



L2 motivation in foreign language learning

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Suggested Citation:

Sung, K.-Y. (2013). L2 motivation in foreign language learning. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 9(2), 19-30. Retrieved from <http://www.jlls.org/vol9no2/19-30.pdf>

Abstract

This study, which involved 130 US fourth to ninth graders enrolled in Chinese as a foreign language classrooms, intended to test Dörnyei's L2 Motivation Self System and the seven motivational constructs identified in his previous study, and investigate whether the constructs found in this study differ based on the following differences: (a) gender, (b) grade level, and (c) starting age of learning a foreign language. This study found four motivational constructs: instrumentality-dominant, attitudes toward the L2 speaker/community-dominant, learners' perception of their parents' proficiency in Chinese, and milieu. In addition, this study found a significant interactive effect between grade level and starting age of learning a foreign language. The younger learners in the foreign language late starter group perceived their parents as having higher proficiency in Chinese than how the older learners in the late starter group perceived their parents.

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Keywords: L2 motivation; L2 Motivation Self System; age differences; foreign language learning; Chinese

1. Introduction

Among the many individual learner factors, motivation is acknowledged as one of the determinant factors in L2 attainment. As Dörnyei and Csizér (1998) stated, "Without sufficient motivation, even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricular and good teaching enough to ensure student achievement" (p. 203). After conducting several empirical studies, Dörnyei (2005) proposed a L2 motivation paradigm, the L2 Motivational Self System. This new paradigm is adopted in the current study to explain the L2 motivation of fourth to ninth graders who were enrolled in Chinese as a foreign language courses in a charter school in the United States.

The L2 Motivational Self System, which integrates several prominent theoretical language learning constructs, such as Gardner's (1985) model and Higgins's (1987) self-discrepancy theory, consists of three main components: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Ideal L2 Self, which is seen as integrativeness/integrative motivation with the Ideal L2 Self, refers to the learner's wish to master the L2 as his or her ideal self-image and is the primary constituent of L2 motivation (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh 2006). The second component, Ought-to L2 Self, refers to the "attributes that one believes one ought to possess" (Dörnyei et al., 2006, p. 17). L2 Learning Experience is related to the learners' learning environment and experience.

In a large-scale motivational study conducted by Dörnyei et al. (2006) in Hungary from 1993 to 2004, Dörnyei designed a questionnaire in which seven main motivational components were conceptualized and later validated by the study results. The researchers then used the seven components

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and the relationships among them to explain the L2 Motivational Self System. The definitions of the seven components explained by Dörnyei et al. (2006) are listed below:

- (1) Integrativeness refers to the learner's desire to integrate into the target language culture.
- (2) Instrumentality refers to the learner's belief in the usefulness of gaining L2 proficiency.
- (3) Attitudes toward the L2 speakers/community refers to the learner's attitudes toward contact with L2 speakers and visiting the L2 country.
- (4) Milieu refers to the perception of the learner's significant others such as family and friends toward the target language.
- (5) Linguistic self-confidence refers to the learner's confidence level in L2 learning.
- (6) Cultural interest refers to the learner's appreciation of the L2 cultural products.
- (7) Ethnolinguistic vitality refers to the learner's perception of the L2 community such as status and demographic factors.

Dörnyei et al. (2006) stressed that their study did not investigate "situation-specific", but "stable and generalized" L2 motivation of ages 13 and 14 Hungarian learners toward five target languages (p. 89). The researchers also stated that the seven motivational components found in their study are "amongst the most common dimensions investigated in past L2 motivation research" (Dörnyei et al., 2006, p. 10). It seems that the researchers believed the seven motivational components could be generally applied to at least Hungarian, if not all language learners. In a later study, Kormos and Csizér (2008) empirically tested the seven motivational constructs in the Hungarian context with learners of three different age groups: secondary, university, and adult learners. The results showed that a few components such as ethnolinguistic vitality, instrumentality and linguistic self-confidence, had to be excluded from the analysis because too few items loaded onto these components. The researchers expressed their surprise that instrumentality did not load adequately as expected, which shows the newly developed motivational constructs needs further empirical testing and verification. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no further quantitative study in a Hungarian or other learning context has been done to verify the level of generality of the seven motivational constructs. That is the purpose of the current study.

