

Ought-to L2 Self and Its Influence on L2 Motivation and Demotivation: A Case of College English Majors

Eunbi Kwon*

Kwon, Eunbi. (2023). Ought-to L2 self and its influence on L2 motivation and demotivation: A case of college English majors. *English Teaching*, 78(4), 165-189.

This paper investigates L2 motivation and demotivation of college English majors in a Korean junior college. The participants' L2 (de)motivation was explored by the ought-to L2 self, an element of the L2 motivational self system. Data were collected from two rounds of interviews with 59 and 31 students in all four years and analyzed qualitatively. The sources of the ought-to L2 self varied; however, it was a matter of how the participants recognized others' expectations and pressure (i.e., manageable or beyond control). It was also relevant to how they comprehended and internalized these external influences for their L2 learning and (de)motivation. The findings indicate that the ought-to L2 self could be a contributing factor in sustaining L2 motivation and exerting effort. Finally, this paper calls for more needs to ensure and promote personalized and meaningful L2 learning for college English major students.

Keywords: L2 (de)motivation, L2 motivational self system, ought-to L2 self, college English major students, qualitative analysis

*This paper is based on the author's doctoral thesis.

*Author: Eunbi Kwon, Lecturer, Department of English, Hanyang Women's University; 200, Salgoji-gil, Seongdong-gu, Seoul 04763, Korea; Email: ebkwon2728@gmail.com

Received 30 September 2023; Reviewed 15 October 2023; Accepted 15 November 2023



© 2023 The Korea Association of Teachers of English (KATE)

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0, which permits anyone to copy, redistribute, remix, transmit and adapt the work, provided the original work and source are appropriately cited.

1. INTRODUCTION

Once you go to college, everything will be fine. It is a common saying that Korean students would hear from their parents and teachers throughout high school. Nonetheless, college students still need to continue studying to be qualified to put themselves out on the job market. One of the qualifications would be English skills.

English is a foreign language (hereafter L2) that has become one of the essential skills in Korea. It is a global language that is also a basic tool and prerequisite for being qualified and competitive in society regardless of one's college major (An & Lee, 2021; S. Kim, 2015). It is almost a chain of learning English even post-college no matter what individuals do for work (Hyun & Kim, 2013). That is, the learning periods extend from preparing for in-house exams, the College Scholastic Ability Test (henceforth CSAT), and college admission in secondary schools to further studies and employment during college. In this sense, it is significant to retain L2 learners' motivation to not identify themselves as test-takers (S. Kim, 2013) or stay amotivated (Oh & Kim, 2022).

Korean learners of English are under a lot of stress and pressure due to the nature of an English as a Foreign Language (hereafter EFL) context in which English is taught as an essential school subject (cf. Suzuki & Childs, 2016). As described in T.-Y. Kim (2006), 'competitive motivation' also captures the essence of learning English in Korea. It is a concept similar to instrumental orientation induced by external sources, but it is more like one's "aspirations to occupy a superior position in life and to be evaluated positively by others" (p. 175). Moreover, English has held its sociocultural place in Korea (T.-Y. Kim, 2015). For example, English is regarded as insurance for the future, whether or not one chooses to use it. The learners' surroundings, such as parents, peers, and society, project their aspirations and expectations onto them. English is also a cultural capital because knowing the language secures success in life. It might grow into *hakbul*, or private education in that the cultural capital is vital for having a superior culture and prosperity received by society.

L2 learning encompasses cognitive and affective domains. It is also a challenging process for the learners to learn and master an L2. Also, successful L2 learning would not be possible without sufficient L2 motivation, which can and does fluctuate over the course (Consoli, 2020; Dörnyei, 2019; Dörnyei & Ryan, 2015). According to Dörnyei and Ryan (2015, p. 72), "even individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long-term goals, and neither are appropriate curricula or good teaching enough on their own to ensure student achievement." It is assumed that the stress and pressure are universal and massively experienced among Korean learners of English. Then, Korea is an English learning context that is interwoven with different factors, which calls for a way to thoroughly understand its L2 learners and motivation.

This paper is inspired by the original data gathered for the author's doctoral thesis since almost all the participants revealed the external influence of their English learning (i.e., ought-to L2 self) without much hesitation (cf. An & Lee, 2021; Kormos & Csizér, 2008). Hence, the ought-to L2 self would be detected in a detailed manner if the sole research focus lies on the particular self and its pertinent aspects (cf. Jang, 2022; Lanvers, 2016). In this vein, this study also aims to understand college English majors' L2 (de)motivation by centering on how and to what extent the participants identified their ought-to L2 self and its influence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. L2 Motivational Self System

To understand L2 motivation in a more contemporary manner, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) centered on the 'self' and coined 'L2 motivational self system' (henceforth L2MSS). The L2MSS is a future-oriented model that has gained its validity for accepting L2 motivation as being dynamic and capable of imagery (Dörnyei, 2010). Taking account of the self in the past, present, and future, possible selves theory (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) are the basis of the L2MSS.

In possible selves theory, the overall self embodies "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" and establishes "a conceptual link between cognition and motivation" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954). Then, one might compare different selves to the point where "the direct result of previous social comparisons in which the individual's own thoughts, feelings, characteristics, and behaviors have been contrasted to those of salient others" (p. 954). There is also a potent link between possible selves and goals or behaviors since the focus is on the future (Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Lee & Oyserman, 2009; Pizzolato, 2006). In this way, individualization and personalization are also decisive for "the potential for growth and change, and all the values that are attached to these possible future states" (Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 957).

Self-concept and self-guides are the basic notions to grasp Higgins' (1987) self-discrepancy theory as the former represents the present and actual self (e.g., actual/own, actual/other), whereas the latter represents the future and desired self (e.g., ideal/own, ideal/other, ought/own, ought/other). Hence, motivation to accomplish goals stems from acknowledging and trying to reduce these gaps or discrepancies one might possess since "we are motivated to reach a condition where our self-concept matches our personally relevant self-guides" (p. 321). It is proposed that individuals differ in terms of which self-guides they are motivated to have as they may have only ideal or ought ones. Also, different emotions

accompany the discrepancies depending on the outcomes. For instance, dissatisfaction, disappointment, and sadness for the absence of positive outcomes; and fear, threat, and edginess for the possibilities of negative outcomes.

