

Exploring Second Language Motivational Self System of Thai Junior High School Students

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Abstract: Research has demonstrated the influence of motivation on second language (L2) acquisition processes. This study aimed to explore the L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS), i.e., the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience of Thai junior high school students and investigate whether there are differences of the three components of the L2MSS between genders. 355 students participated in the study. The L2MSS questionnaire adopted from Swatevacharkul (2021) was employed for data collection. Results revealed that, on average, the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience were moderate. It was also found that the Ideal L2 self and ought to L2 self had no significant difference between male and female students, while the L2 learning experience was significantly different. This means that males have more positive L2 learning experience than females, indicating significant gender-based variations in the L2MSS.

Keywords: L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS); Ideal L2 self; Ought-to L2 self; L2 Learning Experience; Junior High School Students; Gender.

1. Introduction

Students will succeed if they have the will to learn English. That will be called motivation. Motivation is vital to classroom performance for foreign language students [1]. If students have learning motivation, it will make the learning process very interesting, and students will positively influence their attitudes and willingness to learn when attending lectures [2] -- students' ability to speak English. According to Macklem [3], motivation dramatically affects students' self-confidence in learning, which will ultimately affect students' attitudes and behavior in order to succeed in learning. It also proves that motivation is a factor that has a very positive influence on students in their learning process in addition to other determinants of learning success, such as teachers' ability and the teaching materials used. In learning English, there is an assumption which states that people who have a desire, drive, or goal to learn English tend to be more successful than people who learn without based on an impulse compared to people who learn without being based on motivation and encouragement [4].

According to Gardner and Lambert [5], there are two types of motivation. The first one is integrative motivation, which means learning the language to participate in the culture of its people. The second one is instrumental motivation, which indicates and implies that the learner is learning the language to support a purpose related to a career or future career. These types of motivation can affect and control the procedure and outcome of learning. From the above explanation, integrative motivation is one of the positive attitudes of a student towards the target language group and the desire of students to integrate into the community. Meanwhile, instrumental motivation is a motivation that achieves more than one social or economic reward through achieving a second language. So, it refers to the functional reason for learning a language.

Although Intrinsic motivation is considered the most desirable form of motivation and is associated with a variety of benefits - including enjoyment, persistence, and mental health [6], studies have found that extrinsic motivators help

promote behaviors that are not inherently fun (e.g., recycling, doing homework, obeying traffic rules). In other words, the desire to induce or force people to conform to socially expected standards of behavior is sometimes inconsistent with maintaining and promoting individual autonomy and intrinsic motivation [7].

In terms of English language learning, Graddol [8] states that the mandated implementation of English as a topic in elementary schools in many nations has led to the perception of English as an indispensable educational tool. These modifications have affected several fields of language research, including second language (L2) motivation. Dörnyei [9] hypothesized that learners might be more driven to acquire English because of its status as a global language. As such, Dörnyei [9] and Dörnyei and Ushioda [10] have proposed that future research on L2 motivation should adopt a two-level approach: one for studying English and another for studying foreign languages.

2. Rationale of the Study

Dörnyei [9] further argues that the global status of English leads to a need to reconceptualize Gardner's socio-educational [11] model to study second language motivation, particularly integrative motivation. In light of this, he has developed the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), which shows a "self" structure made up of hypothetical selves who would serve as future guides for themselves [9]. The L2MSS consists of three constructs: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience. Given the widespread use of English, it is reasonable to believe that students will drive to study the language.

In recent years, several researchers have investigated whether there is a correlation between L2 motivation and English learning achievement [12,13] and how the three components of the L2MSS influence learners' L2 English learning achievement. In the existing literature, predictive roles of individual factors such as motivation and self-efficacy on the use of surface and deep LLS have been widely

explored [14,15]. In Thai context, the L2MSS can motivate senior high school students in Bangkok, particularly the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience [16]. Besides, Thai junior high students in one English program in Bangkok possess a high level of ideal L2-self inside the classroom, and there is a significant relationship between ideal L2-self and L2 Willingness to Communicate inside the classroom [17]. The L2MSS and the characteristics of Thai EFL learners in terms of their English language achievement serve as the foundation for learners' motivation towards English language learning [18]. It is thus crucial to comprehend the motivational construct influencing language acquisition, how junior high school students develop their L2MSS, and how the L2MSS influences their English learning. It has yet to determine how junior high school students' L2MSS and English learning achievement relate. Particularly in the Thai context, more research is needed to explore the three L2MSS components of junior high students in schools outside Bangkok.

