



Exploring Vietnamese Students' Degree of Motivation in Learning English through Enhancing their Ideal L2 Self

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Abstract

This study reports the extent to which the first-year students' degree of motivation in English language learning was enhanced at a university of Vietnam when the 'Visionary Motivational Process' (VMP) integrated in the existing course aims at enhancing students' Ideal L2 self. Adapting the frameworks of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2 MSS) (Dörnyei, 2009; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013) in elaborating students' vision about their Ideal L2 self, the VMP which includes six steps is designed and aims to develop students' own visions about their future L2 self-images through which their motivation in learning can be enhanced and improved during 15-week course. The findings from the Likert-scale pre/post-questionnaire and learner diary instruments demonstrate that students' degree of motivation increases over the six processes of enhancing their Ideal L2 Self. It is additionally intriguing that in different motivational factors generated from students' learner diary, the language learning goals are the most powerful predictor triggering students' English learning motivation. The study contributes to the success of the MSS in the field of teaching and researching, simultaneously, it supports teachers to create more visionary motivational activities in the language classroom.

Keywords: Ideal L2 Self, Motivational Self System, L2 motivation, vision of self, visionary motivational process.



1. Introduction

Rationale of the study

Motivation in English Language Teaching (ELT) is universally admitted as a key element to students' success in foreign language learning in general and English language learning in particular (Ushioda, 2013). It is reviewed (Dembo, 2004) that despite reaching learning achievements at times, students who are not able to have regular class attendance or left behind in the assignments or tasks are potential accounts for not keeping their learning interest and persistence in learning throughout the term, which eventually results in low academic performance. That is to say, motivation in learning is truly of importance for language learners for their maintaining progress in learning.

There are different views on the definition of learning motivation, each of which might become a controlling philosophy for any particular research nature. According to Dembo (2004: 10), motivation is closely linked to self, defined as 'the internal processes that give behaviour its energy and direction', and those processes are much related to learners' goals, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) claim that motivation is a gradual but complex mental process in which different sub-phases (such as 'initial planning and goal setting, intention information, task generation, action implementation, action control and outcome evaluation', p. 6) may be connected with different motives. With any definitions within this regard, the consensus of opinion on the meaning of motivation is mainly concerned with human behaviour in terms of direction and magnitude which accordingly, correlate the choice, the persistence and the effort given for a particular action.

In Vietnam, English language learning and teaching have been developing rapidly not only inside but also outside the formal educational system with the presence of different foreign and joint language schools, agencies, associations and non-formal educational sectors (Van Van, 2010). More importantly, the globalization, in which global English is increasingly used as a means of communication across nations and cultures, has raised the position of English in Vietnam to be most preferable compared to other five foreign languages (Russian, French, Chinese, Japanese and German) which are included in the foreign language policy (Hoa & Tuan, 2007) and taught as a selective subject for primary pupils and compulsory subject for lower and upper secondary students (Van Van, 2010). The teaching and learning foreign languages have been promoted because according to The Government, Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg (2008) those activities give more benefits to the industrialization and modernization of the country.

In addition to the promotion of English in the language education system, teaching and learning English should be accompanied with the need to develop learners' motivation especially in the globalized world (Ministry of Education and Training, 2016). This essential solution lies in a grand project of teaching and learning foreign languages in the period of 2008-2020 issued by the Prime Minister in Vietnam. For years, there has not been a great deal of research related L2 motivation conducted in Vietnamese contexts (see Phan, 2011; Tran, 2007; Trang & Baldauf,



2007). This gap then leads to the need to undertake a study on L2 motivation so that upgrading students' engagement and willingness in their learning is of great focus.

The L2 Motivational Self System

In profusion of motivational theories from the past to the present, the L2 MSS (Dörnyei, 2009) is considered as an effective approach applied in various teaching contexts worldwide. There is arising a vast body of research draws attention to self and vision aspects from which learners get motivated in their learning (Aubrey, 2014; Islam et al., 2013; Kim, 2009; Kim, 2012; Kong et al., 2018; Papi, 2010; Sampson, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009). This theory, according to Sampson (2012), has reconceptualized the concept of integrative motivation (Gardner, 2004) from the sense that learners are inclined to get closer to the target language community (integrativeness) to the desire of knowing of learners' future ideal self (Ideal L2 Self) in their L2 motivation, which then becomes a motivational factor for learners to sustain their interest in language learning in the long run. Under the globalization in which the borderless and globalized cultural communication is an increasing phenomenon, the L2 MSS is generally assumed to be a theoretical refinement because it leads the learners to imagine their ideal own self in the future, using L2, from which they will attempt to fix their current self to become a better future self.

