of Murcia where only graduates of the pre-primary and primary education degrees are obliged to comply with this qualification.

The Region of Murcia is a coastal province in Southeast Spain with a busy tourist market, a large population of expat residents as well as a strong horticultural export trade demand for competent English users is high in all areas of trade and tourism and, as mentioned, education. Nonetheless, the low EFL rankings would appear to suggest that the demand is not being met. However, while the imbalance in supply and demand is disconcerting, it should also be considered that developing strong EFL skills can be a challenge for undergraduate students given the scarce teaching credits allocated to language learning in the various degrees offered at the two main universities in the Region. Students, in many cases, are faced with the choice of paying for language tuition at private language schools or taking a more self-directed route to language learning. All of this involves considerable investment of time, energy and money, which students may or may not be able to afford. This is the background that led us to analyse the L2 motivational profiles of the undergraduate population in Murcia.

2. THEORY OVERVIEW

The L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009) was welcomed into the L2 motivation research arena as more flexible lens than the previously dominant construct of integrativeness (Gardner, 1985) through which to analyse L2 learners' attitudes and behaviour. Not only does the construct break away from the somewhat restricted views of L2 motivation that integrativeness encompassed, it also introduces two novel dimensions into the theoretical framework: the concept of how envisaging the future can shape current thoughts and actions in L2 learners (the ideal L2 self), and the notion that external pressure to learn can also boost motivation and help sustain action in the long and difficult process of language learning (the ought L2 self). Complemented by a third pillar—the learning situation—the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) provides an overarching theory which can potentially accommodate the wide range of psychological variables affecting motivation that have remained valid yet isolated or confusingly overlapping concepts (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). Empirical work applying the L2MSS has achieved its successful validation (Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009) in Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, and it has been applied as a theoretical lens in some exploratory quantitative studies in Hungary (Csizér & Kormos, 2009); Chile, (Kormos, Kiddle and Csizér, 2011); Sweden (Henry, 2009, 2010) and qualitative explorations in UK (Busse, 2010, Busse & Williams, 2010). Indonesia (e.g. Islam, Lamb & Chambers, 2013; Lamb, 2009; Kim, 2009). However, the potential for exploration analysis of the tenets of the L2MSS is very diverse and certain aspects, such as the source and exact nature or role of the ought L2 self, have produced results in some cultures that are not easily transferrable to others, as is the case in the study we report here. The third element of the L2MSS—the L2 learning experience—although an intuitively coherent inclusion in the construct, remains quite unexplored as to its exact nature within the L2 selves

paradigm. Dörnyei himself (2009) called for further exploration of the language learning domain in alignment with the two self-guides detailed within the L2MSS and this study attempts to contribute to current knowledge regarding this third cornerstone of the L2 MSS.

2.1. The Ideal L2 Self

Seeing motivated behaviour through the hopes and dreams of the L2 learner and the extent to which s/he is able to produce a detailed and vivid vision of a future L2 using self to act as a guide on the learning path can help understand better the efforts the learner might make to reach his or her aspirations (Dörnyei, 2005). Dörnyei, in conceiving the two main guides of his L2 MSS drew from the dual ideal-ought self-system established in general psychology by Higgins (1987) and not the infinite range of possible self-guides that Markus and Nurius (1986) claimed could exist in one's imagination. The energising capacity of an idealised future self resides in the concept of discrepancy, the discomfort that arises on sensing a lacuna between a current self and the self we wish to evolve into. Nonetheless, for self-guides to be efficacious, theorists claim that there must be a degree of plausibility – a knowledge or intuition that one possesses the capability to attain what is dreamed of or envisaged, as well as an ability to depict a detailed vision of the desired self. These conditions help distinguish plausible hopes or expectations from fantasy or 'New Year's resolution' type of promises, to quote the analogy of Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006).

For a novel construct within L2 motivation, the ideal L2 self has proved relatively uncomplicated to extrapolate to the language learning domain. Ryan (2009) and Taguchi et al. (2009) as the first studies to explore the concept, which they did in Asian cultures, asserted its superiority as a determinant of motivated language learning behaviour. These studies were partially replicated in EU contexts with findings also pointing to the L2 self-guide an efficacious precursor to motivated behaviour, e.g. Kormos and Csizér (2008, 2009), Busse (2010) and Henry (2011). The main consequence of this for practice has translated to proposals for the nurturing of vivid and detailed mental images of L2 learners within instructional contexts (e.g. Dörnyei & Hadfield, 2013; Magid & Chan, 2013) in order to ensure that language learners can forge their future L2-using selves and anticipate the paths to take in order to reach their goals. It has been seen to be the case in educational psychology that working on an envisaged future direction can help learners anticipate their needs and empower them to overcome potential obstacles more effectively (e.g. Oyserman, Bybee & Terry, 2006).