2. L2 motivation and gender differences

Gender is one of the variables commonly researched in relation to language learning. Most studies which investigated the relationship between gender and L2 motivation suggested that there are differences between males and females in L2 motivation. For example, Williams, Burden, and Lanvers (2002) found that female British schoolchildren aged seven to nine had a higher level of L2 motivation than males. Sung and Padilla's (1998) study on elementary and secondary learners of Chinese, Japanese, and Korean also reported female learners having significantly higher motivation to learn the languages than male learners. Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study on Hungarian schoolchildren showed a consistent tendency for females to score significantly higher on various motivational variables than males. Ghazvini and Khajehpour's (2011) study showed that high school Iranian female learners were more positive toward learning English than male learners.

In terms of motivation types, Ghazvini and Khajehpour (2011) reported that the female learners in their study were more integratively motivated while the male learners were more instrumentally motivated. A similar result in terms of gender and motivation types was found in Japanese college learners of English in Mori and Gobel's (2006) study. The female learners were more integratively motivated in learning English than the male learners.

Despite the frequently found study results which indicate female superiority in L2 motivation and gender differences in motivation types, a few studies showed opposite results. In Polat's (2011) study on middle and high school Kurdish learners of Turkish, the researcher reported that the male participants scored significantly higher on two motivational orientations, identification and integrated orientations, which were defined by Polat (2011) as demonstrating "more autonomy in determining and manipulating their own actions" (p. 21). In the study of Kuwaiti learners' attitudes toward learning English, Al-Bustan and Al-Bustan (2009) reported a relationship between the negative past high school English learning with the negative attitude of female students towards learning English. Interestingly, such negative attitudes were not found within the male sample population in the study.

Gender differences in L2 motivation is a complex phenomenon. Researchers used the learner's immediate learning and social environment to explain these differences. For example, Kobayashi (2002) explained that Japanese female learners' high motivation in learning English was affected by Japanese society, which perceives learning English as a woman-dominant choice at schools and a tool to help women depart from a society which marginalizes them. In his large-scale nationwide study on the motivation of learners of English in Japan, Ryan (2009) confirmed the social factor identified by Kobayashi (2002). Ryan's (2009) study results illustrated that a reason female Japanese learners are positive in learning English is due to the belief that using English to express oneself illustrates more freedom than using Japanese, a language which has restrictive features for female speakers. A similar social factor on people's perception of languages which might cause gender difference in motivation was found in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) and Williams et al.'s (2002) studies. The researchers in both studies explained that a reason the male schoolchildren in their studies scored lower than the females on the motivation toward learning French was due to the general societal perception that French was seen as a feminine language.

If the cause of gender differences in L2 motivation is not mainly neurobiological, but socially constructed as implied in the literature, it would be worthwhile to investigate whether there is a gender difference in L2 motivation toward learning Chinese, a target language not commonly investigated in relation to gender and L2 motivation in the United States learning context. If the finding is significant, it will give directions to future studies on examining the possible social factors influencing the gender differences in L2 motivation toward Chinese language learning.

3. L2 motivation and age differences

Another factor which might influence learners' L2 motivation levels is age. Although only a few studies examined the relationship between age and L2 motivation, the results of most of the studies seem to indicate that motivation declined with age. In Williams et al.'s (2002) study, seventh graders scored significantly higher on the need for the language, integrative orientation, positive attitude toward their teachers, and perceived self-ability and success than ninth graders. Sung and Padilla (1998) found similar results in their study which showed that elementary students were more motivated than secondary students toward learning Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. Baker and MacIntyre (2000) also reported that the younger learners in their study were more motivated than the older learners. In Sung's (2010) study of college learners of Chinese, age was found to be a factor influencing the learners, with younger learners being more positive toward Chinese language learning due to friends' opinions about the classes and professors at school and the desire to study in a Chinese-speaking country.