More specifically, according to Dörnyei (2009: 29), the L2 MSS is a tripartite system which is comprised of these following elements:

- 1) The Ideal L2 Self, which is the L2-specific facet of one's 'ideal self': if the person we would like to become speaks an L2, the '*ideal L2 self*' is a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves. Traditional integrative and internalised instrumental motives would typically belong to this component.
- 2) *Ought-to L2 Self*, which concerns the attributes that one believes one *ought to* possess to meet expectations and to *avoid* possible negative outcomes. This dimension corresponds to Higgin's ought self and thus to the more extrinsic (i.e. less internalised) types of instrumental motives.
- 3) *L2 Learning Experience*, which concerns situated, 'executive' motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience (e.g. the impact of the teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the experience of success). This component is conceptualised at a different level from the two self-guides and future research will hopefully elaborate on the self aspects of this bottom-up process.

The theory of the L2 MSS therefore lends support to the idea that how well learners shape their future self-images creates their energizing motivation in terms of their learning behaviour at the current learning status (Dörnyei, Henry and Muir, 2016). In conjunction with this, the bulk of the empirical studies on the L2 MSS has made assertions that out of the three elements of the L2 MSS, the Ideal L2 self is believed to be the powerful predictor in motivating learners in their language learning. That is why enhancing students' Ideal L2 self to develop their L2 motivation is of great concern in this study. Moreover, it appears that much of the research has been done with more use of quantitative discipline and less use of qualitative method. It is then essential to research



its impact in a different paradigm in terms of teaching contexts and method to prove its real nature of the Ideal L2 self.

The Enhancement of the Ideal L2 Self

The role of the Ideal L2 self has been researched and reviewed in a great deal of studies in various educational L2 language contexts (Gao, 2013; Kim, 2009; Kim, 2012; Lam, 2012; Mackay, 2014; Magid, 2014; Magid and Chan, 2012; Sampson, 2012; You and Chan, 2015). In such these mentioned studies, the growing body of evidence asserts the role of Ideal L2 self as an influential and stimulating factor concerning learners' language learning aspects in general and language learning achievement in particular.

The promotion of the Ideal L2 self was originally proposed by Dörnyei (2009: 33-38) in the motivational paths to generate language learning visions of the learners and imagery enhancement activities in the classroom. Accordingly, this six-phase programme with specific strategic implications includes the steps of enhancing learners' visions of self as follows: (1) Creating the vision, (2) Strengthening the vision, (3) Substantiating the vision, (4) Keeping the vision alive, (5) Operationalizing the vision and (6) Counterbalancing the vision. Subsequently, Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013) continue to develop the package of visionary motivational activities for the employment in the classroom. These activities were also generated from that of Dörnyei (2009) but tend to be more practical and classroom-oriented and focus more on the progress of activities so that they satisfy the visionary motivational development in a linear fashion from *building up the vision* (consisting of creating the vision, substantiating the vision, counterbalancing the vision, strengthening the vision) to *operationalizing the vision* and *keeping the vision alive* concurrently.

Through Dörnyei (2009) and Hadfield and Dörnyei's (2013) works, which have been validated in a wide range of studies, once applied in the classroom the perspectives of learners towards their self-change (from their actual self to their future ideal self) are hoped to be more detailed and vivid, which then helps learners develop their motivation in their learning process.

Objectives of the study

The researcher wishes to explore the students' degree of motivation in learning English when the VMP integrated in the existing course at a university of Vietnam. Another objective is to investigate which motivational predictors are the most influential factors having impact on their students' L2 motivation during their learning process. Therefore, the research questions of this study are as follow:

1. How are students motivated after the course when the VMP is integrated to enhance their Ideal L2 Self?
2. What are motivational factors influencing students' motivation in learning English?