The evolving nature of possible selves leave the construct highly suited to examining the dynamic, temporal dimension of L2 Motivation and evolving L2 identities. Kim's (2009) and Lamb's (2009) longitudinal qualitative explorations were able to trace the evolution of their participants' ideal L2 selves over a period of time. Busse and Williams, (2010) examined motivational flux in terms of task related self-efficacy in learners of German over an academic year. With regard to shorter term motivational fluctuations, Pawlak (2012) analysed the changes in L2 learners' motivation over a series of lessons, which facilitated an identification of motivating and demotivating aspects of the learning experience in her Polish sample. Henry & Cliffordson (2015) have made one of the first efforts to hone in on the efficaciousness of discrepancy between now and future L2 using selves in classroom-based learning versus socially based L2 selves, concluding that a reduction in the gap between the current and the desired self, diminishes the energising effect of an ideal L2 self-guide.

2.2. The Ought L2 Self

Should the positively-oriented, social-constructed ideal L2 self vision be complemented by some type of external pressure to attain the L2 goal, theory claims that success in L2 learning is even more likely (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Higgins, 1987; Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009). Nonetheless, in studies thus far applying the L2MSS theory, although the ideal L2 self has not proved difficult to identify as a strong force in different populations of L2 learners, indeed with little apparent variation across cultures, its counterpart, the ought L2 self does not lend itself to immediate identification or transfer across cultures or populations of learners (e.g. Kormos & Csisér, 2008). The problems with the ‘obligation’ dimension of the L2MSS are twofold: in the first place there is the issue of a difficult to identify boundary between the pressures to learn deriving from external sources and the values, hopes and expectations that are integrated within the L2 ideal self vision. In the second place, in certain settings and age groups the components that make up an ought L2 self are distinct, and/or externally-sourced duty to learn a language does not appear to be a significant predictor of L2 motivated behaviour. Thus the role of this ‘obliged’ sense of self within the L2 MSS is still in need of further scrutiny.

In the Asian settings (Ryan, 2008, 2009, Taguchi et al., 2009), the influence of family pressure to learn comprising an ought self has proved somewhat influential, although never as strongly affecting learning behaviour or intended behaviour as the ideal self. It had initially appeared that a strong endorsement of family duty might be idiosyncratic to the Chinese culture, although this claim was later refuted by You and Dörnyei, (2016). However, in other cultural contexts, the influence of an externally sourced entity on L2 learning was less apparent e.g. Japan (Taguchi et al., 2009) or not significant at all, as was the case in the sample examined in Hungary (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Csizér & Lukács, 2010). The findings in Taguchi et al. (2009) and You and Dörnyei (2016) suggest that an ought L2 self may be more easily detected through an instrumentality prevention dimension in those cultures in which a strong family imperative is not so prevalent.

2.3. The L2 Learning Experience

The L2 learning experience involves “situation specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience” (Dörnyei, 2005: 106) and is currently the most underexplored pillar of the L2 Motivational Self System. The L2 learning experience can involve everything related to formal learning aspects from the teacher to the learner group; methodology and materials; and even the experience of success within the learning environment—in itself is a complex psychological construct. Of course, Dörnyei’s previous work on the process-oriented model of motivation (e.g. Dörnyei & Ottó, 1998) did identify a long, complex list of motivational influences related to the learning context, and perhaps this is why he indicates that “future research will hopefully elaborate on the self aspects of this bottom up process” (Dörnyei, 2009: 29). In this study and given many student testimonials on negative learning histories in compulsory education, we chose to examine the potential influence of distinct temporal dimensions of the L2 learning experience; past and present.

3. RESEARCH AIMS

The empirical study was guided by the areas that we felt relevant to the idiosyncrasies of the Spanish L2 background discussed earlier, and that had been identified, among others, in the literature as lacunas in current knowledge on the L2 self (McIntyre, McKinnon & Clément, 2009), i.e. cultural differences in the nature and role of ideal L2 selves; the interplay between ideal and ought paradigms and the ambiguous nature of the L2 learning experience within the construct. Two of the research questions (RQs) that were formulated to guide the thesis study are discussed in this paper:

RQ1: How does the motivational profile of English majors vs. non-English majors differ in terms of the tenets of the L2 MSS:

- a) How does the ideal L2 self affect the learning behaviours of this sample?
- b) How does the ought L2 self affect the learning behaviours of this sample?
- c) What role do past and present learning experiences play in the L2 motivation of the sample?