As a tripartite framework, fundamental constructs in the L2MSS are the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). The ideal L2 self is portrayed as the hope the L2 learner would like to become, and this hope could be speaking fluent English to communicate with foreigners or give a presentation at work. On the other hand, the ought-to L2 self is described as obligations and duties onto the L2 learners anticipated by their surroundings such as parents, teachers, or society. Examples would be studying English because other people think it is important or failing to learn English would let others down. The last component of the L2MSS is the L2 learning experience, which is the direct and holistic experience of the L2 learners such as curriculum, peers in class, or teacher's teaching styles. Dörnyei (2019) recently proposed understanding the L2 learning experience as engagement since L2 learning and motivation are dynamic.

2.2. Previous Studies on Ought-to L2 Self

Both the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self are future self-guides to regulate behaviors. However, studies have not been well balanced between the selves since the ideal L2 self has gained much more focus. The ideal L2 self is regarded as a broader concept to encompass integrativeness and instrumentality in a more current globalized context in which the integration to a certain L2 community seems not clear (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017; Lamb, 2004; Ryan, 2009; Ushioda, 2011). On the contrary, the ought-to L2 self is frequently regarded as less or not fully internalized than the ideal L2 self in terms of goals and L2 motivation (T.-Y. Kim, 2010, 2012; Kwon, 2022). Still, different external or other stimuli should be systematically probed regarding the contextual influences on L2 motivation (Lanvers, 2016; You & Dörnyei, 2016).

Also, in their original conception (Dörnyei, 2009), the ideal L2 self is more promotion-focused for representing hopes and desires, whereas the ought-to L2 self is more prevention-focused in that one should meet expectations and avoid negative outcomes. Nevertheless, the ought-to L2 self may serve a dual role as promotion- and prevention-focused since the L2 learners would put effort into accomplishing their goals and not just settle for facing failure or fear of it (Chen, 2012; Quinto & Castillo, 2016).

Still, studies attempted to find the role and validity of the ought-to L2 self along with other L2 motivational components, rather than it being the sole focus of research. The data of 489 Korean secondary school students' L2 motivation were examined by structural equation modeling in K. J. Kim (2016). The ideal L2 self was the most contributing to middle school students' L2 learning, while it was the ought-to L2 self to that of high school students. That

is, middle schoolers could visualize and be motivated to exhibit L2 learning behaviors by the ideal L2 self, whereas high schoolers were more prone to others' views in terms of responsibility shown to the learners' surroundings. Another structural equation modeling was run in Cho (2016) as it administered a questionnaire to 109 high schoolers and 72 undergraduates in Korea. The study demonstrated that both the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience could predict the participants' intended effort. Also, the ought-to L2 self might be transformed into the ideal L2 self by internalization and personalization if English education in Korean could "help language learners internalize such prevalent external values and expectations in a way that is meaningful and relevant to them" (p. 45). As a mixed-methods study, Magid (2009) investigated the L2MSS of 1,154 Chinese middle school and university students through a questionnaire and structural equation modeling and then ten additional cases of undergraduates through an interview process. One of the most significant findings indicated that Chinese society took a substantial part in deciding its people and their behavior regarding family, responsibility, and pressure even when learning English (cf. T.-Y. Kim, 2015).

Oftentimes, the ought-to L2 self was the weaker predictor of L2 motivation. In Kormos and Csizér (2008), the L2MSS was only partially robust when administering a questionnaire to 623 Hungarian learners of English among three different age groups (i.e., secondary, university, and adults). The statistical analyses revealed that the ideal L2 self and L2 learning attitudes were the features to understand the Hungarian learners' L2 motivation, whereas the ought-to L2 self and instrumentality needed to be reconsidered due to their weakness. Similarly, Rajab, Far, and Etemadzadeh (2012) examined 308 first- and final-year Iranian university students majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language by a questionnaire administration and correlation analysis. The ought-to L2 self and instrumentality (prevention) were the weak features since they demonstrated "the insignificant role played by obligation in learning English or the fear of negative results" (p. 423). Moreover, the ought-to L2 self did not affect intended effort in that utilitarian, practical, or pragmatic aspects seemed rather unrelated to learning English.

Yet, there was some research that validated the role and reliability of the ought-to L2 self. In Jang (2022), 290 Korean EFL college students who took an obligatory English course were recruited to participate in a questionnaire confirming their ought self-guides of different standpoints (i.e., own, others, and Dörnyei (2005, 2009)'s original concept) (cf. Teimouri, 2017). A set of regression analyses discovered that 'own' could predict the participants' self-regulatory focus, achievement goals, and classroom learning behavior. On the other hand, 'others' did not show its impact on the students' behavior or effort; but mostly had some relevance to prevention-focus, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals. Quinto and Castillo (2016) also explored the future self-guides of ten Timorese university learners of English in the Philippines by a free writing activity and focus-group discussion.

This qualitative research found out that the ought-to L2 self maintained its position as the more influential future self-guide since it “revolved around the instrumentality of learning English in achieving personal goals and communicating with others” (p. 78).

2.3. Previous Studies on L2 Motivation and Demotivation in Korea

Recent L2 motivation studies conducted in Korea have taken into account L2 demotivation as well. Kim and Oh (2022) attempted to figure out how L2 motivation had changed among 41 Korean university students through a retrospective motigraph and autobiographic essays. Although the participants of the study were majoring in English Education, their L2 motivational intensity varied as the data revealed their L2 motivation fluctuated over the past ten years of L2 learning in elementary and secondary schools. Negative L2 learning experiences and their associated emotions (e.g., pressure, skepticism, frustration) were the primary factors in demotivating the learners. Oh and Kim (2022) grouped six university students who shared English Education as their college major into two levels of L2 motivation (i.e., stronger and weaker). The study used a set of data collection methods—reflective essay, motigraph, and interview—to identify how their motivation had changed from when they first started learning English in Grade 3 until they took the CSAT in Grade 12. One of the findings indicated that those in the weak motivation group were able to be remotivated by external influences such as their L2 learning environment and the people around them. Park (2022) pointed out that the social atmosphere was massive in demotivating Korean university students’ learning English by administering a questionnaire to 143 participants of different majors. Social pressure turned out to be one of the most demotivating factors in that the study called for a shift in such an atmosphere to be developed into a more efficient L2 learning environment for both learners and their teachers (cf. An & Lee, 2021).