Gender is a basic categorization recognized and followed in all human cultures to define a person and social identity. It is believed that gender differences have an impact on motivation, mood, and learning. These days, academics are keen to attribute gender disparities to sociocultural factors that provide female role models and encourage a positive attitude toward learning a second language. Females are more encouraged than males to study foreign languages, according to motivation research on gender differences in a foreign language learning environment [19-21]. Based on gender perspectives, some research has been done on students' motivation and attitudes. Aldosari [22] examined the variations in the motivational and attitude patterns in EFL learning among fifty university students. The findings demonstrated that female students are more motivated and have more positive views. According to the literature, few L2MSS studies have examined junior high school students' motivation to learn English, particularly in the Thai school context outside Bangkok, the capital of Thailand and gender. Therefore, this study attempted to find answers for these research questions:

1. What is the level of ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience of Thai junior high school students?
2. Are there significant differences between male and female students in the three constructs of the L2MSS?

For the second research question, the hypothesis: *there are significant differences in terms of the L2MSS between male and female students* was formulated.

Investigating the perceptions of Thai junior high school learners on the L2MSS in their English learning achievement provides these benefits. For teachers, this study can be a reference for teaching strategies, classroom management, and lesson plans responsive to their students' different levels of the L2MSS. For the school policymakers, this study may contribute to English curriculum and course planning and implementation to increase learning motivation and learning achievement of the students. These results should also yield important insights into the motivational self-system of junior high school students, and how it affects their language acquisition. The results may open doors for more research in this field in the Thai basic educational context.

3. Literature Review

3.1. L2 Motivational Self System

Thanks to Dornyei's work and the L2 Motivational Self

System (L2MSS) framework [9, 23], L2 motivational studies have moved into the socio-dynamic stage. Dornyei [23] reinterpreted L2 motivation in a way that can broaden our comprehension of the ideas put forth by Gardner and others in the past while also making them applicable to the increasingly globalized world of today, given the increasing popularity of Global English. While vital identifications with others, the L1 community, and culture are part of Gardner's motivational framework, Dornyei's approach differs significantly from Gardner's. They are with the future version of the Self. This paradigm builds on Higgins's [24] self-discrepancy, where students study a foreign language or enhance their language skills to eliminate individual discrepancies whenever they see the difference between a language student and an ideal student in their current state [25]. The principle of the "Possible Self" is also emphasized in Dornyei's L2MSS, where students can see the Self in the future: What they are talking about, what they want to be, and how they worry about the future are just some reflections introduced by Dornyei [25].

The L2MSS consists of three constructs: Ideal L2 Self, ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience [9,23]. The first element, our Ideal of what we want to become as language users, is the Ideal L2 Self. According to Lamb [26], this element promotes self-regulation and acts as a motivating force for taking activities that will lead to a desired future. Gardner's concepts of integrative and instrumental orientations, according to Dornyei and Ushioda [10], take this element into account. It is said that learners who learn L2 with the hope of becoming a part of the L2 community (integrative orientation) or with the hope of gaining practical benefits like better pay, job opportunities, and job promotions (promotion-focused instrumental orientation) have been guided by their Ideal L2 Self because this component focuses on improvements or promotion, such as hope and accomplishment [10].

On the other hand, "the attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes" is what it means to be understood by the Ought to L2 Self [23]. It represents one's vision of a future self that one believes one ought to possess due to perceived duties, obligations, or responsibilities [9] and entails the wishes and expectations of significant others [27]. Previous research has found positive relationships between Ought to L2 Self and extrinsic motivation [9, 23], family influences [28], and the prevention-focused aspects of instrumentality [29].

The L2 learning experience which does not deal with the self-concept motivation refers to the learner's attitudes toward the process of L2 learning and is influenced by features inherent in the learning environment. Such features include the curriculum, the L2 teacher, the peer group, and the teaching materials [9]. This aspect of the L2MSS has been shown to strongly affect motivated behavior [28,29]. That is because, according to the statement, "for some language learners, the initial motivation to learn a language comes from successful engagement with the actual language learning process rather than from internally or externally generated self-images" [23]. Compared to the Ideal and the Ought-to L2 selves, which are thought to be more stable conceptions of motivation, the L2 learning experience is more situation-specific.

