

Differences in Motivation for Second Language Acquisition According to L2MSS Model with Reference to Age

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ABSTRACT

The process of globalization in the contemporary world has highlighted the role of English language as an important communication tool. Second language acquisition (SLA) is focused on the student and the learning process, motivation being the most important individual factor affecting the language learning process. Its complexity and changeability are not easy to understand and define so it has led to numerous theories and models in applied linguistics research. One of the latest models the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) was applied in this study. The research was carried out using a questionnaire measuring L2MSS dimensions among adolescents – secondary school students and university students of the first year of undergraduate study. The aim of the research was to explore whether there are any differences with reference to age in motivation for learning English; more precisely, whether there are any differences in motivation of Croatian adolescents for learning English within the L2MSS dimensions. Data analysis was carried out by using the quantitative statistical analysis (SPSS). Research results confirmed that there are statistically significant age differences in motivation for learning English. Namely, statistically significant age differences in the three-dimensional structure of L2MSS in the Croatian educational context were confirmed. Results of this research will enable all participants of the educational process, especially teachers, to gain a better insight into the motivation of adolescents and to apply this knowledge in the teaching process in order not only to motivate their students but also to maintain the level of motivation for SLA over time and to prevent demotivation.

Key words: anthropological linguistics, applied linguistics, motivation, age, L2MSS, SLA

Introduction

The process of globalization, stimulated by a plethora of technological, social and economic factors as well as by the development of information technologies (IT), has brought forward the perception of the world as a whole. This perception has highlighted the importance of communication and, consequently, of language as an important communication tool. The role of the greatest economic power – the United States of America in the IT revolution significantly contributed to the English language becoming a *lingua franca*^{1,2}. Therefore, students are nowadays most exposed to English in comparison with other world languages.

The language learning process is complex, time-consuming and demanding. Motivation is considered to be perhaps the most important individual factor which sig-

nificantly affects the language learning process. Dörnyei³ defines motivation as the initial stimulus for learning language and the driving force to sustain the long and arduous learning process. Its complexity, multidimensionality and dynamics is not easy to understand and define, which has led to numerous theories and models. The L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) introduced by Dörnyei³ is a completely innovative model based on the presumption that SLA is a vital part of one's self and thus represents an integral part of the individual's identity. The model comprises three dimensions: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. Nevertheless, the model has not been tested in the Croatian educational context, except for two research works^{4,5}.

The Ideal L2 Self refers to the person we would like to become and contains the desire of the individual to reduce the disparity between the real and the ideal image of her-

self/himself. Ideally, it corresponds to the integrative dimensions of Noels⁶ and Ushioda⁸. It is the student's vision of himself as a fluent speaker of a second language. The Ought-to L2 Self refers to attributes that we believe we should have due to social pressures, such as duties, obligations or responsibilities, in order to avoid possible negative consequences. This dimension corresponds to Higgins' possible self and the extrinsic instrumental motifs of Noels⁶ and Ushioda⁷. The L2 Learning Experience refers to the immediate environment in which we learn and the motives associated with the educational context and learning experience.

According to Dörnyei⁸, the Ideal L2 Self is a strong motivator under six conditions - four of which relate to the notion of self and two to traditional general concepts of motivation and motivational strategies. The four conditions specific to Dörnyei's assumptions are: (1) the student must have the desired image of the future self, (2) that image must be complete and clear, (3) the image must be achievable, and (4) the image must be constantly active and present in the student's working concept.

The relationship between the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self is significantly influenced by the process of globalization. Namely, the perception of each person is mostly based on social norms, so the ideal image of oneself and the desired image of oneself depend on it. The question is to what extent is L2MSS affected by a particular learning context, to what extent it is a universal aspect of learning, and to what extent the two are intertwined. Finally, the question is how to test and validate the model by carrying out scientific research and studying the results.

Dörnyei's motivational model is particularly interesting to explore because it encompasses not only the educational context but also the individual and the social. Because the results of research in linguistics and psychology of education^{3, 8-13} highlighted adolescence as the age when a stable image of oneself as a second language learner can be developed, this research focused on precisely that population: secondary school and university students. It seems completely understandable that students who are older and more mature can perceive and understand more than elementary school students, and also have the necessary school experience based on which they can make comparisons^{14,15}.

Having established the theoretical justification of the new construct, Dörnyei pays special attention to research and research results on respondents of different age groups, levels of education and levels of language learning that could confirm its assumptions, i.e. the three-dimensional model. The first studies of the Dörnyei's model were conducted in Hungary, China, Iran, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Spain on high school students, college students, and adult course participants¹¹⁻²⁰.