On the other hand, a few studies on age and L2 motivation reported contradictory results. For example, Wong (2008) found that Chinese immigrant learners of English older than 20 in Hong Kong displayed higher motivation to learn English than those younger than 15. Kormos and Csizér (2008) compared three different age groups of Hungarian learners of English and concluded that the youngest

group, the secondary school students, had a lower motivation level than the university students and adult learners. The researchers of the aforementioned studies offered possible reasons for their findings on age differences in L2 motivation. For example, Williams et al. (2002) suspected that the reason they found younger learners to be more motivational may be that there was a general tendency for motivation in school-based learning to decrease when learners started secondary school. Kormos and Csizér (2008) interpreted the finding of the secondary learners having lower motivation than older learners as a result of the compulsory nature of learning English in school where the learners were required to choose a language available to learn and continue learning the language until the secondary school years end. Wong (2008) believed that the older Chinese immigrant learners had a higher motivation than younger ones as the older ones needed to pass a public university entrance examination which had English as a test subject. All of these reasons seem to be context-specific, which means research is needed to study learning populations distinctive from the ones mentioned in the literature to verify how generalizable the study results are.

Another aspect regarding age difference in language learning often discussed is the critical period hypothesis, which claims that there is a critical period to acquire a language, after which language learning becomes more difficult. A few studies found that children seem to learn languages better than adults (Polat, 2011). If age, in terms of when one starts learning a language, is a factor influencing L2 acquisition, then it is reasonable to assume that the same factor might influence learners' L2 motivation. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, there are no studies about the relationship between L2 motivation and the age learners start to learn the L2; hence, the current study included this factor to test the researcher's hypothesis.

4. Research questions

The studies in the literature section have shown that there is limited understanding and inconsistent results about the seven motivational constructs originally found in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study. The constructs need more empirical testing. The current study intended to fill this gap. Moreover, the current literature seems to suggest that gender and age differences in L2 motivation tend to be socially constructed; that is, the specific learning and social environments the learners are in have certain effects on their L2 motivation levels and types of motivation. If this is true, the results of the previous studies cannot be generalized. Investigating gender and age differences in L2 motivation in different learning and social contexts is necessary in order to gain a broader understanding of various learner groups' L2 motivation. The current study had a focus on the group of US learners of Chinese as a foreign language ranged between fourth and ninth grades, which is a learner population infrequently examined. This study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- (1) What motivational constructs toward learning Chinese do US learners between fourth and ninth grades have?
- (2) Do US fourth to ninth graders' L2 motivational constructs toward learning Chinese as a foreign language differ based on the following differences: (a) gender, (b) grade level, and (c) starting age of learning a foreign language?

5. Method

5.1. Participants

All 134 fourth to ninth graders in the Chinese classes in a charter school in the United States and their parents were informed about the purpose of the study and asked for the learners' willingness and parents' agreement to participate in the study. Four learners decided not to participate, hence, the present

study involved 130 learners. This study used a non-probability sample, which was the population to whom the researcher had easy access. There were 73 males and 57 females in the study.

5.2. Questionnaire

In order to test the motivational constructs found by Dörnyei et al. (2006), this study adopted the questionnaire, Language Disposition Questionnaire, from the researchers with minor wording revisions to fit the Chinese language learning context in the US. Items 1 to 21 concerned the learners' reasons for learning the target language, their attitudes towards the L2 and the L2 community, their contact with the L2 and its speakers, the amount of effort willingly invested to learn the target language, and their perception of their parents' language proficiency in Chinese. Items 22 to 29 were related to the learners' general views regarding their learning milieu and linguistic self-confidence. The 29 questionnaire items were placed on a five-point Likert scale. The participants had five choices for items 1-21: 5 being "very much", 4 being "quite a lot", 3 being "so-so", 2 being "not really", and 1 being "not at all". The five choices for items 22-29 are: 5 being "absolutely true", 4 being "mostly true", 3 being "partly true partly untrue", 2 being "not really true", and 1 being "not at all". The last section of the questionnaire contained seven items about the learners' background such as gender, and previous language learning experience.