2.4. Research Questions

This paper generates two research questions to investigate the effects of the ought-to L2 self perceived by college English major students. The research questions are:

- 1) To what extent does the ought-to L2 self explain L2 motivation of the participants?
- 2) To what extent does the ought-to L2 self explain L2 demotivation of the participants?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Context

Ought-to L2 Self and Its Influence on L2 Motivation and Demotivation: A Case of College English Majors

The study was conducted at A University, a junior college for female students located in Seoul. The English Department of the research site offered two separate two-year (i.e., four-semester) programs for each degree—associate and bachelor’s degree. The students could take either a normal (i.e., associate degree) or optional (i.e., bachelor’s degree) program in a single institute to learn English for the workplace as well as English for communication. For example, one might take the normal course to graduate with an associate degree or apply for the optional course to pursue a bachelor’s degree once she has received an associate degree or has an equivalent one.

The English Department at A University had a diverse group of students regarding their background such as secondary education—whether they graduated from a high school (general or vocational) or took a qualification exam equivalent to a high school diploma. Moreover, each student’s proficiency in, level of, and interest in English were varied, although the research context was full of English majors (cf. Kim & Oh, 2022).

3.2. Participants

The participants of this paper were majoring in English and enrolled at A University in Phase 2 of data collection. At the end of the questionnaire administration (Phase 1), the students were asked to show their interest in volunteering for two interviews (Phase 2), which resulted in 59 participants for the first phase and 31 for the second.

As the participants gave their GPAs for the previous semester and the types of high schools they went to in the questionnaire, the researcher could use it as the basic information to prepare for the first round of interviews. Most of the participants were first- and second-year students; the majority earned a grade between 3.00 and 3.99 and graduated from a general high school. Table 1 summarizes the participants at the time of the first interviews.

TABLE 1
Details of the Participants in the First Round of Interviews ($N = 59$)

School Year	1	2	3	4
<i>n</i>	29	24	3	3
GPA	4.00	3.00	2.00	1.00
	-4.50	-3.99	-2.99	-1.99
<i>n</i>	11	36	9	3
High School Type	General	Vocational	Qualification exam equivalent to a high school diploma	
<i>n</i>	52	5	2	

Even though the interviewees’ background information varied, the reduced number in the

second round of interviews was largely because most of them graduated or applied for a leave of absence from school after the first round. Additionally, the relatively small number of third- and fourth-year students were due to two main reasons. First, the optional bachelor's program divided students into one class each for third- and fourth-year students, usually consisting of about 15 students. Second, only those who completed the two years of the normal course at the research site were recruited.

Each participant was provided with a pseudonym to ensure anonymity in the selected excerpts in the next chapter. Also, most first- and third-year participants in the first interviews agreed to participate in the second phase as they became second- and fourth-year students. For instance, a first-year student would be identified as 'Year 1' in her first interview and as 'Year 1 → Year 2' in the second.

3.3. Interviews

The participants' insight on and understanding of their L2 motivation as college English majors were of utmost significance for the study. During Phase 2 of data collection, two interviews were coordinated in order to cover all four school years and lighten the burden of the participants (e.g., job-seeking activities). As it was believed that the students might have had similar experiences in school, those who continued studying in the research context progressed from the first interviews in the fall semester (November 2018) to the second ones in the spring semester (May 2019). Thus, the second round of interviews was chiefly carried out to observe any changes over time and confirm their responses in the first round as the participants advanced to the higher school year. Table 2 details the timeline.

TABLE 2
Interview Timeline

Interview	First Interview	Second Interview
Time	November 2018	May 2019
Duration	November 5 th –December 6 th	May 7 th –June 5 th
The Number of Participants	59 Students	31 Students
The Details of Participants	Fall Semester Years 1 & 3 (Second Semester) Years 2 & 4 (Fourth and Final Semester)	Spring Semester Year 1 → Year 2 Year 2 → Year 3 Year 3 → Year 4

Simply put, a one-on-one semi-structured interview method was adopted. The researcher strove to seek more chances of “negotiation, discussion and expansion of the interviewee’s responses” (Mann, 2016, p. 91), not “ready-made response categories that would limit the depth and breadth of the respondent’s story” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136). Besides, to secure

some structure in the interviews, organized was the guide for each interview based on the questionnaire items about L2 motivation. The primary scales were intended effort, instrumentality (promotion), and the three elements of L2MSS—ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. Some interview questions are also presented in Table 3. Moreover, several variables relevant to the L2 learning experience scale were incorporated into and covered as prompts for a set of questions in the first interviews. There were nine L2 learning experience variables addressed to the participants to reveal the context and L2 (de)motivation behind how and where they had continued their L2 learning (cf. T.-Y. Kim, 2012). The variables addressed were:

1. Professors
2. Professors’ teaching styles
3. Class size (the number of students)
4. Class hour
5. Class content
6. Class materials; textbooks
7. School and classroom facilities
8. Peers in class
9. Others (please specify)

TABLE 3
Sample Interview Questions

Scales	First Interview	Second Interview
Intended Effort	Could you give me an example where you worked hard in college?	In terms of effort, how would you describe the degree of your effort compared to the last semester?
Instrumentality (Promotion)	Could you explain how useful English is for you in detail?	Do you still think English is essential and useful as you did in the first interview?
Ideal L2 Self	Where do you see yourself in five years as a junior college English major?	Do you still have the ideal L2 self you mentioned six months ago, or have the selves changed over a semester?
Ought-to L2 Self	Who or what mainly affects your learning English as a junior college English major?	Do you still have the ought-to L2 self you mentioned six months ago, or have the selves changed over a semester?
L2 Learning Experience	How much do you like studying English as a junior college English major?	How much are you currently satisfied with your English learning in school?