Based on these studies, Dörnyei⁸ draws several conclusions. He concludes that the results confirmed the validity of the model, and that the Ideal L2 Self and integrativeness are closely correlated. Furthermore, the division of instrumentality into promotion and prevention showed that these two aspects of instrumentality are different and that instrumentality-promotion is more related to the Ideal L2 Self, while instrumentality-prevention is more related to the Ought-to L2 Self. Thus, Dörnyei and his colleagues proved that there are solid theoretical and empirical foundations that support the three-dimensional L2MSS motivational construct.

To demonstrate the relationships within the Dörnyei's system the Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis^a of Dörnyei's L2MSS with regard to university students and secondary school student made by Magid¹⁷ is shown in Figure 1.

L2MSS model was tested by Lamb²¹ on a sample of 527 secondary school students in Indonesia. One of the aims of this research was to establish whether there are age differences in the motivation among adolescents according to L2MSS model. His results confirmed that Ideal L2 Self develops and grows stronger with age.

In Croatian educational context, Martinović⁶ used Dörnyei's model to explore the motivation to learn English at the University of Zadar. The results of that research, which included 555 university students, pointed to their developed vision of the Ideal L2 Self and the strong instrumental motivation associated with employment and career advancement.

This study was carried out in an effort to collect data on motivation of adolescents to learn English in another formal socio-educational context in order to obtain as much data as possible in various social and educational environments and on various samples. The data ought to help in gaining a broader image of motivation in Croatian context to enable teachers to adapt classes and curriculums accordingly and thus achieve better success in learning English.

Research Methodology

Aim

The aim of this research was to explore whether there are any differences with reference to age in motivation for learning English; more precisely, whether there are any differences in motivation of Croatian adolescents for learning English within the L2MSS dimensions. Moreover, it is important to find out how adolescent motivation to learn English develops and changes during secondary school education and university study, whether the motivation is stable or susceptible to age-related changes as well as whether relationships within the L2MSS model change with age.

^a Structural equation model (SEM) is a multivariate statistical approach used for testing hypothesis with respect to the interrelationship of multiple variables.