2. Method

Participants

There were 31 first-year students who major in English Language at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at a university in Vietnam. All of them had to pass the high school national exit examination organized by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training, in which those with a specified grade regulated by the university could be accepted as full-time students. Their level of English is thus assumed to be similar.

Research instruments

The VMP teaching material including 14 motivational activities was used as a pedagogical instrument integrated in the existing course and aims at enhancing students' Ideal L2 self, thus leads to the enhancement in their motivation in English language learning. The activities are both adapted from Hadfield and Dörnyei's (2013) and tailored by the researcher so that they can be suitable to the objectives of the course.

The researcher used pre/post questionnaire to examine their degree of motivation of students before and after learning the course. The questionnaire is the five-point Likert scale questionnaire including 17 items focusing on six processes of the visionary motivational processes:

- Process 1: 'Creating the vision' aims at helping students create their Ideal L2 self (their visions of who they would like to become) (Items 1 → 3)
- Process 2: 'Substantiating the vision' aims at helping students make their Ideal L2 self in relation to realistic and plausible expectations. (Items 4 → 6)
- Process 3: 'Counterbalancing the vision' aims at helping students consider failure or depict negative consequences to offset their desired future self. (Items 7 → 8)
- Process 4: 'Enhancing the vision' aims at helping students enhance their Ideal L2 Self in a more clarifying and urgent action. (Items 9 → 10)
- Process 5: 'Operationalizing the vision' aims at helping students develop a set of concrete action plans to make their Ideal L2 Self productive. (Items 11 → 15)
- Process 6: 'Keeping the vision alive' aims at helping students activate their Ideal L2 Self regularly by providing an engaging framework. (Items 16 → 17)

Besides, to triangulate the results from the questionnaire, the learner diary was also used as another research instrument so that the researcher could gain further valuable information from students' responses from which clarification and reasons for their L2 motivation from their responses could be more specified.

Data collection

The pre/post-questionnaire was delivered twice, at the beginning (week 1) and at the end (week 15) of the course. Students were asked to fill in the questionnaire within time allowance and the researcher collected them after they finished. The learner diary was administered after each



process and students were requested to write their responses to the questions as homework assignments and submitted to the teacher/researcher in the following class.

Data analysis

For pre/post-questionnaire, the results from the mean scores between the pre-questionnaire and the post-questions were calculated and compared to the degree of motivation of students throughout the six processes.

For the learner diary, the data from students' answers were coded into categories and themes in which the similarities were explored and gathered to explain which influential factors affects students' L2 motivation during 15-week learning process with the VMP.

3. Results

Research question 1: How are students motivated after the course when the VMP integrated to enhance their Ideal L2 Self?

Firstly, the results of the pre/post-questionnaire indicate that the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is at accepted score of reliability (.71 and .88 for pre- and post-questionnaire respectively), showing that the questionnaire is reliable and at high internal consistency. As regards students' degree of motivation before and after the course, a paired-sample t test was conducted to compare the mean scores of pre- and post-questionnaires. Accordingly, there was a significant difference in the scores for the students' degree of motivation before the course ($M=3.2$, $SD=.32$) and after the course ($M=4.2$, $SD=.37$); $t(30)=-14.82$, $p=0.000$. These results suggest that students are motivated in learning, shown by the fact that when the VMP was integrated in the course, their degree of L2 motivation does increase. The following table demonstrate the mean scores of students' degree of motivation before and after learning the VMP.