To put it together, the two interviews were an act of reflection and interaction between the

participants and researcher to find opportunities of expressing identities as the interviewees and interviewer (Mann, 2016).

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

Following the ethical permission sought from the researcher's institution, the pilot study and the questionnaire administration for the main study took place in early and mid-September 2018, respectively. Then, the researcher personally contacted those willing to join in the interviews after each midterm exam week. It was to minimize any possible anxiety or pressure that may have influenced the interviews and safeguard a more cordial environment for them to take place. In this respect, the researcher could spare about four weeks to review the responses from the questionnaire and polish the interview guides. All interviews in Phase 2 were generally about 25 to 30 minutes in Korean within different places in the research site. Each interview began with their consent to be recorded by the researcher once again to make sure they were still willing to proceed although it was asked in Phase 1. Also, the participants were told that they could ask any questions or withdraw if needed.

Once each interview was completed, the researcher started transcribing the interview data to record what she had encountered as much as possible. Each transcription was read and reread multiple times before being translated into English. The total words in the transcriptions amounted to a corpus of approximately 144,438 Korean words. To deal with a considerable amount of verbal data, ATLAS.ti 8 was chosen as the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Qualitative thematic analysis was adopted for this paper to capture key 'ought-to L2 self' themes within the data. In this data-led analysis, the steps of first and second cycle coding were primary in generating codes from initial patterns to meaningful and reappearing ones (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

4. FINDINGS

The following section reveals to what extent the ought-to L2 self affected college English major students' L2 motivation and demotivation. Several excerpts were selected to answer the research questions. Also, some interventions made by the researcher during the interviews, such as clarifying questions, will be kept in parentheses.

4.1. Learning English Is What Others Want, but I Can Manage It

The sources of others' expectations varied; it was whether the ought-to L2 self was manageable that facilitated the participants' L2 motivation.

4.1.1. Optimal level of care, attention, and expectations

Some participants valued others' expectations as signs of care and attention, which eventually yielded their L2 motivation. In this case, the level of care, attention, and expectations was sufficient or even optimal. The participants' surroundings, especially those who shared similar experiences of learning English as college students, made intervention for promoting their L2 motivation.

Excerpt 1 (Joo, Year 2, Interview 1)

My older sister also graduated from here, from this department and this school. I decided to come to this school thinking I might do well as much as my sister did well here. And I chose to study Trade English more, thinking it's something I can be good at. It's also because she's working in a trade company. (I see. So, do you want to measure up to her?) Yes. She did very well. And we usually take TOEIC or other exams together. Also, for the Trade English Certificate. She's preparing for Level 1, and I'm preparing for Level 2. I get a lot of influence from her because we usually study together. (Okay. Does she say anything to you? Like, what to study or when to study?) Yeah. She always asks, 'Are you gonna study with me?'

Excerpt 2 (Eun, Year 1, Interview 1)

My older sister lived in the States. She also studied English Language and Literature in a university, so she is really good at English. She just looked so cool, and it was why I fell in love with English in the first place. However, I think she doesn't like my English cause she's so good at it. She's like, 'What's wrong with your pronunciation?' or 'Why are you so bad?' Then, I get annoyed and talk back to her saying, 'You were in the States!' It happens all the time, but I don't really care about it now. I mean, I'm studying English much harder because I don't want to hear things like that from her anymore. But at the same time, if I ask some things I don't know, she teaches me. ... She's also doing some tutoring, so she always sends me stuff after she's done with sessions. She puts everything together for me to study almost every day, like, 'You should study, too.' I'm really thankful to have her to help me study English. I think I'm just thankful.

The expectations were manageable for Joo (Excerpt 1) and Eun (Excerpt 2) to keep putting effort into their L2 learning. They received care and attention, which influenced their goals and behaviors, from their surroundings such as their sisters who were also college English

majors. In this regard, Joo decided what to do after graduation and sat exams for her future career; and Eun studied English much more than before.

4.1.2. Implicit expectations in class

Several students were aware and conscious of each other's implicit expectations in the classroom. For example, competitiveness was one of the influences that was connoted with greater effort exertion.

Excerpt 3 (Lin, Year 2, Interview 1)

What I was concerned about at first was that it could've been standardized downward because the class content is quite easy. But my friends are very hardworking and get quite good grades. And I can work hard and be more worried about it in a good way thanks to them.

Excerpt 4 (Hyun, Year 3, Interview 1)

I've got more competitive than before because my peers in class now are really hardworking. And we push each other as we learn together. It's all about this good competitiveness. In turn, I also get to enjoy classes more.

Excerpt 5 (Gain, Year 2, Interview 1)

... When I came back [after a gap year], it feels like the whole class is doing things together. And I was surprised that they ask a lot of questions during class. Their attitudes are really good, so it makes things a little competitive. That they're hardworking. I feel like I need to work hard, too. Get this motivation. ... And I went back to school, the class atmosphere was so good. One of the professors even said that we are doing great in terms of the class atmosphere and attitudes. I guess it's the biggest difference as I get back to school. This 'I have to work really hard' atmosphere.

Lin in Excerpt 3 had some misinterpretations on the class content and its impact on her overall class in the beginning of her school. However, it was inferred that the atmosphere in which Lin and her classmates shared was what made her study harder and built a competitive learning atmosphere, despite her dual concerns. In a similar way, Hyun in Excerpt 4 and Gain in Excerpt 5 also mentioned the competitiveness implied in class because they felt, not heard. Hyun gained boosted competitiveness which eventually led her to enjoy class even more because the whole class, including herself, could collaborate or cooperate to boost their learning. As she returned to school after taking a gap year, Gain could also feel the class

dynamics and study motivation that she too needed to put more effort into her own learning.