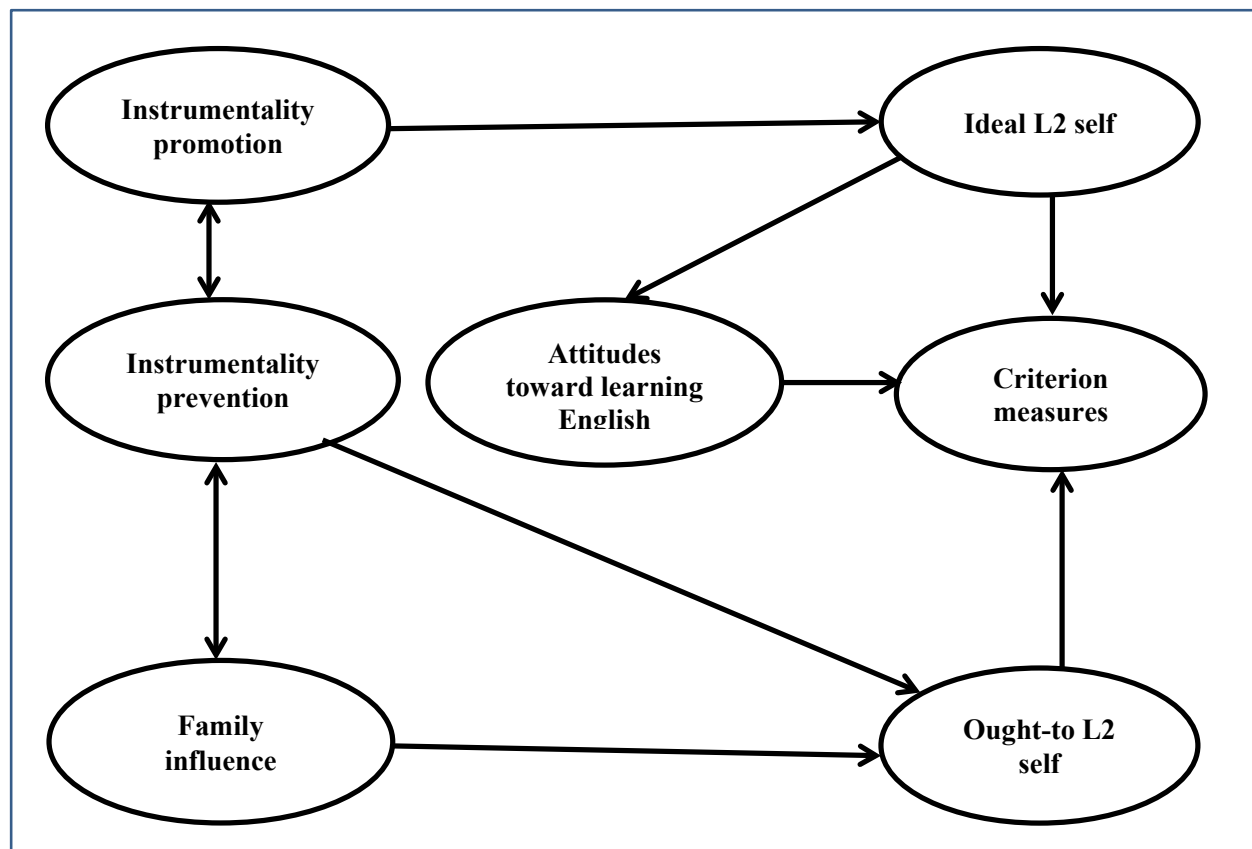


Fig. 1. Model for university students and secondary school students (Source: Magid¹⁷, adapted by author).

Participants

The sample included 345 participants (N=345) – secondary school students and university students: 89 first grade students (N₁=89), 100 third grade students (N₂=100) and 156 university students (N₃=156). All the participants were studying for maritime careers. The age range was between 14 and 21 and all the students were male students. The sample with reference to age group is shown in Table 1.

Instrument

The research instrument for collecting research data consisted of two parts. In the first part demographic data was collected: age, gender, year of study and programme of study. The second part consisted of a questionnaire compiled and verified by Taguchi et al.¹⁶ to test the L2MSS model, which was translated and adapted for the Croatian context. The validity and reliability of the instrument in the Croatian educational context was confirmed. The questionnaire consisted of total 83 statements covering 11 motivational components: Criterion Measures, Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, Parental Encouragement/Family Influence, Instrumentality-Promotion, Instrumentality-Prevention, Linguistic Self-confidence, Attitudes To-

ward Learning English, Travel Orientation, Interest in the English Language and English Anxiety. The participants were asked to specify their degree of agreement with individual statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree).

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected in the Croatian educational context during regular classes at the Maritime and Technical School for secondary education in Dubrovnik and at the Maritime Department of the University of Dubrovnik. All data collected was analysed using the statistical package SPSS 20, more precisely, using Analysis of Variance – ANOVA (for finding differences in motivation in relation to age).

Results and Discussion

In order to explore age differences in motivation for learning English within the L2MSS and to determine whether there are any age-related differences within individual motivational dimensions, ANOVA test for independent samples was used. Age differences were observed according to the educational level (1st grade and 3rd grade

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS – PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO AGE GROUP

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1st grade	89	25.8	25.8	25.8
3rd grade	100	29.0	29.0	54.8
University students	156	45.2	45.2	100.0
Total	345	100.0	100.0	

of secondary school and university 1st year students). The research previously carried out in other educational contexts (China and Hungary) confirmed that the L2MSS can effectively represent the L2 motivation of different age groups^{11,17}.

As shown in Table 2, statistically significant differences in relation to age have been found within three individual components of motivation for learning English. Namely, statistically significant differences have been found for the components: Parental Encouragement / Family Influence, Linguistic Self-confidence and Attitudes Toward Learning English.

Taking into consideration the trend of mean values for Parental Encouragement / Family Influence, it can be observed that the means tend to decrease with age. The younger participants (M=3.03) are more motivated to meet the expectations of their parents and family than the older participants (M=2.75). Adolescence is a sensitive period involving physical and mental challenges and changes, all of which affects their behaviour and relations with the peers as well as their family/parents. Their awareness of their own identity and role in the society grows. The

findings showing the weakening of parental influence in adolescence were confirmed by other researchers as well²². During adolescence and with the corresponding changes, adolescents are developing the sense of maturity and independence and tend to be rather rebellious against their parents.