Table 1: *The mean scores of the students' degree of motivation over six processes*

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Process1_Pre	31	2.67	5.00	3.3656	.64034
Process2_Pre	31	2.33	4.33	3.4839	.48564
Process3_Pre	31	3.00	4.00	3.5968	.43626
Process4_Pre	31	1.50	5.00	2.7903	.81419
Process5_Pre	31	2.40	4.20	3.1419	.38710



Process6_Pre	31	2.50	4.50	3.4677	.53128
Process1_Post	31	2.67	5.00	4.1828	.57631
Process2_Post	31	3.33	5.00	4.1505	.45411
Process3_Post	31	3.50	5.00	4.4355	.46083
Process4_Post	31	2.50	5.00	3.9032	.70023
Process5_Post	31	3.40	4.80	4.2903	.39946
Process6_Post	31	3.50	5.00	4.2419	.56082
Valid N (listwise)	31				

The results from the table also indicate some interesting illustrations of students' preferences for each process in the VMP. As can be seen from the table, process 3 'Counterbalancing the vision' can help increase students' L2 motivation the most, found both before and after the integration of the VMP ($M=3.59$, $SD=.43$ and $M=4.43$, $SD=.46$, respectively). The nature of this process is to help students have an opportunity to consider their own weaknesses/obstacles they might encounter in language learning so as to obtain an 'avoid motivation' to offset an 'approach motivation' when they visualize their desired image (Hadfield and Dörnyei, 2013).

On the contrary, students' degree of motivation was found at the lowest point out of the six processes ($M=2.79$, $SD=.81$ and $M=3.9$, $SD=.70$ for pre/post-questionnaire respectively) when their perceived process 4 'Enhancing the vision'. The objective of this process is helping students enhance their Ideal L2 self in a more clarifying way. However, not all students could describe their visions vividly. This can be explained by the fact that in the VMP, there are two activities (out of fourteen activities) regarding enhancing the students' vision of self. One of the activities in the process 4 requires students to imagine themselves in a future scenario, take picture of themselves and describe themselves in the photo. This finding is somehow similar to Sampson's (2012) investigation on students' vision of their future English self when he found out that although students could describe their basic future plan, they were unable to make their plan more detailed and their clear defined visions were not included whereas to Dörnyei (2009: 34), the need for visualization of the ideal self in a degree of elaborateness and vividness is important and effective for students' enhancement of motivation.

Although there are some variations in the students' degree of motivation in each process, the findings from the study has generally displayed the substantial enhancement of students' motivation over 15-week learning, especially when the VMP was integrated in the existing course and when the motivational approach of enhancing students' Ideal L2 self was applied at a university in Vietnam.



Research question 2: What are motivational factors influencing students' motivation in learning English?

The findings from the learner diary show useful information regarding students' perspectives on the factors that can have an impact on the learning motivation. In general, there are central variables arising from the learners' pieces of diary which show the aspects of interest that can be motivational factors in their learning process. These variables are described in the following table.

Table 2. *Influential motivating factors from learner diary*

Influential motivating factors	Percentage of being mentioned in the learner diary
• Language learning goals	38%
• Sense of self	4.2%
• Imagination	7.5%
• Motivated behaviour	23%
• L2 learning experience	28%

The reciprocal relationship between motivation and these motivational factors are discussed further below, especially in the order of impact from the highest level to the lowest one.

Language learning goals and Motivation

Students' explanations regarding the language learning goals and their L2 motivation varied from different sub-categories such as '*international posture*', '*knowledge orientation*', '*job orientation*', '*desired progress*', '*national interest*', and '*integrative*'. For students, these categories are of their concern in language learning process, and learning goals play an important role for the increase in their degree of motivation over six processes.

Desired progress Among those mentioned categories, the highest number of students revealed that they get motivated in learning as long as they can make improvement in their learning, which means their '*desired progress*' is really of significance and this helps them build up their motivation. Some explanations were as follows:

- The VMP helps me think about my learning method. This awareness helps me improve and develop my ability to learn English. [*process 1*]
- It helps me improve my reading and writing skills a lot. [*process 1*]
- I am more confident in communication. I can improve my reading and writing skills after each VMP. [*process 2*]
- I enhance many skills; I can write and speak. [*process 1*]



From students' great interest and expectation for the *desired progress*, it would be implied that learning achievement or performance is the most concern to most students. The *desired progress*, to them, is not only related to cognitive factor – which is the improvement in language skills such as reading and writing skills, but it is also connected to the affective factor – being confident in the language learning process. For these students, learning and progress in learning should be of top priority, so it is understandable that the correlation between academic desired progress and motivation in learning is closely linked with each other.