5.3. Data analysis

The questionnaire data was analyzed through SPSS statistical software. For the first research question, "What motivational constructs toward learning Chinese do US learners between fourth and ninth grades have?", the use of factor analysis was necessary to see whether the participants in this study had similar motivational constructs as the ones found in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study. A total of two factor analysis tests were run as in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study. The first one involved questionnaire items 1-21 concerning the L2 and L2 communities. The second one included items 22-29 concerning the learners' views related to the learning milieu and their linguistic self-confidence. Similar to the analysis done in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study, items 8 and 9, which concern learners' perception of their parents' proficiency levels in Chinese were added to the factor analysis. The reason to add these two items, as Dörnyei et al. (2006) explained, was that the parents' proficiency may be related to the milieu factor. The only difference between the current and the previous studies was that Dörnyei et al. (2006) used the mean of items 8 and 9 while the present study simply added both items to the factor analysis. The reason of adding both items instead of the mean of the items is the assumption that each parent might have individual influence on the learner; hence, averaging the parents' proficiency would not be reasonable. The sample size to run factor analysis in this study was justifiable, which exceeded the recommended minimum of 100 subjects by Gorsuch (1983) in order to yield reliable results. In addition, Chronbach's alpha of each test was calculated by SPSS in order to determine the internal consistency of the items and factors in the questionnaire. Moreover, reliability tests were run for the questionnaire and each single factor.

In order to answer the second research question, "Do US fourth to ninth graders' L2 motivational constructs toward learning Chinese as a foreign language differ based on the following differences: (a) gender, (b) grade level, and (c) starting age of learning a foreign language?", MANOVA was run. In this study, the dependent variables were the motivational constructs found in the factor analysis tests. The independent variables were gender, age, and starting age of learning a foreign language. The test run had a minimum conventional level of significance, $p = .05$. In addition, the null hypothesis was assumed.

The participants were divided in groups in the following ways. The gender factor consisted of a male and a female group. The grade level factor consisted of a group of fourth to sixth graders and a group of

seventh to ninth graders. The factor, starting age of learning a foreign language, had a group of participants who started learning a foreign language at age eight or younger and a group of participants who started learning a foreign language at age nine or older. Table 1 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the divided groups for each factor.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the groups in the MANOVA test

Learner Factors	Categories	N	%
Gender	male	73	56%
	female	57	44%
Grade Level	fourth to sixth graders	73	56%
	seventh to ninth graders	57	44%
Starting Age of Learning a Foreign Language	age eight or younger	72	55%
	age nine or older	58	45%

6. Results

5.4. Factor analysis

The analysis of the internal consistency reliability of the 29 questionnaire items showed that the Cronbach's alpha was .75 with $F(129, 28) = 132.583$, $p < .000$ indicating that there was an acceptable internal consistency of the items being assessed. The results of the first factor analysis showed that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.77, which supported the factorability of these data. The significance level of Bartlett test of sphericity = .000 indicated that these data were thus approximately multivariate normal and acceptable for factor analysis. The output of the first factor analysis on items 1-21 revealed six components with eigenvalues exceeding one. After applying Cattell's (1966) scree test as did Dörnyei et al. (2006), the screeplot revealed that two components were on the steep portion of the graph. These two components were retained for further investigation. A Varimax rotation was performed in order to aid in the interpretation of the two components. The rotated result showed that 11 items moderately or strongly loaded on one of the two components. The subsequent two-component solution explained 33.5% of the variance, with Component 1 contributing 24.2% and Component 2 contributing 9.3%. Following the factor analysis, the analysis of internal consistency reliability was conducted. Table 2 illustrates that the Cronbach's alpha in Component 1 is .81 and in Component 2 is .66 indicating fair to reliable degree of reliability.

Table 2. Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation of two-factor solution for questionnaire items 1-21

	Factor loading	M(SD)
Component 1: Instrumentality-dominant		
Cronbach's alpha = .81		
6. How much do you think knowing Chinese language would help you when traveling abroad in the future?	.774	4.18(0.93)
7. How much do you think knowing Chinese language would help your future career?	.749	3.40(1.17)

2. How much do you think knowing Chinese language would help you to become a more knowledgeable person?	.736	3.97(0.97)
1. How much do you like Chinese language?	.554	3.63(1.09)
3. How important do you think Chinese language is in the world these days?	.547	3.92(0.92)
5. How much effort are you prepared to expend in learning Chinese language?	.431	3.82(0.97)
Component 2: Attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community-dominant		
Cronbach's alpha = .66		
14. How much do you like meeting Chinese people?	.736	4.12(0.91)
10. How much would you like to travel to China?	.687	3.16(1.06)
17. How much do you like the people who live in China?	.636	3.99(0.99)
11. How much would you like to travel to China?	.595	4.13(1.11)
21. How much do you like Chinese pop music?	.527	2.02(1.70)