The first two theoretical components, the ideal L2 self, and the ought-to L2 self, are derived directly from Higgins' [24]

conceptualization of the ideal Self and the ought Self. The third component, the L2 learning experience, however, is conceptualized at a different level from the two self-guides. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda [10], this bottom-up approach is included to "represent the potential influence of the student's learning environment." Furthermore, it reflects the successes of studies on motivation conducted in the 1990s, which identified the critical influence of peer groups, the curriculum, and teachers on second language learners' motivation. According to the L2MSS, there are three primary sources of motivation for learning a foreign or second language: the learner's perception of themselves as proficient speakers of the language, social pressure from their surroundings, and rewarding learning experiences, as summarized by Dörnyei and Ushioda [10].

The L2MSS framework states three leading causes of motivation to learn a second language: the learner's vision of themselves as an effective L2 speaker, the social pressure from the learner's surroundings, and the positive learning experiences. The three constructs of the L2MSS will serve as the study's conceptual framework, as depicted in Figure 1.

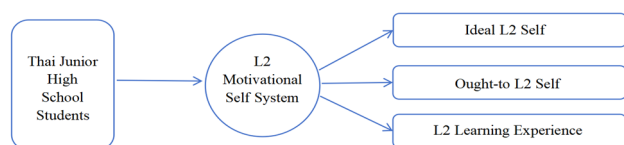


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of L2 motivational self-system

3.2. Related studies on L2MSS

According to the features of the L2 motivational factors, there has been much research in the Asian context exploring the relationship between the L2MSS and other variables. The L2MSS is likely associated with numerous well-established constructs from the broad field of research on L2 acquisition. For instance, it has been shown that components of L2MSS can predict L2 willingness to communicate (WTC) [30-33]. Furthermore, the ideal self is associated with a growth mindset, a concept used to explain academic engagement [34]. Connections between the L2MSS and other concepts were also explored, such as academic resilience and, more specifically, the factor of perseverance [35]. A recent study has also shown that there are significant connections between L2MSS and L2 anxiety [36].

It was found that the L2MSS is unrelated to performance on an English test [37]. Additionally, other research has not found a connection between the L2MSS components and English proficiency [38,39]. At the same time, Alqahtani [40] failed to detect a significant relationship between L2MSS and vocabulary size. It is possible that L2MSS does not relate to essential and relevant real-life outcomes, such as performance on an English test. In China, the primary motivator for high school students in private and public high schools was their L2 learning experience, followed by their ideal L2 self, while the ought-to L2 self had a minor influence. The ought-to L2 self-played a minimal role in students' efforts to learn English in both settings and its limited impact on L2 learning motivation [41,42] investigated the L2 motivational self-system and learning approaches of high school students in a Turkish high school setting. The results indicate that L2MSS is a moderate category, with L2 Learning Experience being the most commonly reported sub-category of L2MSS. Higher-performing students typically exhibit an Ideal L2 Self-motivation than lower-performing students in terms of

proficiency. Additionally, pupils with high Ideal L2 self-levels frequently employ deep learning techniques. In the Korean context, high school students were weak ideal L2 self, strong ought-to L2 self, and universal concept of instrumentality (promotion) [43].

Arda and Doyran [44] found from an analysis of the young learners' and teenagers' attitudes toward English language learning of third-grade and seventh-grade students that both groups had positive attitudes toward learning. However, the seventh graders were not fully satisfied with the lessons' materials and activities and their teachers' attitudes. A study in a Cambodian context by Laohawiriyanon [45] revealed a significant correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and language proficiency, which was found among high achievers. The L2MSS seems more appropriate in explaining L2 motivation as it highlights temporal dimension (i.e., future and present), mental imagery, identity, and the L2 self [46].

In the Thai educational context, [47] found that in Thailand, key factors such as the ideal L2 self, L2 learning experience, instrumentality promotion, and cultural/community interest positively correlated with learners' motivation. These factors highly influenced their intended effort toward language learning. Learners who imagined themselves proficient in the target language and saw its relevance to future career success were more motivated. Interestingly, external motivations like the ought-to L2 self and instrumentality-prevention did not significantly influence their intended effort. Poonlarp [48] researched the effect of the L2MSS on L2 achievement of students at a Thai university. The findings showed that the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience had positive and significant relationships with L2 achievement. L2 learning experience was the most vital factor of L2 achievement. Specific to high school students' motivational research, it was found that the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experience were high.