Knowledge orientation While the desired progress belongs to first priority for students, many other students express their interest in *knowledge orientation*. To them, the fact of gaining knowledge at school is the motivational factor for them to sustain their interest in the lesson. That is why in their learning diary, they perceived knowledge orientation as the clarification for their degree of learning motivation:

- I choose 'very motivated' because it helps me have a lot of motivation for learning and understanding of the English language. [*process 1*]
- Because English is a popular language. English is necessary nowadays. [*process 1*]
- It helps me know the importance of English, which the more I want to it. [*process 4*]

In fact, knowledge orientation concerns the students' recognition of English for gaining knowledge regardless of general or academic knowledge (Islam et al., 2013). That is to say, through these students' perceptions, English is important for them and that is the only purpose for their learning motivation. Since they have the need to understand and know more about English language and because of it, they can be motivated in their learning.

Job orientation Throughout six processes, not many students mentioned the relationship between job and motivation. However, '*job orientation*' was described as students' primary concern in their process of learning, according to several students' extracts.

- Motivation helps me try at school to find a good job in the future, especially to become a tourist guide. [*process 2*]
- English language is very important in my life because it helps me find a good job in the future [job orientation] and this is a popular language for me to communicate with many people in the world. [*process 3*]
- Bởi vì tiếng Anh là ngôn ngữ quốc tế, khi bản thân có được một ngôn ngữ nước ngoài sẽ tăng cơ hội có được một công việc tốt. [Because English is an international language. When I myself know a foreign language, I can have more chances to get a good job.] [*process 2*]

The reasons related to job orientation were demonstrated in relation to knowledge orientation, which implies the idea that the motivational factor as regards job orientation does not appeal to students much, but their notion of job orientation is in line with their knowledge orientation as the instrumental factors for their motivation.

International posture This factor is a new term derived in Yashima's (2002) study, showing the students' motivation to learn language is generally because they desire to participate in the contemporary world or to communicate with people worldwide. In this study, there were just few



students reflected their desire of learning English for the purpose of international communication. Some explanations regarding international posture are shown in the following:

- English language is very important in my life because it helps me find a good job in the future and this is a popular language for me to communicate with many people in the world. [process 3]
- I chose 'very motivated' because I think it helps me improve many English skills. Help me have confidence when I talk to foreigners. [process 4]

Students' perspectives on *international posture* were not widely reviewed in the learner diary; however, to some students, they are interested in interacting with foreigners and this is the motivation for them to learn English. Their thinking is comprehensible as English is becoming pervasive in the landscape of language learning and teaching in Vietnam.

National interest versus *Integrativeness* While *national interest* refers to students' perception of the advantages of English language for the development of their country (Islam et al. 2013), *integrativeness* concerns the purpose of learning English is because of the desire of interacting with the native-English-speaker communities (Gardner, 2001). Actually, these terms were mentioned once in students' responses, showing that these concepts display low level of importance for the students' interest in learning.

- I really love my hometown, so I am interested in this lesson. [process 2]
- I think that I will make friends with native people and chat/speak with them more. Besides, I can relax and have more friends. [process 4]

Generally, only *desired progress* and *knowledge orientation* were found to have an influential motivating power on students' learning process. Since they are first-year students, their great concerns are making progress in learning and gaining knowledge for their learning. That is why these language learning goals are the key factors motivating students' English language learning.

L2 learning experience and Motivation

Initially, the study's objectives focus solely on the enhancement of students' Ideal L2 self which results in enhancing their L2 motivation, without mentioning the other elements in the L2 MSS as Ought-to L2 self and L2 learning experience. However, the findings from students provide an insight into the impact of the learning environment such as *teacher*, *peer group*, *teaching material* and *L2 learning attitudes* on students' motivation enhancement, produced from their explanations in the learner diary.

L2 learning attitudes Regarding this variable, it was found out that students' degree of L2 motivation was mentioned the most in the *L2 learning experience* theme. Accordingly, most of them display their positive feelings towards the L2 learning, which is described in the following extracts:

- It makes me feel more excited and relaxed during my studies. [process 1].