4.1.3. Accepted responsibilities

Most interviewees' responses included some aspects of the students' responsibilities as English majors that were viewed and stereotyped by the general public. For instance, these responsibilities were personalized or actually experienced by the participants quite frequently. In the respect, the learners were determined to study English much harder and more autonomously.

Excerpt 6 (Jee, Year 1 → Year 2, Interview 2)

Way more, compared to last year. ... I try to do at least one thing every day. Studying vocabulary or working on a page in the textbook. Vocabulary, for example, I have this routine of studying every night when I get home. Trying to study for a few more words. ... Also, there's this stereotype of English majors that most people tell you, 'You must be good at English.' And I don't know if it's just me, but I still care about what they think of me. ... I now only think about myself to become what I would like to become; not what others would like me to. I think I should study harder to become the level of or have the proficiency of being able to teach others. ... It's not entirely about making a lot of money. I would like to work with English and spend more productive and useful time since I've spent time and put effort in learning English here as an English major.

Excerpt 7 (Yoo, Year 1, Interview 1)

A lot of people have this perception of English majors that they would speak and use English like a native. When I first started my part-time work, my boss asked me to speak English whenever we saw a foreign customer. I was once a bit taken aback. I got closer to this foreigner and talked to him quietly so only he could hear me. Because I wasn't confident. There's this pressure when you're an English major. It's prevalent in society that an English major has to have the same proficiency of a native. ... You should at least be able to hold a conversation with foreigners in English if you're an English major. ... It is why I try to watch or listen to more English even when it's not an exam period. There are many YouTube videos I want to watch, but I subscribe to channels to improve my pronunciation on a daily basis. I think I'm making a bit of effort every day because I'm studying English in college.

Excerpt 8 (Yoo, Year 1 → Year 2, Interview 2)

It motivates me as an English major to study harder and more passionately as I see people in general, I mean, non-majors, work so hard to learn English. It's a positive influence. ... These days, it got stronger so that I want to upgrade myself to live up to this social perception towards an English major. ... Six months ago, I thought I should get a job as soon as I graduated. But now, I think I changed my mind to study a little more or study abroad to gain some real experience in terms of English skills. ... I think English is getting closer to me in my daily life. When I see something new in English, I just look it up, like, unconsciously. I think I'm trying to learn more English without me realizing it.

Jee in Excerpt 6 settled down into a routine of studying English on her own with a stronger degree of effort. She still cared about others' views, but she seemed to be getting more determined as she could concentrate more on herself and her own English learning during the second interview. Thinking she could bridge the gap between what others wanted from her and what she wanted for herself, the identity of an English major student was the core of Jee's studying English. Comparably, Yoo in Excerpts 7 and 8 felt pressured and lacked confidence in the past with her boss judging her English proficiency based on her college major. Still, Yoo progressed to have stronger responsibilities towards her identity as an English major as she frequently experienced having a conversation with foreign customers in English at her part-time work. She preserved what she believed in and even reinforced her effort, identity, and responsibilities between the first interview and the second one.

4.2. Learning English Is What Others Want and It Is Beyond My Control

The ought-to L2 self may have caused less or no L2 motivation when the participants perceived it as beyond their control over their own L2 learning.

4.2.1. Mismatch between care/attention and expectations

Some participants still regarded others' expectations as care and attention; however, the level of external influence was considerable or even too much to have caused some disagreements. In this regard, such type of care, attention, and expectations hindered the learners from generating or promoting their L2 motivation.

Excerpt 9 (Hye, Year 4, Interview 1)

I lose whenever I fight with my dad. He listens to what I say, but it's more like, he suggests almost everything ... It was my father who actually made me think about studying English in the first place. So, it's not like he does things for me, but he suggests things that I can't even think of by myself. These aspects of studying English rather than methods. (These aspects?) My dad says things really straightforward. That I need a TOEIC score about this much and that I need to take extra TOEIC courses at a *hagwon*. And he blames me for not having done it. ... My dad wants me to study English Language and Literature, but I want to do English Education [in a graduate school]. So, there is this gap because I'm not really interested in linguistics or literature. I think we fight a lot because my dad still wants me to study what he wants.

Excerpt 10 (Bora, Year 2, Interview 1)

I failed all six early admissions, but I didn't want to spend another year for college prep. So, I came here cause English seemed compulsory and used everywhere. ... I try really hard not to think about the others because my parents are too excessive. ... I studied under the pressure and responsibility of having to go to a prestigious university and there was no other way. I think my parents planted this idea. ... My dad still wants me to study to take another CSAT. And my mom worries so bad that I came to a junior college. Their words are too much even now. It's like agony. I still don't know what to do about it.

The expectations surrounding Hye (Excerpt 9) and Bora (Excerpt 10) were not manageable and too high for the learners to decide what to do with their L2 learning. Learning English was determined by their significant others, such as their parent(s), even though both participants were adults and college students. The mismatch between external influences made Hye question her future as an English major; and Bora have negative feelings towards her overall English major identity. Also, the lack of L2 motivation for Bora's current English learning seemed more evident because the care, attention, and expectations she received were considered quite excessive.

4.2.2. Explicit expectations in class

Several students were under others' expectations that were explicitly conveyed in the classroom. Such expectations were based on others' experience that were too far to reach for

the participants. In this case, the notion of ‘too far to reach’ was pertinent to distant or irrelevant goals to the students.

Excerpt 11 (Jin, Year 1, Interview 1)

When they tell us about these examples of our seniors [who graduated before us], they’re all about good cases. Unreal and hard to achieve. ... I start to feel lethargic a lot these days because every day is like, you take classes and exams and all of these again and again. It’s meaningless. I find it quite meaningless that I’m going to school. So, my attendance doesn’t look good this month [November], so I’m worried.

Excerpt 12 (Hyo, Year 1, Interview 1)

I have no choice but to study English because everyone uses English these days. It’s a must to learn English in Korea. (No choice but to?) I think it’s quite compulsory. We’ve already been brainwashed. English has become the language that you need when communicating with people from other countries. So, I’ve got this idea of English as a must all the time. And we’re also learned this from our professors because we haven’t really started our careers yet. I mean, they already know the society. How everything works and how important English is.