The highest mean values have been found for the Linguistic Self-confidence. Self-confidence includes perceptions of one’s abilities to reach goals successfully or to finish tasks. The trend of mean values for this motivational component shows the highest self-confidence of the eldest group of participants – the university students (M=4.29) and the lowest for the third-grade secondary school students (M=3.99). This finding is rather interesting, having shown that the youngest group of participants (M=4.18) indicated more linguistic self-confidence than their older colleagues in the secondary school and yet an even higher level of linguistic self-confidence of the university students. This trend opens the possibilities and the need for further research. The results could be attributed to the fact that the first-grade secondary school students and the university students, unlike the third-grade secondary school students, actually start a new stage in their

TABLE 2
DIFFERENCES WITHIN L2MSS MOTIVATIONAL DIMENSIONS IN RELATION TO AGE

Motivational Dimension	F-test (df=2.341)	p	1 st grade (89)		3 rd grade (100)		University students (156)	
			M	σ	M	σ	M	σ
Criterion Measures	2.794	0.06	3.03	.784	2.75	.776	2.88	.837
Ideal L2 Self	2.406	0.09	3.83	.830	3.84	.892	4.04	.819
Ought-to L2 Self	2.135	0.12	3.04	.743	2.95	.790	2.83	.826
Parental Encouragement /Family Influence	3.067	0.04*	3.03	.874	3.02	.963	2.75	1.090
Instrumentality-Promotion	0.452	0.63	4.11	.658	4.08	.641	4.03	.610
Instrumentality-Prevention	1.678	0.18	3.43	.860	3.23	.887	3.23	.933
Linguistic Self-confidence	5.249	0.00**	4.18	.739	3.99	.798	4.29	.648
Attitudes Toward Learning English	3.232	0.04*	2.77	.964	2.74	.891	3.00	.888
Travel Orientation	0.651	0.52	4.24	.721	4.15	.827	4.12	.819
Interest in the English Language	1.409	0.24	3.43	.856	3.41	.935	3.60	1.047
English Anxiety	2.326	0.09	2.39	1.039	2.29	.927	2.12	1.011

*p<0.05; **p<0.01

M = Mean; σ = Standard Deviation

education and might not yet be aware of the challenges ahead as far as language learning is concerned. Namely, the participants in the study learn English for specific purposes – maritime English. That means that they are required to learn some very specific terminology which they might find challenging. The professional vocabulary is introduced in the second grade of the secondary school hence the first graders are still under less pressure to learn specific terminology. On the other side, the university students have already learned something about their profession and the required terminology. Research carried out by Ghenghesh²³ involving secondary school students in Egypt indicated a similar trend of higher motivation of the younger students than the older ones. The students attributed their loss of motivation to the teacher and the learning context. Ghenghesh concluded that further research into the decrease in motivation with age should be further explored.

Similar trend of the highest means for the university students ($M=3,00$) and the lowest means for the middle group – the secondary school third grade students ($M=2,74$) has been observed for the Attitudes Toward Learning English. The reasons may be similar to those explained for the Linguistic Self-confidence as self-confidence is seen as a key component in determining language attitudes and language learning motivation³. More precisely, the attitudes seem to change in a similar fashion as the self-confidence and thus with acquiring more knowledge and the growing motivation, the older group shows more positive attitudes toward learning English. Previous research work exploring L2MSS¹⁷ proved that attitudes are in strong correlation with motivation for learning, in particular with the Ideal L2 Self. Again, starting to learn about their future profession but still not having acquired sufficient knowledge may be one of the reasons for the slight loss of positive attitudes in the third grade. Dörnyei and Csizér²⁴ examined the students' attitudes in Hungary and stressed the importance of positive attitudes and their correlation with English proficiency and success. Active engagement in the learning process fosters positive attitudes.

With regard to Dörnyei's L2MSS, the Parental Encouragement / Family Influence is related to the Ought-to L2 Self dimension, the Linguistic Self-confidence is related to the Ideal L2 Self and the Attitudes Toward Learning English are related to the Learning Experience. Thus, the age differences in the three-dimensional structure of the L2MSS model have been confirmed, supporting the hypothesis that there are changes in motivation to learn English in relation to age. These changes vary depending on the context and many other factors, but there is no denial that they are still not perfectly clear or perfectly predictable.

Conclusions

Various research studies in second language acquisition have pointed out the importance of individual factors,

motivation being one of the most important ones and, moreover, closely intertwined with the other factors. The complexity of motivation and the constant changes indicate that there is still much research work to be done in an effort better to understand this phenomenon.

This research was carried out among adolescents – secondary school students and university students of the first year of undergraduate study with the aim to find out whether there are any differences with reference to age in motivation for learning English, more precisely, whether there are any differences in motivation of Croatian adolescents for learning English within the L2MSS dimensions.