- Làm cho bản thân có hứng thú hơn trong tiết học. [Make myself more interested in the learning sessions.] [process 2]
- I like the VMP lesson because it is so interesting and it connects with the lesson in class, so it helps me have a lot of chances to practice more. [process 3].
- I feel more motivated and more interested in learning. [process 4]
- It was interesting, so I wanted to study more. [process 5]
- I think that I have more interest in learning English. [process 6]

Besides the motivational factor – *desired progress*, second is the large number of students who express how they are motivated in learning is parallel with how their feelings are paid attention to. This implies the fact that their motivation in learning is somehow congruent with their positive feelings of excitement, relaxation or enjoyment; therefore, to many students, as long as the learning environment related to L2 learning attitudes is considered, it then becomes a significant factor for them to gain motivational power during the course. On the other hand, apart from the positive feelings which trigger students' motivation in learning, there still exists negative feelings as regards student' anxiety over English which becomes a motivational predictor for students' learning:

- Because I am not good at writing skills. When I learn VMP lesson, I practice writing skills more. [process 2]
- Because I am not good at writing skills, so when I learn VMP lesson, I practice writing skills more. [process 3]

These extracts were produced by one student in both processes 2 and 3 in the learner diary. What is interesting is that her worries about her low English writing proficiency did not demotivate her, but encouraged her to attempt more in her learning, which generates motivated behaviour of high frequent practice for writing.

Teaching material Evidence of the teaching material was found when many students perceived that their motivation was extended due to the good teaching material, which means the teaching material plays an important part in their learning in general and in their motivation in learning in particular. Some extracts related to the students' explanation was found in the learner diary:

- The VMP always helps me be motivated when studying because the topic of the writing is interesting and helps me to improve my sentence writing skills. [process 2]
- VMP is so useful for my learning. It helps me a lot in learning. For example, I have just done my plan clearly based on VMP; I try to get over some obstacles in learning. Therefore, I believe that I am very motivated in my learning. [process 4]
- I believe that I will succeed in learning English language if I focus on VMP. VMP is one of the best ways to improve my skills of English. [process 5]

From the findings, the motivational role of the teaching material in English language learning is apparent. There are many ideas that result from students' extracts concerning the positive influence of the teaching material on students' L2 motivation. That is to say, the right selection of the teaching material in language learning may partly motivate students in their learning.



Peer impact and teacher impact A small number of students mentioned the impact of the peer group and the teacher on their learning motivation. To these students, these external influences are the sources of their motivation in learning. The factor in terms of teacher impact includes the teaching voice and way of teaching while peer-related factor is the excitement of doing things together with their friends or of mutual-understanding to develop their relationship. Subsequently, their explanations such as the following were discussed:

- It is the first time we met our teacher; her voice is very clear and she makes us want to study. [*process 1*]
- Được cô dạy cho các kỹ năng cần có để học tốt hơn và đặc biệt hơn là kỹ năng đọc và viết. [The teacher teaches me necessary skills to learn better, especially reading and writing skills.] [*process 6*]
- My friends and I met together, did the homework and the exercises together, which makes us to be closer. [*process 4*]
- I can know what I am thought by my friends. Besides, I can understand my friends, and I feel so excited. [*process 6*]

As regards external forces, there were a few cases in which the role of teacher and friends of the students had an influence on the learning of English; in other words, teacher impact and peer impact appear as a crucial motivator to some students.

Motivated Behaviour and Motivation

Being in the third highest position out of the five variables, motivated behaviour was perceived as factors of motivation that students had during their learning process. Motivated behaviour is reviewed as students' effort and persistence in learning (Kormos et al., 2011). Students' explanations in regard to their ongoing activity, regular training or intended learning effort are all key predictors for their motivation in learning. Some extracts from students' learner diary with respect to motivated behaviour are demonstrated in the following:

- Chủ động trong học tập hơn, tăng cường các ý tưởng [Be more autonomous in learning; enhance my ideas.] [*process 1*]
- The lesson is very interesting, and I like it. I can write what I like to do in the L2 and possibility of achieving. So, I will try to achieve what I like. [*process 2*]
- Because when I set my goals, try to achieve my goals by practicing learning even when I'm struggling. [*process 3*]
- I am active in learning English. I practice writing and reading every day because I want to improve English skills. [*process 6*]

Students' motivated behaviour is obviously a reference to students' anticipated effort that they were going to make during learning. In this study, students mentioned the presence of motivated behaviour in a reciprocal relationship with other factors such as students' desired progress or the teaching material, for example. As a result, it can be suggested that in addition to the function as the motivational predictor, the motivated behaviour demonstrates the cause and effect relationship with the language learning goals and the L2 learning experience, in which those two latter factors are the cause for the students' motivated behaviour.