In contrast, the ought-to L2 self for grades 10-12 students in Mathematics-Science, Chinese-Japanese, and Mathematics-Science was moderate [16]. Another study of the relationship between ideal L2-self and anxiety with L2 willingness to communicate inside the classroom of 70 Thai junior high school English program students [17] was conducted. The results showed that the students possess a high level of ideal L2-self inside the classroom. The results also revealed a significant relationship between ideal L2 self and L2WTC in the classroom.

In terms of research on genders and the L2MSS, 1,462 junior high school students were studied by Azarnoosh and Birjandi [49]. 708 of the students were female, and 754 were male. There was no discernible difference between the male and female views on English learning; males scored higher on the measures of intended effort and ought-to L2 Self, while females scored higher on ideal L2 self. Similarly, their motivation to learn English was the best and most robust predictor of students' intended effort. Shahbaz et al. [50] found the gender-specific differences and effects of parents' education on L2 learning motivation (English) in Pakistan. Drawing upon the data of 547 first-year college students, the study provided a complex scenario of L2 motivation. A strong extrinsic and instrumental motivation may help boys learn English more than girls. Conversely, girls are more driven due to their idealized views of themselves as L2 learners and their language acquisition experiences. Additionally, males' interest in other languages and cultures was found to be somewhat more connected with their learning attempts than

that of females. For example, Ryan found that among English learners in Japan, including non-language college students, language majors, and middle school students, women scored much higher on the ideal second language independent variable. Azarnoosh and Birjandi [49] similarly observed gender differences in their sample of Iranian junior high school pupils, with females exhibiting significantly higher averages on the ought-to L2 self and ideal L2 self measures. Kim Yoon-Kyoung and Kim Taeoung [51] discovered that female students were more driven to learn the L2 and had a more precise concept of their ideal L2 self than male students in a study on Koran students. Furthermore, among non-English primary university students in the Chinese context, You and Dörnyei [52] discovered higher motivation levels among females to acquire the English language, including a higher average on the ideal L2 self scale.

In conclusion, there seems to have no absolute conclusion of the L2MSS and genders. Therefore, the aim of this paper was to investigate gender differences in terms of the L2MSS of junior high school students.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

This study took a form of cross-sectional survey employing a google form questionnaire to collect data from grade 7-9 Thai students.

4.2. Context and Participants

In regard to an educational system of Thailand, primary and higher education are the two categories into which Thai formal education falls [53]. Primary education in Thailand

lasts for a total of 12 years, divided into three parts: three years of lower secondary education (Mattayom 1-3 or Grade 7-9), three years of upper secondary education (Mattayom 4-5 or Grade 10-12), and six years of primary education (Pratom or Grade 1-6). Primary education must be accessible to all children of school age [16].

For this study, the participant students are junior high school students who study in a medium-sized public school located in Ayutthaya in two regular programs, i.e., English-Chinese and English-Japanese. Totally there are 1,269 students from grades 7-9 (435, 420, and 414 respectively). Among them, 689 are male and 580 are female students. Ages from 12-15. For the response rate, 355 responses were received. The demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

This questionnaire comprises participants' demographic information and items for the L2 motivational self-system. The first part was used to obtain students' background information, such as grades, gender, program of study, GPA, and experience traveling or living abroad. Items in the second part in a 5-point Likert scale format were mainly adopted from the existing literature[13]. Part 2 looks at the L2 motivational self-system's three facets: Ideal L2 self (10 items), which assesses participants' desire to become proficient English users in the future and their ideal self-image as proficient English users. Ought-to L2 self (10 items) asks participants if they learn English to fulfill their commitments and avoid negative consequences and assessments. Ten measures measuring participants' perceptions toward their prior English learning setting and experience comprise the L2 learning experience.