Jin in Excerpt 11 was almost amotivated. As school was meaningless to her, Jin’s amotivation or low L2 motivation may have been debilitated by the distant goals that were frequently exposed to her without her knowing or agreement. Likewise, Hyo in Excerpt 12 thought she had been implanted with some ideas. Although she mentioned English in Korean society and its compulsory nature, Hyo interpreted English and the act of learning it quite powerlessly or passively due to her comparatively insufficient life and work experience to understand how much the language would be needed.

4.2.3. Absolute requirements

It seemed common knowledge among the participants that English is one of the most essential requirements in Korea. However, the role of English in society may have been too overtly exaggerated to the learners. In particular, the English language became the social pressure for the learners to continue studying rather aimlessly.

Excerpt 13 (Arim, Year 1, Interview 1)

It's not like I chose to study English because I really like it. It's become a very basic language. A lot of [work]places want you to be able to speak English as if it's your mother tongue, so I thought I cannot be bad at it. I think it's essential.

Excerpt 14 (Chae, Year 1, Interview 1)

I chose to major in English not because I wanted to, but because I can. ... I study English every day and I read English every day [in school]. When I get home to do assignments, they're all in English. Sometimes professors show us a movie for refreshment, and even that is in English. I think I'm getting a little exhausted. That's why I don't like learning English. (You're exhausted?) ((nod)) I'm in trouble. I have another year to go. I might not have studied English if Korean was a lingua franca. Nope. English is needed whenever [and wherever] you communicate with foreigners at work or on a trip. But I want to continue studying English just because it's a lingua franca. I would've studied Korean or Chinese if one of the languages was a lingua franca.

Excerpt 15 (Chae, Year 1 → Year 2, Interview 2)

I don't think I'm enjoying learning English now. I'm just doing it because I have to. ... There's no change. No matter where you go, English is the official language. It's used by everyone and it's a tool for having a conversation even if you don't know other languages. Even if you don't use English at work, you may have to talk to people in English. It's just what you need. If Chinese is the same as English, I would be studying Chinese.

Even though the participants were all English major college students, they decided to major in English not just because they wanted to. For instance, Arim in Excerpt 13 understood the role of English in various fields as a requirement which she 'cannot be bad at.' It was why she needed to learn and study English under the pressure of mastering the language to a certain level as well. As in Excerpts 14 and 15, Chae's responses also confirmed her view of and emotions and attitudes towards her learning English throughout two separate interviews. She maintained that studying English was what society wanted and needed because the specific language is a lingua franca.

5. DISCUSSION

The participants in this paper were very much aware of the expectations of their L2 learning from their surroundings. Others' expectations originated from various sources such as one's home, classroom, and society; yet, it was how they coped with their ought-to L2 self that impacted their L2 learning, identity, and motivation. In other words, the findings revealed that it was how the participants managed to accept or reject their ought-to L2 self and its influences. Although the sources of the self might be from their family, classroom, and society, they were not at extreme opposites in the same way that motivating factors can also be demotivating ones (cf. T.-Y. Kim, 2012).

When it comes to the actual people around the participants, their older sisters were not particularly role models or a source of pressure. Instead, they were advisers and more of companions with whom the participants would regularly study English, similar to the learners' peers in class. Besides, the sisters' existence and even their annoying words were a good influence (i.e., care and attention) on them since they were very much receptive to what they were told. They also shared the experience of majoring in English as college students. Likewise, the participants' classmates were an indirect or hinted stimulus for them to go along with and study English much harder. These peers were relevant to modifying one's duties in class such as creating a productively competitive and more pleasant learning environment. Although it was to avoid possible negative outcomes and gain a higher GPA (Excerpt 3), the learners tried to meet others' expectations in an amicable manner because they felt gratitude and determination along the way (cf. Chen, 2012; Rajab et al., 2012). Overall, such types of the ought-to L2 self provided the participants with manageable expectations; in particular, the impetus to study English more rigorously.

More than a few learners illustrated their responsibilities with regard to determination, intended effort, and real use of the language as was not the case in Rajab et al. (2012). In addition, the participants acknowledged or experienced their responsibilities for English majors as a marked identity establishment (cf. K. J. Kim, 2016). They were also autonomous, and their notion of instrumentality solidified through the actual and real use of the language. For example, as in Excerpt 7, the autonomous participants consistently studied even when it was not for their school exams. The participants were still aware of the social expectations of and pressure on them to some extent; their responsibilities were accepted, personalized, and even internalized to make them highly motivated or remotivated over time (Oh & Kim, 2022). Furthermore, they endeavored to personalize and individualize their L2 learning to match their responsibilities and identities to set goals or behaviors (Cho, 2016; Hoyle & Sherrill, 2006; Lee & Oyserman, 2009; Markus & Nurius, 1986; Pizzolato, 2006).

In this regard, constructive forms of the ought-to L2 self might represent the possibilities of crafting their mindset and behavior on the whole (Jang, 2022; Quinto & Castillo, 2016).

Meaning, the ought-to L2 self did not directly influence one's L2 learning; rather, it spurred the participants to make greater efforts because the self was manageable, affordable, and under control. The effort itself seemed plausible and reachable to the participants to the point where they could eventually see or predict the results (Cho, 2016). Moreover, the sisters and peers in class that were mentioned in this study had optimal conditions for becoming the ought-to L2 self to facilitate L2 motivation probably because all the individuals had similar experiences or were under similar circumstances. Also, the responsibilities were more towards the 'own' aspect of the ought-to L2 self because they stemmed from a fixed idea by others which later then shifted into their own and real experience.

It was clear that the participants were still under the influence of other people even though they were already college students and adults. However, the impact of others was far greater or even too much if the control was out of their hands (Kormos & Csizér, 2008). For instance, others' recommendation or suggestion for the participant's English learning gradually faded into pressure (Excerpt 9) or torment (Excerpt 10) if they perceived a mismatch between care/attention and expectations. When it comes to the idea of torment by Bora in Excerpt 10, her response also represented the society where the nature of English learning and belief of *hakbul* are colossal, which was shared in general and sunk into the learner herself (cf. You & Dörnyei, 2016). That is, some other forms of the participants' ought-to L2 self had different means of allowing them to interpret the specific self. In the end, the level of one's L2 motivation would depend on how much control the learner has over their own English learning. If the 'others' weighed more than the learners' own willingness, effort, or determination, it might lead to demotivation.

