Literature Review on Second Language Motivational Self System

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ABSTRACT.*As the dominant theory of the research field of L2 learning motivation, L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) has proven itself adaptable to conceptual innovations. On the basis of analyzing and summarizing the relevant literature, this paper reviews the latest studies on L2MSS from four aspects: 1) the verification of L2MSS; 2) the relationship between L2MSS and L2 learning, including individual's subjective intended effort, learning behaviors and learning achievement; 3) the influence factors of L2MSS; 4) the theory development of L2MSS.*

KEYWORDS: *literature review; L2 Motivational Self System; ideal L2 self; ought-to L2 self; L2 learning experience;*

1. Introduction

L2 learning motivation is one of the most important fields of L2 acquisition. Since 21th century, the development of L2 learning motivation has mainly embodied in the new explanation of "integrativeness" under the background of globalizations by referring to the related theories of personality psychology and sociocultural science. In 2005, Dörnyei put forward a new theory called L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), which was based on the theories of possible selves and future self-discrepancy theory in psychological field. IT includes three core components, which are ideal self, ought-to self and L2 learning experience. Dörnyei (2005) conceptualizes the ideal self as encompassing a wide range of components such as ideal L2 self, cultural interest, integrativeness, instrumentality promotion, attitude to L2 community[1]. By contrast, the ought-to dimension responds to external demands such as family influence, and avoids negative outcomes resulting from external expectations (instrumentality prevention). L2 learning experience refers to the motivation related to the learners' immediate L2 learning situation and experiences, for instance, the effect of their teachers, the curriculum and the successful experiences. And the learners' L2 learning experiences are also affected by their past learning experiences.

2. Review of foreign studies on L2MSS

2.1 Researches focusing on the verification of L2MSS

Since the L2 Motivational Self System theory was proposed, scholars around the world have conducted a sea of empirical studies to verify the core concepts of it in different sociocultural situations. For example, Doiz & Lasgabaster (2018) studied university students' and teachers' L2MSS from a qualitative perspective in the way of focus groups[2]. The results revealed that the ideal self prevailed over the ought-to self in the case of the teachers, while both components were more balanced among students. Kong at al. (2018) compared L2 learning motivation between commonly taught language and less commonly taught language learners in university in South Korea and their research results proved the validity of Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System[3]. The Chinese scholar Liu (2015) carried out an empirical study and found out that L2MSS was acceptable among different groups of English learners in China[4]. From the studies above, L2MSS theory has been proved to be scientific and can be applied into different sociocultural situations.

2.2 Researcher focusing on the relationship between LSMSS and L2 learning

The relationship between L2MSS and L2 learning, more specifically, L2 learner's subjective intended effort, learning behavior, learning grades and other aspect of L2 learning, is one of the major research directions of L2MSS.

In terms of the relationship between L2MSS and L2 learner's subjective intended effort, many scholar conducted studies from the perspective of social psychology and found that L2MSS played an important role in predicting L2 learner's subjective effort level. Al-Hoorie(2018)reported the first meta-analysis of L2MSS. A total of 32 study reports, involving 39 unique samples and 32,078 language learners, were meta-analyzed[5]. The results showed that the three components of the L2MSS were significant predictors of subjective intended effort. From the aspect of the relationship between L2MSS and L2 learning behaviors, Lee & Lo(2017)studied L2 learners' attitude toward classroom language choice through a questionnaire among Korean undergraduate students[6]. The result indicated that the students who acquired higher scores on the "ideal L2 self" scale were more in favor of an English-only learning approach. Chen (2019) conducted a questionnaire investigation among 294 undergraduate students in China and concluded that the three components of L2MSS, especially the ideal L2 self, were the direct and significant positive predictors for students' classroom participation behavior[7]. In addition, many studies were intended to explore the relationship between L2MSS and L2 achievement. Wong (2018) explored the structural relationships between L2 learners' L2-specific future self-guides, motivated learning behavior, and L2 achievement among young Chinese as a second language learners in Hong Kong. The study result supported the predictive influence of the L2 selves, with motivated behavior as a mediating link, on L2 achievement[8].

2.3 Researches focus on the influence factors of L2MSS

The influence factors of L2MSS can be classified into internal factors and external factors. Internal factor includes self-regulation competence, learner beliefs, attitude towards L2 Speakers and so on. Zheng et al.(2018)explored a structural relationship model that integrates English language learners' motivation with their online self-regulation[9]. Two questionnaires, Online Language Learning Motivation and Online Self-regulated English Learning, were developed and administered to 293 Chinese university students. The study result revealed that students with a positive future image of their language learning and an internal interest in English culture tended to have better self-regulatory capacity in online learning environments. Yashima et al. (2017) investigated two types of learner beliefs reflecting L2 learning experience. The results showed that Communication Orientation (the tendency to value extensive use of language) affected ideal L2 self more than ought-to L2 self, while the Grammar–Translation Orientation (the tendency to value learning grammar explicitly) had a stronger influence on ought-to L2 self[10].

As for the external factors, social background, family background, overseas education backgrounds and other contextual factors are included. Fryer & Roger(2018)investigated the effects of study abroad experiences on the change of L2 self through a longitudinal study of 8 Japanese university students[11]. The study results indicated that short-term study abroad enabled learners to experience possible futures, with sustained effects on the clarity and availability of their future self visions and motivated language learning behaviors. Zhan & Hong (2015) discussed the influence of family backgrounds on English learners' L2MSS and learning behavior[12]. They found that family background had a significant influence on learners' ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self. Students with upper family background were generally motivated by ideal L2 self, while students whose family background were of middle or lower levels were mainly motivated by L2 learning experience.

2.4 Researches focus on the theory development of L2MSS

During the past decades, L2 learning motivation research has a monolingual bias, which proposes a question that whether the L2MSS theory is acceptable to languages other than English (LOTEs). In addition, there are still ambiguities exist regarding the definition of some core concepts, such as "self" within the theory. To revise the problems in current discussion of language learner motivation, Lanvers(2016)proposed a new model called Self Discrepancy Model[13]. He claimed that this new model was more adaptable to different contextual situations. While Henry(2017) spoke in favor of the dynamic nature of L2MSS, and he claimed that "since the self guides forming the centerpieces of Dörnyei's model are inherently dynamic, the motivational self system approach is ideally suited to studying the evolution and development to multilinguals' language learning motivation as a dynamic process"[14]. Dörnyei himself also admitted that L2MSS as a new theory needed more evidence to improve itself. For the future development of L2MSS, Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie(2017) suggested five research directions: (1) the confounding interaction of English- and LOTE-related selfimages; (2) the

individualistic focus of the ideal L2 self; (3) the different nature/role of the ought-to self associated with languages with substantial versus marginal social support; (4) the different nature of goals in the learning of English and LOTEs; (5) the differing role of unconscious motives in the study of English and LOTEs[14].

3. Conclusion

Among the conceptual frameworks of L2 learning motivation, the L2 Motivational Self System is currently dominant undoubtedly. Overall, the L2MSS has yielded many pedagogically valuable insights, and has proven itself adaptable to conceptual innovations. As for the future development, the definition of the core concepts within the system and the interrelation among them need a clearer description. In addition, as one size is unlikely to fit all, studies need to look at different learner groups with different contextual factors.

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