Table 1. Demographic Information of Participants (n = 355)

Category	Sub-category	Total n=355		Females n=191		Males n=164	
		Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Grade	7	163	45.92%	89	25.07%	74	20.85%
	8	97	27.32%	48	13.52%	49	13.80%
	9	95	26.76%	54	15.21%	41	11.55%
Program of study	English-Chinese	192	54.10%	82	23.10%	82	23.10%
	English-Japanese	163	45.90%	109	30.70%	82	23.10%
English GPAX	Grade 4	47	13.20%	28	7.90%	19	5.35%
	Grade 3.5	51	14.40%	26	7.32%	25	7.04%
	Grade 3	83	23.40%	43	12.11%	40	11.27%
	Grade 2.5	67	18.90%	37	10.42%	30	8.45%
	Grade 2	27	7.60%	17	4.79%	10	3.82%
	Grade 1.5	29	8.20%	13	3.67%	16	4.51%
	Grade 1	38	10.70%	19	5.35%	19	5.35%
	Grade 0	13	3.70%	8	2.25%	5	1.41%
Experience of abroad	Travelled abroad	33	9.30%	14	3.94%	19	5.35%
	Studied abroad	8	2.30%	6	1.70%	2	0.56%
	Exchange student	6	1.69%	2	0.56%	4	1.13%
	Never been abroad	307	86.47%	168	47.61%	139	39.15%

4.3. Instruments

The questionnaire was adopted from Swatevacharkul [16]. The Thai version of the L2MSS questionnaire consisted of 30 statements: 10 statements each for the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience. The five-point scale was utilized in this L2MSS questionnaire because the 5-point rating will not overwhelm younger participants and is more typical of Thai pupils. In addition, the 5-point scale of the

online questionnaire performed better on the screen of a mobile device than the larger scale [16].

The participants gave their opinions ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. For the interpretation of the rating scores, 4.21-5.00 indicates very high, 3.41-4.20 indicates high, 2.61-3.40 indicates moderate, 1.81-2.60 indicates low, and 1.00-1.80 indicates extremely low, according to the interpretation. Before filling out the questionnaire, students were first informed about the purpose of data collection and

were told that it was anonymous.

4.4. Data Collection

With a permission from the school, students signed in the Google Form to participate in the study. The participants completed the online survey during class in early September of 2024. The questionnaire is divided into four parts. The participants' demographics, including gender, grade, study program, and grade point, were gathered in the first section. The three L2MSS components -- the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience -- are divided into three sections. Each component has ten items in total.

4.5. Data Analysis

To analyze the L2MSS of the participants, the score of each component of the L2MSS was computed using SPSS 22 to determine the mean and standard deviation (SD). An independent samples t-test was calculated to test the hypothesis: there are significant differences in terms of the L2MSS between male and female students.

5. Findings

For research question 1, it was found that the three components of the L2MSS were rated moderate. Note that the L2 learning experience was rated the highest with a mean of 3.200 (SD = 0.892), followed by the ought-to L2 self with a mean of 3.084 (SD = 0.872). The Ideal L2 self was reported as the third and the lowest, with a mean of 2.920 (SD = 0.872). Table 2 displays the findings.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviations of the L2MSS

Constructs	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Ideal L2 self	2.920	0.872	Moderate
Ought-to L2 self	3.084	0.872	Moderate
L2 learning experience	3.200	0.892	Moderate

Furthermore, the findings of the mean and SD of each item of the L2MSS were illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations of Each Item of the L2MSS

Ideal L2 self			ought-to L2 self			L2 learning experience		
Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	2.952	1.097	11	2.921	1.212	21	3.214	1.142
2	2.848	1.112	12	3.070	1.268	22	3.369	1.116
3	3.023	1.145	13	3.096	1.187	23	2.944	1.163
4	2.873	1.151	14	3.237	1.167	24	3.011	1.191
5	2.958	1.177	15	3.107	1.130	25	2.820	1.182
6	2.552	1.212	16	3.177	1.157	26	3.389	1.177
7	2.938	1.227	17	3.197	1.228	27	3.549	1.174
8	3.341	1.219	18	3.259	1.105	28	3.158	1.151
9	2.755	1.157	19	2.921	1.135	29	3.183	1.101
10	2.961	1.253	20	2.851	1.261	30	3.361	1.130

From Table 3, for the ideal L2 self, every item was rated moderate. Item 8 showed the highest motivation on the Ideal L2 self (*The things I want to do in the future require me to use English.*). However, item 6 (*I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native English speaker*) was the lowest of 30 items (mean = 2.552),

Regarding the ought-to L2 self, all of the items were reported as moderate. Among them, item 18 (*Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.*) was the

highest (mean = 3.259). It was closely followed by item 14 (*My parents believe I must study English to be educated*). In contrast, item 20 was the lowest (*If I fail to learn English, I will let other people down.*), with a mean of 2.851.