RQ2: As examined through the L2 MSS, what role do attitudinal, goal-related and affective factors play in the motivational profile of the participants?

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Instruments

The post-pilot version of the final MFQ (Brady, in press) for this Spanish study contained 71 items classified under 14 psychometric scales, including the criterion measure of intended learning effort — referring to plans to continue learning or improving English language competence in the future. The scales were grouped under four main categories of variables: L2 MSS-related factors (including the two self guides and the learning experience); attitudinal; goal-related, and affective factors. The MFQ draws from two multiscale MFQs designed to examine the L2 MSS: Ryan in Japan (2005, 2008, 2009) and that employed in Japan, China and Iran by Taguchi, Magid and Papi (2009). See Table 1 for a description of each scale and number of items in each along with its reliability coefficient. For our specific aims in Spain, we created two separate scales to distinguish past learning experience from current learning experiences, given our previously mentioned hypothesis on negative learning experiences. Participants were required to rate each statement on a 6 point Likert scale from 0 (absolutely disagree) to 5 (absolutely agree). The data was analysed using SPSS 17.

Table 1. Post-pilot Psychometric scales employed in the Spanish study

CRITERION MEASURE
INTENDED LEARNING EFFORT: 5 items targeting students' past and present learning activities and their intention to continue study or spend time abroad to improve their English. ($\alpha = .79$)
SELF-RELATED FACTORS
IDEAL SELF: 5 items aimed at participants' emotional involvement with the L2 and visions of themselves using English in the future. ($\alpha = .81$)
UGHT SELF: 4 items targeting the pressure students feel to learn from society, parents, and significant others. ($\alpha = .70$)
LEARNING EXPERIENCE FACTORS
ATTITUDES TO PAST LEARNING EXPERIENCE 4 items on past and present classroom learning experiences. ($\alpha = .78$)
CURRENT ATTITUDES TO LEARNING ENGLISH 3 items on current enjoyment of learning English. ($\alpha = .73$)
ATTITUDINAL FACTORS
CULTURAL INTEREST: 4 items targeting the extent to which student watched TV, read, or listened to music in the L2. ($\alpha = .70$)
INTEREST IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE: 6 items targeting students' opinions on the language itself e.g. structure and sound. ($\alpha = .75$)
GOAL RELATED FACTORS
INSTRUMENTALITY PREVENTION: 5 items covering a range of disadvantages to not succeeding in English. ($\alpha = .76$)
INSTRUMENTALITY PROMOTION: 6 items covering a range of pragmatic advantages to acquiring English. ($\alpha = .68$)
INTEGRATIVENESS: 7 items (used in the original Hungarian study) targeting students' interest in engagement with in UK/US people and their culture. ($\alpha = .80$)
INTERNATIONAL POSTURE: 7 items on views of using English in contexts unrelated to specific native speaker communities. ($\alpha = .72$)
AFFECTIVE FACTORS
PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT: 4 items directed at the specific influence of parents on learning history and current efforts to learn ($\alpha = .63$)
LANGUAGE USE ANXIETY: 6 items on emotional aspects of using English in the classroom or in public. ($\alpha = .86$)
LINGUISTIC SELF-EFFICACY : 6 items on ease of learning and willingness to communicate. ($\alpha = .74$)

4.2. Participants

The participants ($N=529$) were selected from two of the three regional universities one state-run and one private institution located in the city of Murcia on the basis of a convenience sampling method by which work colleagues and acquaintances from faculty departments were contacted and permission was solicited to administer the questionnaire during lecture hours. Based on the RQs posed, the participant profiles, were the following:

- a. **English Majors** ($N=176$): a student population with a strong focus on the English language were selected from the Degrees in English Studies and in Translation & Interpretation Studies.
- b. **Education** ($N=175$): given the recent educational stipulation for bilingual teachers in Spain and so as to represent a potential ought L2 self profile, students enrolled in teacher training degrees i.e. pre-primary and primary education were selected along with students from degrees that have a high rate of employment in secondary teaching, such as the Spanish Language and Literature Degree.
- c. **Other Studies** ($N=173$): this subgroup is intended to represent students in lines of study that did not present a clearly defined educational or legislative connection to English language competence, although English as a L2 would likely be considered a desired competence in many of the professional careers relating to these degrees (e.g. Tourism, Business Administration, and Healthcare studies such as Physiotherapy and Nursing).