Moreover, the participants' significant others were still under the influence of society (cf. Magid, 2009), which lasted and was passed onto the following generations over time (T.-Y. Kim, 2015). The participants were explicitly delivered or exposed to what others had experienced; nonetheless, the learners would translate it as being unreal (Excerpt 11) or even brainwashed (Excerpt 12) because such forms of the ought-to L2 self were beyond the learners' competence. They only demotivated the participants to the point where they almost failed to personalize English, its use, and learning, let alone applying one's effort, although one's possible future states should revolve around one's goals and threats as well as hopes and fears (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

The findings also indicated that the L2 learners could feel distant from or powerless over their own L2 learning if the requirement aspect grew too much. In other words, they were demotivated or even amotivated to the point where they were desensitized to continue studying English just because English is viewed as compulsory or as required as a language can be in and out of Korea (Park, 2022). Likewise, even college English majors in this paper could not set themselves short- or long-term goals, not to mention exerting effort in it if others' expectations were regarded as beyond their control. Instead, emotion-wise, it was the

idea of learning English merely as a requirement that agitated the participants even more (Higgins, 1987; Kim & Oh, 2022). Then, the odds might be against the learners whose ‘requirement’ aspect exceeds their own needs and wants in learning English given that English in Korea is more than ‘self-evident’ and has been the single choice (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017).

It seems equally valuable to find a way to make good use of the ought-to L2 self especially for college English majors (cf. Lanvers, 2016). It might be possible to integrate the learners’ ought-to L2 self into the learning context to better internalize the external ‘self’ concept to personalize their own L2 learning. Along the way, the learners could set goals and matching plans since they know what others want and need from their current L2 learning. Then, they will have more chances of self-directed and personalized L2 learning. Ultimately, it will be the real process of bridging the gap between what the learners would like to become and what others expect them to become.

6. CONCLUSION

As the participants in this study were Korean adult learners of English and college English majors at the same time, their L2 learning would be more towards their needs, the near future, and the real world. It would mean they are qualified and ready to move on with what they have learned from their college education and use their L2 skills in their desired workplaces or fields. A cordial and supportive L2 learning environment should be the key implication to take from this study since it is significant to foster and provide a facilitative and personalized L2 learning environment.

The idea of one’s ought-to L2 self should not be merely an expectation to meet or an obstacle to avoid. The L2 learners are less likely to go through a meaningless process once they set appropriate personal goals and plans. Also, it would be better if there were a lot of authentic English practice sessions in the curriculum, such as internship programs, in which the students apply what they learn and come to understand how real-world English works in and out of the classroom as L2 learners. Preparing in-class activities to deal with possible impacts of the ought-to L2 self would be helpful for the learners as well. This acts to minimize the prevalent pressure of learning English in Korea through recognizing the ought-to L2 self. It is also a method of finding a way to maximize the positive outcomes of L2 learning (e.g., pleasure, responsibility, achievement).

Still, this paper has its limitations. It may be somewhat difficult to generalize the findings as all participants were female college students majoring in English in a junior college. Although the study included students in all four years of study, both female and male students would be needed to make future research more generalizable in similar L2 learning

contexts. Moreover, research could be conducted to identify to what extent L2 learning contexts in junior colleges are unique, for example, different sorts of pressure or *hakbul*. In addition, cross-grade research might be considered within the same context since this paper did not capture particular differences of the ought-to L2 self across grades. Although it was presumably due to the participants' similar environments and circumstances in and out of school, future studies could focus on revealing what is behind the participants' ought-to L2 self and its influence beyond the aggravated pressure of employment as college graduates. Also, the focus of this paper was largely on the ought-to L2 self through the lens of qualitative analysis. There is more room for development in research if the 'self' concept of the L2MSS was considered more extensively with other L2 motivational components in a quantitative or mixed-methods study.

Applicable level: Tertiary

REFERENCES

- An, S., & Lee, S. (2021). University students' English learning motivation and demotivation by individual differences. *Studies in English Education*, 26(1), 141–172.
- Chen, S. A. (2012). Motivation and possible selves: An interview study of Taiwanese EFL learners. *Language Education in Asia*, 3(1), 50–59.
- Cho, M. (2016). L2 motivational self system of Korean high school and university learners of English: A structural equation modeling approach. *Korean Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 32(1), 27–50.
- Consoli, S. (2020). Understanding motivation through ecological research: The case of exploratory practice. In R. J. Sampson & R. S. Pinner (Eds.), *Complexity perspectives on researching language learner and teacher psychology* (pp. 120–135). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 motivational self system. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9–42). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