In terms of the L2 learning experience, noticeably, item 27 (*I like my English teachers because of their fun English classes*) is the only one out of 30 items which was rated high (mean = 3.549). Item 25 was the lowest (*I would like to have more English classes at school*).

Table 4. Differences in the L2MSS Components between Males and Females

	Male		Female		df	t	p
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Ideal L2 self	2.951	0.920	2.894	0.831	353	0.612	0.541
Ought-to L2 self	3.117	0.948	3.055	0.803	353	0.660	0.510
L2 learning experience	3.304	0.925	3.111	0.855	353	2.044	0.042

For the second research question, it was found that there were no significant differences of male and female students in terms of the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self ($p > 0.050$).

The research hypothesis was rejected as a result. However, there was a significant difference between male and female participants in terms of their L2 learning experience ($p <$

0.050). This means that males tended to have more positive L2 learning experience than females. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted for this component. Table 4 shows the findings.

6. Discussion

For the first research question, the findings revealed that the three components of the L2MSS were at a moderate level. The findings are in line with the study of Irgatoğlu [42] conducted with junior high school students in Turkey. The are some explanations as follows.

6.1. The Minor Roles of Self-system Motivation for Junior High School Students

The result of the ideal L2 self was at the moderate level and the lowest among the three components of the L2MSS. This result was consistent with Welesilassie and Nikolov [54], who found that students were only moderately motivated to see themselves as proficient English speakers and expressed a low to moderate ideal L2 self. However, it is not consistent with the study by Prompakdee [17] and Swatevacharkul [16] revealing a high ideal L2 self of English program junior high students and senior high students respectively. This finding may be due to an English proficiency of the participants. Approximately 50% of these students are moderate learners, so their English skills are developing (see Table 1). Learners who have not yet reached advanced proficiency may not fully envision English as central to their future selves, whether ideal or required. Lamb [55] states that learners' motivational selves are strongly tied to their perceived language competence. If students perceive their English abilities as insufficient, their Ideal L2 self -- a vision of their future self as a competent English user -- may be less developed. Supported by Peng [13], students who have a high ideal L2 self and motivation to learn English mainly stem from their desire to become better versions of themselves in the future and the internalized ambition of being a proficient English user consumes the ideal L2 self. The participants of this present study are junior high students whose English may not developed to become a proficient user of English.

Another significant factor is the age of these students. Junior high school students are still in the early stages of their educational journey. They may still need to be seriously considering their higher education or future careers, which often necessitate proficiency in English. Dörnyei [23] emphasizes that the ideal L2 self is typically linked to long-term goals such as career aspirations or university studies. Swatevacharkul [16] mentioned that a future career vision to become a language user is powerful enough to maintain or invest in learning efforts. At this stage, these students may not feel an immediate need to integrate English into their future identities, leading to a moderate level of ideal self about English.

Moreover, the students participants' ideal L2 self may be shaped by the school's location. Students' exposure to English may be limited by the school's location outside of the capital city, away from the cosmopolitan and globalized contexts emphasizing English as a critical skill. Because of their remote location, the student's goals to become an ideal L2 self may be further dampened by the decreased importance of English in their daily life. Learners who reside in more isolated or less internationally connected places are less likely to think that English is directly relevant to their social and

professional situations, which lowers their motivation to acquire a second language [56].

Regarding the moderate ought-to L2 self, this finding was similar to Swatevacharkul [16]. According to Taguchi et al. [29], the ought-to L2 self-factor significantly contributes to the variation in learners' motivated behavior in Asian contexts. Because of the outside influences pupils encounter, it is possible that the ought-to L2 self is moderate. In a school outside the capital, external expectations, such as parental or societal pressure to learn English, might be less pronounced than students in more urban settings. Consequently, students may feel a lower sense of obligation or external pressure to learn English, leading to moderate levels of the ought-to L2 self. This aligns with Dörnyei's [23] model, which suggests that the ought-to L2 self is shaped by external factors, such as social expectations, which may vary depending on geographic and socioeconomic factors.