As shown in Table 2, Component 1, which included six items, was loaded heavily on the instrumentality motive (items 6, 7, 2, 3); therefore, it is called the instrumentality-dominant factor. The four instrumentality items found in this study are identical with the instrumentality items found in the English and German target languages in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study. One (item 1) of the remaining two items in the component is related to integrativeness while the other (item 5) is related to learning effort.

Component 2 consisted of three items (items 14, 17, 11) related to attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community, one item (item 10) related to integrativeness, and one item (item 21) related to cultural interest, therefore, this component is called attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community-dominant factor.

The results of the second factor analysis showed that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.54, which indicated that the factor analysis test was appropriate. The significance level of Bartlett test of sphericity = .000 indicated that these data were thus approximately multivariate normal and acceptable for factor analysis. The output of the second factor analysis (items 8-9 and 22-29) revealed four components with eigenvalues exceeding one. An inspection of the screeplot revealed that two components were on the steep portion of the graph. Therefore, these two components were retained. The Varimax rotation result showed that nine items moderately or strongly loaded on one of the two components. The subsequent two-component solution explained 36% of the variance, with Component 1 contributing 18.6%, and Component 2 contributing 17.4%. Table 3 illustrates that the Cronbach's alpha in Component 1 is .74, which is considered reliable. However, the Cronbach's alpha in Component 2 is .46 indicating unreliability. This result suggests that revising the items in the second factor analysis should be considered to increase its reliability.

Table 3. Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation of two-factor solution for questionnaire items 8-9 and 22-29

	Factor loading	M(SD)
Component 1 Learners' perception of their parents' proficiency in Chinese Cronbach's alpha = .74		
8. How well does your mother speak Chinese?	.876	1.36(0.85)
9. How well does your father speak Chinese?	.868	1.40(0.88)
Component 2 Milieu Cronbach's alpha = .46		
25. I don't think that foreign languages are important school subjects.	.729	2.00(1.21)
28. Learning foreign languages makes me fear that I will feel less American because of it.	.679	1.50(1.02)
27. My parents do not consider foreign languages important school subjects.	.603	1.68(1.14)

As shown in Table 3, Component 1 considered two items (items 8-9) related to the participants' perception of their parents' proficiency in Chinese. In Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study, parents' proficiency was not loaded on any factors, but the present study had a contradictory finding.

Component 2, named milieu, consisted of three items (items 25, 28, 27) related to the views of the participants and their parents toward learning foreign languages. In Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study, the items (items 25, 27, 24, 28) found in the milieu factor were very similar to the current finding (items 25, 28, 27). However, the low Cronbach's alpha shown in the present study indicates that the items related to milieu and linguistic self-confidence run in the second factor analysis may not be suitable for the Chinese language learning context in the present study. More research will be needed to find better ways to ask this target population to find more accurate L2 motive constructs.

5.5. MANOVA

The results of the MANOVA test indicated that there was no main effect on each of the three independent variables: gender, grade level, and starting age of learning a foreign language; that is, the participants' gender, their grade level, or the age they started learning a foreign language, had little or no influence on the four L2 motivational constructs. However, the results demonstrated that there was a significant interactive effect between grade level and starting age of learning a foreign language, $F(4, 119) = 2.537, p < .05, \eta^2 = .079$; Power = .704. The value of the η^2 indicated that there was a medium association between the interactive effect of the two factors and L2 motivation. The observed power was fairly strong. The null hypothesis was rejected and one can conclude that the interaction of learners' grade level and starting age of learning a foreign language mediated the motivational constructs.

The between-subjects effects table shown in Table 4 indicated that there was an interactive effect between grade level and starting age of learning a foreign language on the motivational component, learners' perception of their parents' proficiency in Chinese. For the between-subjects test, the partial eta squared (η^2) was close to medium and the observed power was fairly strong.