Results of this research underline the importance of researching motivation for learning English on participants in many different contexts. The questionnaire compiled by Taguchi et al.¹⁶ has proven to be valid and reliable and it can be used in the Croatian educational context. The results obtained further confirm that although there are numerous components to motivation, with continuous research efforts they could be determined and such findings could be valuable in better understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Statistically significant differences in motivation for learning English among adolescents have been found. Namely, differences in relation to age have been found for Parental Encouragement / Family Influence, Linguistic Self-confidence and Attitudes Toward Learning English. The influence or encouragement of the parents and family onto motivation to learn seems to be less important to the eldest group of participants. This result is not surprising since adolescence is a sensitive period involving physical and mental challenges, affecting behaviour and relations with the peers as well as family/parents. The findings showing the weakening of parental influence in adolescence can be related to the awareness of one's own identity and role in the society.

The university students have indicated the highest level of Linguistic Self-confidence while the lowest self-confidence has been shown by the third-grade students, with their younger peers in the secondary school having shown more self-confidence. This result may be attributed to the specific circumstances when learning English for specific purposes. The first-grade secondary school students start learning the professional vocabulary in the second grade. The third-grade secondary school students have started learning professional subjects and professional vocabulary and thus are more aware of the challenges ahead and the effort needed to meet those challenges. On the other hand, the first-year university students have learned the basics and start their academic education with more confidence.

Similar to the above, the highest means for the university students and the lowest means for the secondary school third grade students have been observed for the Attitudes Toward Learning English. A possible explanation may be similar to those explained above. The attitudes seem to change in a similar fashion as the linguistic self-confidence and thus with acquiring more knowledge

and the growing motivation, the older group shows more positive attitudes toward learning English.

The findings from this research have confirmed once again the importance of exploring motivation as one of the key factors in the learning process. The complexity and changeability of motivation requires continuous efforts of researchers and the need to encompass more participants and more social and educational contexts. It also encourages researchers to propose and explore new approaches

to understanding the L2 motivation. This is of particular importance for teachers because it is up to them not only to make efforts to motivate their students but also to monitor and nourish their motivation as well as to avoid or prevent demotivation. The motivation of language teachers has been rather neglected and it should be given more attention in future research, since their motivation significantly affects the students' motivation.

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RAZLIKE U MOTIVACIJI ZA UČENJE INOGA JEZIKA S OBZIROM NA DOB

SAŽETAK

Kao rezultat globalizacijskih promjena u modernome društvu, engleski jezik se pokazao kao najzastupljenije komunikacijsko sredstvo. Suvremena nastava usmjerena je na učenika i proces učenja, a posebnu važnost ima motivacija kao ključni faktor u procesu ovladavanja inim jezikom (OVIJ). Složenost i promjenjivost motivacije nije lako razumjeti i definirati, što je dovelo do brojnih teorija i modela u glotodidaktičkim istraživanjima. Jedan od novijih motivacijskih modela je „Inojezični motivacijski sustav pojma o sebi“ (eng. *L2 Motivational Self System – L2MSS*). U ovom radu prikazani su rezultati istraživanja provedenog na adolescentima različite dobi: učenicima srednje škole i studentima prve godine sveučilišnoga preddiplomskog studija. Cilj istraživanja bio je utvrditi postoje li razlike povezane s dobi u motivaciji za učenje inoga jezika u konstrukt L2MSS tijekom adolescentske dobi; točnije, postoje li razlike u izraženosti različitih dimenzija konstrukta L2MSS kod hrvatskih adolescenata povezane s dobi u motivaciji za učenje engleskoga jezika. Podatci su obrađeni kvantitativnom statističkom analizom (programski paket SPSS). Istraživanje je potvrdilo postojanje statistički značajnih razlika u motivaciji za učenje engleskoga jezika s obzirom na dob. Ovim istraživanjem utvrđene su razlike u izraženosti različitih dimenzija konstrukta L2MSS u hrvatskome obrazovnome kontekstu u adolescentskoj dobi. Nalazi istraživanja moći će se primijeniti u nastavi stranih jezika u hrvatskome obrazovnome kontekstu i poslužiti nastavnicima da dobiju bolju sliku o motivaciji učenika i studenata. Te spoznaje mogu se primijeniti u obrazovnome procesu kako bi nastavnici mogli ne samo motivirati svoje učenike ili studente već i spriječiti pad ili gubitak motivacije za učenje inoga jezika.