The MFQs were administered in two phases of the academic year, the first phase in May, and the second phase after the summer break in October. The administration procedure was carried out personally by the author of the study to ensure all instructions were delivered in a consistent fashion across the sample and eliminate risk of different delivery styles influencing the completion of the questionnaire.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present and discuss our findings, starting with the means obtained in the scales across the three participant subgroups before going on to detail the correlations of the various attitudinal, goal-related and affective factors with the core elements of the L2 MSS.

5.1. Criterion measure: Intended learning effort

Across the whole sample the means obtained in the criterion measure of intended learning effort were generally on the positive side of the six-point scale, ranging from just above the somewhat agree point at 3.50, $SD = .84$ in the Education and Other Studies cohorts to the highest rating of 4.37, $SD = .57$ (absolutely agree) in the English Major group. The effect size of intended learning effort was large (Cohen, 1988), producing 17% variation across the groups. Commitment to future effort naturally appears much more robust in the English Major group, although some degree of acquiescence can be detected among the non-English

Major groups regarding learning or improving English in the future. There was no significant difference between the mean in the Education group ($M = 3.69, SD = .99$) and that of the Other Studies group ($M = 3.50, SD = .84$) in their indications of future intentions to learn. Evident from the parity in means in these two cohorts is the fact that a mandatory FL certification for Education degree students does not appear to distinguish them in terms of intentions to learn or improve their English.

Table 2. ANOVA contrast for attitudinal, goal-orientation and affective variables across academic subgroups

	ENGLISH MAJOR		EDUCATION		OTHER STUDIES		F	Effect size	¹ Seq
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
INTENDED LEARNING EFFORT	4.37	.575	3.69	.990	3.50	.839	53.978*	.17	1/2,3
SELF-RELATED FACTORS									
IDEAL L2 SELF	4.49	.576	3.28	1.24	3.47	1.11	69.039*	.21	1/3,2
OUGHT L2 SELF	.84	.707	1.79	1.10	1.70	.948	58.138*	.18	2,3/1
LEARNING EXPERIENCE FACTORS									
CURRENT ATTITUDE TO LEARNING	4.32	.521	3.36	.997	3.33	.906	76.692*	.23	1/2,3
ATTITUDE TO PAST LEARNING	2.67	1.35	1.99	1.36	2.43	1.31	24.440*	.08	1/3/2
ATTITUDINAL FACTORS									
CULTURAL INTEREST	4.14	.83	2.92	1.30	2.91	1.20	65.296*	.20	1/2,3
INTEREST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE	4.34	.569	3.60	1.03	3.50	.979	45.385*	.15	1/2,3
GOAL-ORIENTATION FACTORS									
INSTRUMENTALITY PROMOTION	4.09	.676	3.66	.806	3.78	.862	13.374*	.05	1/3,2
INSTRUMENTALITY PREVENTION	4.08	.859	3.54	.996	3.51	1.06	18.646*	.06	1/2,3
INTEGRATIVENESS	3.49	.638	2.80	.958	2.89	.987	31.492*	.11	1/3,2
INTERNATIONAL POSTURE	3.72	.412	3.25	.612	3.34	.586	34.390*	.14	1/3,2
AFFECTIVE FACTORS									
SELF-EFFICACY	4.08	.644	3.20	1.02	3.15	1.07	53.517*	.17	1/2,3
ANXIETY	3.04	1.37	2.56	1.26	2.73	1.28	5.998*	.02	1/3,2
PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT	3.17	1.34	2.97	1.42	3.17	1.26	1.216	.00	1,3,2

*the mean difference is significant at the .05 level

¹ Post hoc SNK comparison sequence. Numbers refer to the academic groups: 1= English Major, 2=Education, 3= Other Studies and are presented with the highest mean value coming first.

5.2. Mean values of the L2 MSS concepts

The ideal L2 self emerged as a highly relevant concept for all the participant groups confirming findings in previous studies: Germany (Busse 2013), Hungary (Csizér and Lukács 2010; Kormos and Csizér 2008), Indonesia (Lamb 2012), Iran and Japan (Taguchi et al. 2009), Pakistan (Islam et al. 2013), Saudi Arabia (Al-Shehri 2009) and Sweden (Henry 2009, 2010, 2011). In Table 2, we see that the means ranged from 3.28 (SD .2.24) in Education to 4.49 (SD .58) in the English Major group. As hypothesised, the English Major group did show a significantly higher means indicating that this cohort may have more defined and detailed future L2 using self-guides.