Table 4. Multivariate analysis of variance: Between-subjects interactive effects

Between-subjects Interactive Effects	F	df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Observed Power
Grade Level x Starting Age of Learning a Foreign Language	6.627	1	.01	.052	.724
Motivational Component: Parents' Proficiency in Chinese					

The descriptive data shown in Table 5 indicated that the major contrast is within the group of learners who started learning a foreign language at age 9 or older. The learners in this group who were fourth to sixth graders perceived their parents to have higher proficiency in Chinese than the seventh to ninth graders' perception of their parents' Chinese proficiency.

Table 5. Between-subjects interactive effects on learners' perception of parents' proficiency in Chinese

Starting Age of Learning a Foreign Language	Grade Level	Mean	SD
age 8 or younger	4th-6th	1.3725	.52767
age 8 or younger	7th-9th	1.5000	1.24499
age 9 or older	4th-6th	1.7500	1.02062
age 9 or older	7th-9th	1.0972	.31212

6. Discussion

In response to the first research question, “What motivational constructs toward learning Chinese do US learners between fourth and ninth grades have?”, the present study found four constructs: Instrumentality-dominant, attitudes toward the L2 speakers/community-dominant, learners' perception of their parents' proficiency in Chinese, and milieu. The instrumentality-dominant construct consisted of two items categorized as other types of motives: integrativeness and learning effort. The second construct, attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community-dominant also consisted of an integrative item. It seems integrativeness was interwoven with other types of motives. This finding can be explained by applying Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivation Self System. The central theme of the system, the Ideal L2 Self, which has been described as integrativeness/integrative motivation, has two immediate antecedents: instrumentality and attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community. Dörnyei et al. (2006) explained that the Ideal L2 Self is an image of a competent or native speaker of the target language; hence, the more positive a learner is toward the L2 speakers/community, the more attractive the learner's Ideal L2 Self is. With respect to the relationship to instrumentality, the researchers believed that professional successfulness would enhance the image of the Ideal L2 Self; therefore, the higher a learner is on his or her instrumental motive, the more desirable the learner's Ideal L2 Self is. Dörnyei et al. (2006) stated, “We would argue that instrumentality and the attitudes towards the L2 speakers constitute two complementary aspects of the Ideal Language Self: Its general agreeableness and its achievement-related effectiveness/competence” (p. 93). This explained why integrativeness emerged in the instrumentality-dominant and attitudes towards the L2 speakers/community-dominant constructs. The third construct, learners' perception of their parents' proficiency in Chinese found in the present study, was not found in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study. This finding could be attributed to the different social contexts in the two studies in terms of how people judge one's language proficiency without using a

proficiency test and how much influence parents have on their children's study in a particular society. Dörnyei et al. (2006) explained that in certain cultures family expectations are strong motives. It could be that the family expectations in the current study were stronger than the ones in the Hungarian study. The fourth construct in the present study, milieu, consisted of similar items to the ones in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study. However, the low reliability in this construct requires more examination on these items when used in a Chinese language learning context.

In sum, Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivation Self System and the seven motivational constructs were only partially supported by the results of the present study. The three motives: Vitality of L2 community, self-confidence, and cultural interest, were not found in the factor analysis tests in this study. This means the items in the Language Disposition Questionnaire are not general enough for all language learning contexts and need to be revised to better fit the US context of Chinese language learning. In addition, Dörnyei et al. (2006) stated that the questionnaire did not include items addressing the Ought to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience mentioned in Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivation Self System, which means more questionnaire items will need to be developed to test the system proposed by Dörnyei (2005). In conclusion, Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivation Self System needs to be re-visited and tested in order to make it a more thorough system which consists of all motivational constructs one can find in a given language learning context.

In responding to the second research question, "Do US fourth to ninth graders' L2 motivational constructs toward learning Chinese as a foreign language differ based on the following differences: (a) gender, (b) grade level, and (c) starting age of learning a foreign language?", the current study found no motivational difference based on the three variables; however, there was a significant interactive effect of learners' grade level and starting age of learning a foreign language on the motivational construct, learners' perception of parents' proficiency in Chinese. Furthermore, the major difference found was that the younger learners (4th to 6th grades) in the foreign language late starter group (started at age 9 or later) perceived their parents to have higher proficiency in Chinese than how the older learners (7th to 9th grades) in the late starter group perceived their parents.