6.2. The Crucial Role of L2 Learning Experiences

Although the L2 learning experience was found at the moderate level, it was the highest rated component among the L2MSS. The findings are consistent with those of Papi [56], You and Dörnyei [52], and Zhao [41]. The findings clearly indicate the crucial role of the positive and effective L2 learning experience. As Dörnyei [23] stated, some students' initial motivation does not come from pursuing an ideal self-image but rather from an enjoyable learning experience during the learning process. Language experiences can contribute to students' positive language achievements. The indirect effect of enjoying the support of teachers and students in English language achievement was achieved through enjoying English language learning [57]. Similarly, the L2 learning experience was found to have the most vital relationship with student achievement [25]. Supported by Poonlarp [58], the L2 learning experience significantly contributes to L2 achievement among university students in Thailand. Therefore, it can be said that the L2 learning experience is the vital factor of academic success of students at all levels, indicating that students' present learning environments and positive attitudes toward the language-learning process play a critical role in their performance.

Specific to this study, item 27 (*I like my English teachers because of their fun English classes.*) was the highest, and it was the only one item which was rated high and is definitely worth discussion. Teachers are important to create effective learning experiences to develop foreign language learning motivation. Positive L2 learning experiences are more potential to increase learning motivation than the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. Teaching methodology, materials and assessment should be taken into account when teachers plan lessons. As suggested by Lee et al. [12], a positive classroom environment with strong teacher support is positively associated with students' intrinsic motivation and use of learning strategies. For classroom practice, English instructors should employ various teaching pedagogies and game-based approaches, which could promote students' learning experience [59]. A high level of second language learning experience is attributed to the teacher, and at the same time, the teacher's central role in creating a conducive second language learning environment fosters students' motivation to learn by providing opportunities to practice their English skills. Strongly argued by Swatevacharkul [16],

teachers are vital in the process of creating positive L2 learning experiences for students.

For the second research question: Are there significant differences between male and female students in the three constructs of the L2MSS? The results displayed that the ideal L2 self and ought to L2 self had no significant difference in gender ($p > 0.05$). Nevertheless, there was a significant difference between genders and the L2 learning experience ($p < 0.05$) indicating that males have more positive L2 learning experience than females. These findings contradict many other studies on the link between gender and characteristics of second language learners [6, 49, 51, 52]. The study showed that both genders had a moderate ideal and ought-to L2 self. Basically, these self-system motivation connects with future career envision. Using a vision of the future in language can effectively ignite an ideal and ought-to L2 self motivation. Future career vision with the ultimate goal of becoming a user of the language is powerful to maintain or invest learning effort. With this positive attitude towards learning the language, learning to improve their language skills and achieving their future career goals can be invested in and maintained [16]. Therefore, studying English for purposes relevant to their future education and employment is considered crucial for students of both genders. However, the participants of this present study are junior high students who will need three to five years for their senior high school education. It might be possible that they have not seriously considered about their future careers or education. For Dörnyei and Ushioda [10], professional success is regardless of gender.

An explanation for the L2 learning experience and gender difference is the greater access to extracurricular opportunities and language exposure that males may experience. Studies on Thai education systems indicate that male students are more likely to engage in gaming, online forums, and social media platforms where English is often the dominant language [60]. These informal contexts can contribute to more significant L2 learning experiences outside the classroom, allowing male learners to develop their language skills in a more dynamic, immersive environment. Additionally, Thai males may experience different classroom dynamics that contribute to their perceived L2 learning experience. Thai classrooms, especially in urban areas, may still reflect traditional gender roles, where male students may feel less pressure to conform to passive learning styles and engage more actively in class discussions or seek additional help when needed [61]. This greater classroom participation can enhance their L2 learning experience by giving them more opportunities to practice and receive feedback in English.

7. Conclusion

In this study using the L2MSS theoretical framework, the results from the questionnaire showed that on average the Ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self, and the L2 learning experience were moderate. Note that L2 learning experience was rated the highest among the 3 components, in terms of gender and the L2MSS, there are no significant difference in the ideal and ought-to L2 self. However, the L2 learning experience revealed the significant difference, which indicated that males seem to have higher positive attitudes towards L2 learning experience than females.

For English language pedagogy, instructors are essential to this process because they create a warm, inclusive classroom

atmosphere that values teamwork. To draw pupils, it is essential to highlight the valuable advantages of learning a language, such as more options for travel and employment. To effectively integrate these outcomes and create a well-rounded and motivating educational experience for students, recommendations include assisting teachers in their ongoing professional development, fostering collaboration among educators, and involving parents in their children's language learning processes.

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