Imagination and Motivation

Imagination refers to the process of expanding students' vision and imagery about their future life, their future self-images related to English, which then act as future self-guides influencing their motivation in learning English (Dörnyei, 2009). In this study, the qualitative data from the students' learner diary indicate that not too many students related imagination to their learning motivation although throughout the six processes, students were required to join in the imaginary activities. Some cases broadening the important role of imagination in their L2 motivation are described below:

- When I learned 'Creating the vision', I had imagined about myself good at English and it motivated me to plan in study. [*process 1*]
- Because I can imagine what I can be in the future; I can do something I want, so I am very motivated about my future. Furthermore, I will try my best to get successful based on VMP. [*process 4*]
- It makes me think about myself in the future – a good English learner and makes me want to achieve my goals. [*process 5*]
- I can imagine my ideal L2 self in the future. I am going to try many skills at the present. [*process 6*]
- It's new and exciting because this is the first time I have imagined in this situation. [*process 6*]

The above extracts offer explanations for the reasons why imagination may contribute to the students' degree of motivation. In fact, in their writing, it can be seen that once students imagine their L2 future life or future self-image of an L2 proficient user, this imagery can help students bring out adequate motivated behaviour or positive feelings in order that their motivation in learning can be enhanced. This finding, while it is not mentioned by the majority of students, is still meaningful as it reveals the fact that imagination can be a new bridging constituent for the motivation enhancement of students in the language classroom.

Sense of self and Motivation

Sense of self refer to the students' awareness of themselves or a self-identification investigated through some VMP activities. In this study, '*sense of self*' is reviewed as the least influential motivating factor described by not many cases. This is also a sub-category of imagination because only students took part in the imagery activities, they were given chances to look back themselves and discovery more about themselves. There are several aspects when students relate their motivation increase to their sense of self.

Sense of self associated with sense of their self-weaknesses or self-barriers in learning English is found in some extracts below:

- Nó giúp em hiểu rõ về bản thân cùng những điểm yếu, những trở ngại khi học tiếng Anh. Và tìm cách để cải thiện kỹ năng của bản thân. [It helps me understand clearly about myself,



my weaknesses, and obstacles in learning English, then find solutions to improve my learning skills.] [*process 3*]

- It makes me recognize that I have a lot of problems when I learn English and it motivates me to face with my problems and solve it. [*process 3*]
- Giúp tôi nhìn lại những khó khăn để hoàn thiện tôi như bây giờ. [Help me look back my difficulties so that I can make myself as improved as I am now.] [*process 6*]
- Giúp tôi biết được những thiếu sót của bản thân và ngày càng phấn đấu để hoàn thiện bản thân. [Help me know my own shortcomings and make an effort more and more to make my self improved.] [*process 6*]

On the contrary, in some cases, sense of self was mentioned as a desired image of their own self, or their strengths regarding learning styles, or even their expectation to improve themselves, from which they can get more motivated in learning:

- Giúp người học nhận thức trước con người trong tương lai của mình. [Helps the learners be aware of their own future self in advance.] [*process 2*]
- Because I can study many new things. I identify my strengths. [*process 5*]
- I can recognize my preferred study styles and improve it to be better than before. [*process 5*]
- Hiểu rõ phong cách học tập của bản thân và nâng cao nó để có một kết quả tốt hơn trong học tập. [Know more about my study styles and enhance them to get a good result in learning.] [*process 5*]
- I know exactly who I am in my friends' opinions. Then I can strengthen myself. [*process 6*]

From these above data, students' sense of self whether it belongs to positive or negative senses, students' perceptions of their own self are likely to let them gain more motivation in learning, to improve their selves and to be recognized by their friends. As a result, the correlation between motivation and sense of self does also bring positive effect on their learning.