We had hypothesized that an ought L2 self might be more salient in the Education sample given the recent educational requisite to certify foreign language skills in the teaching community in Spain. As can be seen from the low figures shown in Table 2, the participants appear to strongly reject the notion of feeling pressured to learn or only learning in order to comply with qualification demands. This in itself is a welcome observation for stakeholders in English language learning in this region as it suggests that the interest in acquiring English as a L2 goes beyond a desire to merely comply with an imposed certification.

A dual scale was employed to assess and contrast the sample's attitudes to past language learning and to the learning of English at the time of the study. As hypothesised, attitudes to past learning were quite negative across the sample. However, it was the Education group who, unexpectedly, scored the lowest rating of the three cohorts ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 1.36$). The English-major group did hold their past experiences in somewhat higher esteem than the other two subgroups. Nonetheless, with a small effect size of 8%, it appears that there is a consensus across the sample that learning English at school in the decade of the 90s was not a wholly enjoyable experience. Attitudes to current learning, on the other hand, are starkly different, as ratings have improved dramatically in all three subgroups. The differences between past and current attitudes were all significant ($p > .000$). What we can glean from this is that, despite negative views of past learning, these do not seem to have persisted and attitudes to the learning situation have changed to some extent.

The data on the concept of international posture, quite novel in L2 motivational studies in Spain is interesting as the means are significantly higher for this variable across all the subgroups. This fact denotes that undergraduates are more interested in engaging with English speakers across the globe as opposed to a closed 'native' community considered 'owner' of the language. It would be interesting to consider this fact for classroom practice and traditionally the teaching of EFL culture has offered a narrower view of English language communication.

5.3 Correlations of motivational variables with the criterion measure

For the whole sample, the ideal L2 self was the variable most highly correlated with the criterion measure of intended learning effort, providing support for Dörnyei's theory in this cultural context and tying in with findings in previous L2MSS studies. Unexpectedly, the correlation was significantly stronger in the two non-language related cohorts than in the English Majors. It would seem that the ideal L2 self has a stronger parallel relationship with intentions to learn in students who are perhaps not as engaged in L2 learning as they

would like to be. In the learners who are already working towards and nearing their L2 goals, the relationship between the L2 self-guide and future plans is weaker. In this vein, Henry and Cliffordson (2015), who also found a weaker parallel relationship in higher achievers, attributed it to the lower degree of discrepancy between the current and ideal selves of these students. This reinforces the notion that effective L2 self-guides may work in the cases of a detailed L2 ideal self, yet one which is still somewhat distant from a current self.

Table 3. Correlations of MFQ variables with the criterion measure of intended learning effort

	WHOLE SAMPLE	ENGLISH MAJOR	EDUCATION	OTHER STUDIES
SELF RELATED FACTORS				
IDEAL SELF	.71**	.47**	.77**	.67**
OUGHT SELF	-.26**	-.12*	-.37**	-.29**
LEARNING EXPERIENCE FACTORS				
CURRENT ATTITUDE TO LEARNING	.62*	.50**	.69**	.67**
ATTITUDE TO PAST LEARNING	.36*	.32*	.27*	.49*
ATTITUDINAL FACTORS				
INTEREST IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE	.71*	.53*	.71*	.67*
CULTURAL INTEREST	.55*	.32*	.47*	.46*
GOAL-ORIENTATION FACTORS				
INSTRUMENTALITY PROMOTION	.57*	.43*	.53*	.66*
INSTRUMENTALITY PREVENTION	.54*	.40*	.50*	.55*
INTERNATIONAL POSTURE	.48*	.39*	.60*	.52*
INTEGRATIVENESS	.63*	.51*	.64*	.62*
AFFECTIVE FACTORS				
SELF-CONFIDENCE	.59*	.38*	.57*	.51*
ANXIETY	.14*	-.18	-.04	-.11
PARENTAL ENCOURAGEMENT	.21*	.18	.32*	.14

*P < 0.01

In the data in Table 3, notable differences can be seen in the Education group with higher correlations between their intentions to invest in language learning efforts in the future and the variables of the ideal L2 self, interest in the English language, parental encouragement and the inverse relationship of the ought L2 self. The relationship between the ought L2 self and intended effort only reached significance in the negative association

seen in the Education group indicating a potential reluctance to commit to future action in the face of pressure to learn from educational authorities. In Higgin's (1987) work on self-discrepancy, he indicates that when there is a lack of alignment between a person's own standpoint and that of others in a particular domain of achievement, negative emotions and negative outcomes may result.