- Dörnyei, Z. (2010). Researching motivation: From integrativeness to the ideal L2 self. In S. Hunston & D. Oakey (Eds.), *Introducing applied linguistics: Concepts and skills* (pp. 74–83). London: Routledge.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2019). Towards a better understanding of the L2 learning experience, the Cinderella of the L2 motivational self system. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 9(1), 19–30.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2017). The motivational foundation of learning languages other than global English: Theoretical issues and research directions. *The Modern Language Journal*, 101(3), 455–468.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ryan, S. (2015). *The psychology of the language learner revisited*. New York: Routledge.
- Higgins, E. T. (1987). Self-discrepancy: A theory relating self and affect. *Psychological Review*, 94(3), 319–340.
- Hoyle, R. H., & Sherrill, M. R. (2006). Future orientation in the self-system: Possible selves, self-regulation, and behavior. *Journal of Personality*, 74(6), 1673–1696.
- Hyun, J.-E., & Kim, T.-Y. (2013). A study of Korean office workers' motivation and demotivation in learning English. *Foreign Languages Education*, 20(2), 163–188.
- Jang, Y. (2022). Motivational strength of the revised ought-to L2 self in predicting self-regulatory focus, achievement goals, and actual classroom learning behavior. *Studies in Foreign Language Education*, 36(4), 319–339.
- Kim, K. J. (2016). Korean secondary school students' EFL learning motivation structure and its changes: A longitudinal study. *English Teaching*, 71(2), 141–162.
- Kim, S. (2013). Korean college students' English dream: Learner identities and English learning motivation. *English Language Teaching*, 25(3), 233–252.
- Kim, S. (2015). Demotivation and L2 motivational self of Korean college students. *English Teaching*, 70(1), 29–55.
- Kim, T.-Y. (2006). Motivation and attitudes toward foreign language learning as socio-politically mediated constructs: The case of Korean high school students. *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, 3(2), 165–192.
- Kim, T.-Y. (2010). Ideal L2 self and sensitization in L2 learning motivation: A case study of two Korean ESL students. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 10(2), 321–351.
- Kim, T.-Y. (2012). An analysis of Korean elementary and secondary school students' English learning motivation and their L2 selves: Qualitative interview approach. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 12(1), 67–99.
- Kim, T.-Y. (2015). The sociocultural meaning of English learning and its implication to English education: Four sociological approaches. *Studies in English Language & Literature*, 41(3), 105–134.

- Kim, T.-Y., & Oh, S. (2022). Longitudinal changes in English learning motivation of Korean university students: Focusing on retrospective motigraph and autobiographic essays. *Foreign Languages Education*, 29(4), 77–106.
- Kormos, J., & Csizér, K. (2008). Age-related differences in the motivation of learning English as a foreign language: Attitudes, selves, and motivated learning behavior. *Language Learning*, 58(2), 327–355.
- Kwon, E. (2022). The effect of an L2 motivational program for new junior college English major students: Focusing on how the learners changed. *English Teaching*, 77(4), 71–101.
- Lamb, M. (2004). Integrative motivation in a globalizing world. *System*, 32(1), 3–19.
- Lanvers, U. (2016). Lots of selves, some rebellious: Developing the self discrepancy model for language learners. *System*, 60, 79–92.
- Lee, S. J., & Oyserman, D. (2009). Possible selves theory. In E. Anderman, & L. Anderman (Eds.), *Psychology of classroom learning: An encyclopedia* (pp. 695–698). Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA.
- Magid, M. (2009). The L2 Motivational self system from a Chinese perspective: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 6(1), 69–90.
- Mann, S. (2016). *The research interview: Reflective practice and reflexivity in research processes*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954–969.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Oh, S., & Kim, T.-Y. (2022). EFL learners' motivational and demotivational factors: An analysis of retrospective autobiographical essays and interviews. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics*, 22, 846–870.
- Park, E.-S. (2022). Demotivating factors affecting EFL learners of Korean university students. *Journal of Learner-Centered Curriculum and Instruction*, 22(20), 455–468.
- Pizzolato, J. E. (2006). Achieving college student possible selves: Navigating the space between commitment and achievement of long-term identity goals. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 12(1), 57–69.
- Quinto, E. J. M., & Castillo, J. C. D. (2016). Reconceptualizing the language motivation of Timorese ELLs in the Philippines. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, 16(3), 71–82.
- Rajab, A., Far, H. R., & Etemadzadeh, A. (2012). The relationship between L2 motivational self-system and L2 learning among TESL students in Iran. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 66, 419–424.

- Ryan, S. (2009). Self and identity in L2 motivation in Japan: The ideal L2 self and Japanese learners of English. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp.120–143). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Suzuki, S., & Childs, M. R. (2016). Drawings reveal the beliefs of Japanese university students. In C. Gkonou, D. Tatzl & S. Mercer (Eds.), *New directions in language learning psychology* (pp. 159–183). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing.
- Teimouri, Y. (2017). L2 selves, emotions, and motivated behaviors. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 39, 691–709.
- Ushioda, E. (2011). Language learning motivation, self and identity: Current theoretical perspectives. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24(3), 199–210.
- You, C. J., & Dörnyei, Z. (2016). Language learning motivation in China: Results of a large-scale stratified survey. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(4), 495–519.

APPENDIX

Interview Guide (First Student Interviews, November 2018)

- Opening Question
 - How's life in college as it's your second (or final) semester?

- L2 Learning Experience
 - Why did you choose to major in English?
 - How much do you like studying English as a junior college English major?
 - How much are you currently satisfied with your English learning in school?
 - What aspects of studying English do you enjoy the most?
 - What aspects of studying English do you enjoy the least?
 - Could you (briefly) explain about your English learning before college?
 - Which elements do you think affect positively your current English learning the most?
 - Which elements do you think affect negatively your current English learning the most?

Professors	Class hour	School and classroom facilities
Professors' teaching styles	Class content	Peers in class
Class size (number of students)	Textbooks; class materials	Other(s) (please specify)
	affect positively	affect negatively
1		
2		
3		

■ Intended Effort

- Do you think you have been working hard as a junior college student of English major?

Please circle how you have been working hard as a junior college student of English major. (6 being the highest)					
1	2	3	4	5	6

- Could you give me an example where you worked hard in college?
- Could you give me an example where you worked less hard in college?
- Why did you work hard and less hard?

■ Ideal L2 Self

- What do you plan to do after you graduate from college?
- Where do you see yourself in five years as a junior college English major?
- How much do you believe you could become what you want to?
- How vividly can you imagine yourself as someone you'd like to become?

■ Ought-to L2 Self

- Who or what mainly affects your learning English as a junior college English major?
- (Do you know) why?
- To what extent is it different from what you think of yourself?
- How do you feel about it?

■ Instrumentality (Promotion)

- Could you explain how essential English is for you in detail?
- Could you explain how useful English is for you in detail?

■ Closing Questions

- Is there any question you would like to ask me?
- Next time we meet in May next year, we will be talking about your current English learning experience where you feel excited and at the same time exert unusual efforts.
- Next time we talk in May next year, we will be talking about what you do at the time after you graduate.