The findings from the learner diary reflect the real situation that students are more passionate about the learner-internal factors or the Ideal L2 self (including language learning goals, motivated behaviour, imagination and sense of self) than the L2 learning experience (including the L2 learning attitudes, the teacher and peer impact) on the enhancement of their motivation in L2 learning. Although those factors affect students' degree of motivation in different ways with different extent, it is apparent that the VMP helps increase students' L2 motivation and provide influentially inspiring environment for their learning.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Findings in the present study are consistent with the findings of Islam et al.'s (2013); Mackay (2019), Sampson's (2012), Papi's (2010) as they support to the empirical successful effect of the L2 MSS on students' motivation enhancement in the mainstream of the motivational research. Furthermore, this positive impact of the L2 MSS partly strengthens the application of the new model and the utilization of the visionary motivation activities for the purpose of learners' vision enhancement and motivation development in the language classroom environment. The



findings then confirm the validity of the vision enhancement activities in association with L2 motivation. The result of this study is therefore similar to the findings of Sampson's (2012) and Mackay's (2019) study. As a result, it goes without saying that the construct of the L2 MSS, especially the implication of the six-phase programme in promoting the Ideal L2 self, is a better fit for the university learning environment where the approach of learner-centered orientation is of teaching philosophy in the target study context.

In comparing the two major elements (the Ideal L2 self and the L2 learning experience) in the L2 MSS theory, it was found out that, in contrast to earlier findings (Islam et al., 2013; Kong et al., 2018, Lamb, 2012; Papi, 2010) which show the superior position of the L2 learning experience over the Ideal L2 self, this study detects the evidence of the Ideal L2 self as the better influential motivating factor in students' learning process. There are several explanations for this result. Firstly, Vietnamese students in this study are English-majored students whose perceptions towards English learning are quite clear, especially when they selected the major as English language to enter a university. As a result, knowledge orientation or job orientation appears as one of the primary interests to them. Secondly, the fact is that the university learning environment is likely to offer students more opportunities to showcase themselves when they join in different extra-curricular activities. Participating in those school activities is a clearly a golden chance for them to identify their capacity or strengths, from which they have a need to know about their self or discover their self. That is therefore why understanding about their self is really of importance, and Ideal L2 self is a better motivating predictor in students' language learning, compared to L2 learning experience. Furthermore, once students leave their high school learning environment for a university learning environment, they start their independent life without direct caring from their parents, which means they become more responsible for their life and their decision; in addition to this, teachers play a less important role in the university classroom when the learner-centered approach is more emphasized, so their awareness of studies and their selves are paid more attention. For those explanations, the Ideal L2 self seems the most likely motivating factor compared to the L2 learning experience in this study context.

In conclusion, this study confirms previous findings and contributes to our understanding of the L2 MSS (Dörnyei, 2009) with the stress on the strategy of enhancing students' Ideal L2 self, through which their motivation in learning is expected to be fostered. That is to say, students' degree of motivation was substantially enhanced after the VMP treatment integrated in the course. Additionally, the study also explores the most powerful predictors of the language learning goals (indicating the more preferable roles of instrumentality-focus such as desired progress and knowledge orientation). Although the study did not show the correlation among motivational factors since it solely emphasizes emerging influential motivating factors derived from the learner diary, it did substantiate the most degree of impact of the motivating predictors on students' L2 motivation enhancement, in which the Ideal L2 self appears as the main factor and L2 learning experience shows its less crucial role. This study adds to the body of knowledge around the mainstream of L2 motivation in general; it, particularly, promote the validity of the L2 MSS which has been successfully applied in diverse teaching contexts across different countries.



More research is needed to better understand the framework of the L2 MSS in different age groups in English language learning context in Vietnam. Especially, the application of the visionary motivational process in the English classroom should be tested with different kinds of research methodology as case study or longitudinal study in the future research so that the values generated from those studies can better interpret the roles of the three elements in the L2 MSS construct. This finding, while specific-situation designed, suggests that the English language teachers should take students' motivation into consideration by creating more visionary motivational activities for different courses with both non-English-majored and English-majored undergraduates.

5. References

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