The researcher suspects that the difference might not be the actual Chinese proficiency level of the parents, but how different groups of learners perceive language proficiency of their parents differently. First, the mean of the parents' proficiency factor for older learners is 1.09, which was very close to 1, "not at all" on the Likert scale, while the younger group has the mean of 1.75, which was close to 2, "not really" on the Likert scale. These two answers do not appear to be very different. Both tend to indicate that the parents do not know Chinese, but the wordings of the answers might have shown that people who choose 2 might be more optimistic than people who choose 1. As discussed in the L2 Motivation and Age Differences section, Williams et al.'s (2002) study found that younger learners tended to be more positive about their perceived self-ability and success, which could have been extended to their family members, such as their parents, as this study shows. In addition, the younger learners (4th to 6th grades) who started learning a foreign language at or after age 9 means that they started this new experience of language learning fairly recently. If being positive and optimistic are characteristics of the younger learners, such characteristics could apply in a new language learning experience. If the assumption is true, it seems that optimism could be the reason the younger learners in the foreign language late starter group had a significantly different responses on their perceived parents' proficiency in Chinese than the older group.

7. Conclusions

The present study showed several directions future research on L2 motivation and its factors can take. First, this study confirmed the central theme, the L2 Ideal Self (formerly interpreted as

integrativeness) and its immediate antecedents, instrumentality and attitudes toward L2 speakers, identified in Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivation Self System. However, the other factors identified in Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) study were not found in this study, which might indicate that the questionnaire instrument adopted from Dörnyei et al. (2006) was not suitable to the participants in this study and that the L2 Motivation Self System did not include all possible factors that explain the learning context in the present study. Future research will be needed to confirm these assumptions. Second, contradictory to most studies, this study did not find any L2 motivation difference based on gender or age. As this study did not have a design which allowed the participants to give insights in the learning contexts for explaining the findings, future research will be needed to explore the reasons for the lack of difference based on gender, grade level, and starting age of learning a foreign language. Third, this study found a significant interactive effect of learners' grade level and starting age of learning a foreign language on learners' perception of parents' proficiency in Chinese. Based on the current literature, the researcher suspects that the younger learners' characteristic of optimism could be the reason the younger learners who started learning a foreign language late perceived their parents to have higher proficiency in Chinese than the older group. This assumption needs more empirical testing for proof.

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Yabancı dil öğrenmede ikinci dil motivasyonu

Öz

Amerika'da Çincenin yabancı dil olarak öğretildiği sınıflara devam eden ve seviyeleri 4-9. sınıf arasında değişen 130 öğrencinin katıldığı bu çalışma, Dörnyei'nin İkinci Dil Öğrenme Motivasyonu Benlik Sistemini ve daha önceki çalışmasında belirlediği güdüsel yedi yapıyı test etmeyi ve de çalışma neticesinde saptanan yapıların a) cinsiyet, b) sınıf ve c) yabancı dil öğrenmeye başlama yaşı açısından değişiklik gösterip göstermediğini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma, güdüsel dört yapı saptamıştır: araçsal ağırlıklı, ikinci dil konuşan kişilere ya da topluma karşı tutumlara dayanan, öğrencilerin ebeveynlerinin Çincedeki yeterlilikleri ile ilgili düşünceleri ve sosyal çevre. Bununla birlikte, sınıf düzeyi ile yabancı dil öğrenmeye başlama yaşı arasında manidar bir etkileşim olduğunu ortaya çıkarmıştır. Nitekim, yabancı dil öğrenmeye geç başlayan gruptaki yaşı küçük olan öğrenciler, yaşı büyük öğrencilere kıyasla, ebeveynlerinin Çincedeki yeterliliklerinin daha yüksek olduğu kanısındadırlar.

Anahtar sözcükler: İkinci Dil Öğrenme Motivasyonu; İkinci Dil Öğrenme Motivasyonu Benlik Sistemi; Yaş Farklılıkları; Yabancı Dil Öğrenme; Çince.

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