The data situating interest in the English language as having a very close relationship with intended learning effort across all subgroups is worth highlighting attention, as is the case with the similarly close relationship with integrativeness. It seems that what is correlating strongly with intentions to learn is actually an enjoyment or appreciation of the language itself and a generally positive current attitude to learning. It may be interesting for future studies to take this close relationship into account as they seem to be tapping into the same concept, which could be interpreted as intrinsic enjoyment of language learning. We should remember that integrativeness in its traditional interpretation seemed implausible in contexts with little contact with an EFL community (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2006) and a desire to communicate with English speakers is part of the natural enjoyment of learning the language.

Self-efficacy was strongly correlated with future L2 learning plans across the three groups with Education associating this individual attribute more intensely with intentions to learn. The correlation of this variable for the English Studies group was relatively lower in comparison to the other motivational variables again indicating that a higher involvement with the language does not, as would be expected, augment feelings of efficacy in using the language. The scale of anxiety, nonetheless, had a very weak correlation with intentions to learn across the three subgroups. We see that this variable, as a non-situated conceptualisation of L2 use apprehension, does not appear to be a salient factor affecting motivated behaviour across the sample.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Our study contributes to research into the L2 Motivational Self system by offering a view of the workings of its three core pillars in a population of Spanish university students. In answer to the RQs that guided the study, the ideal L2 self has proven highly relevant in the motivational disposition of this sample of university students, we confirm that discrepancy between current and future L2 selves appears diminished in higher achievers. This suggests, in agreement with Henry & Cliffordson (2015), that effective L2 self-guides may be more efficient when L2 targets are somewhat distant. The ought L2 self in our sample has proved difficult to pin down to exact external sources and our data indicates that the underlying construct may be detected more easily through the concept of instrumentality prevention as also suggested by You and Dörnyei (2016). Given the negative relationship between our ought L2 self and commitments to engage in learning, it may be considered that an unwelcome imposition may cause a degree of psychological reactance threatening students' freedom of choice in their future plans and leading to certain reticence as regards L2 learning engagement in a proportion of the sample.

With regard to the influence of goal related variables as target by RQ2, we saw that instrumentality in its approach-avoidance dimension is a balanced and relevant set of influences in these Spanish students. A balance in approach-avoidance motives

is claimed to be more effective than promotional motives alone (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). We consider that both the pragmatic gains in learning as well as the detrimental consequences of non-achievement should receive attention in formal learning contexts in order to align classroom objectives and orientations more closely with students' personal and professional self-guides. Our findings also lead us to highlight the relevance of international posture for our sample – an orientation that may well prove beneficial if taken into consideration in other classroom settings where a sense of identity with a narrowly defined community of English speakers may be difficult to develop for some learners.

Regarding the influence of the *learning experience* pillar of the L2 MSS construct. We have also been able to offer a more precise view than that offered to date in L2 MSS theory of the distinct influence of past and present temporal dimensions in learning experiences. In understanding our sample's potential for demotivation in language learning we can also point to a possible lack of parental support in their past learning histories. These two factors combined may provide an explanation for the popular view of the Spanish as poor language learners. However, despite some negativity towards past learning among these students, there are indications that favourable attitudes to the language and more positive current beliefs about learning may help overcome the effects of negative of past learning experiences. As an affective variable, L2 self-efficacy appears to be quite relevant to this sample and we consider that this affective variable indeed merits deeper enquiry in future L2 motivation studies, especially with regard to its connection to past learning experiences.

The study described in this paper naturally has its limitations. We do not claim representativeness beyond the geographical context studied. Indeed, our overriding objective was to understand more about this precise population given our deeper knowledge of the socio-economic and educational background in this Region. National pictures of such a complex psychological concept as L2 learning motivation become untenable when we consider that individuals are necessarily embedded in a complex social, educational and professional network of past and present achievements and challenges (Ushioda, 2009). Nevertheless, we hope that this study can be considered from the point of view of a skeletal framework from which to design and construct other cross-sectional, longitudinal, quantitative or qualitative examinations of the complexity of L2 motivational in this or other regions of Spain.

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