

A Structural Equation Model on English Learning Self of Middle School Students in China's Ethnic Minority Populated Area

Yunyun Xuan

Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Xiao Xie*

Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Vahid Nimehchisalem

Department of English, Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Abstract—As the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) is premised on monolingualism, which ignores the cross-cutting properties of multilingual environments, this study investigates the English Learning Self and its structural characteristics of students in a junior high school in a minority-inhabited area of Guizhou Province, China. These ethnic minority students not only learn their native language (minority languages), but also learn Mandarin Chinese, through which they learn English as their third language, with features of low English proficiency, weak *motivation* to learn English, and low frequency of English use. Data were collected from 159 Han Chinese students and 274 ethnic minority students in the eighth grade of the junior high school. Structural equation modelling revealed that the Ideal English Self contains three factors: Ideal English Learner, Ideal English Career and Ideal English User, and the most significant Ideal English Self exhibited by the middle school students was Ideal English Learner; while the Ought-to English Self contains three factors: Meeting Other's Expectation, Self's Future Expectation and Self's Present Demand, with Meeting Other's Expectation marking contributed the most. Through comparative analysis, this study further found that there was no significant difference between local Han Chinese students and ethnic minority students in terms of English Learning Self.

Index Terms—English learning self, ideal English self, ought-to English self

I. INTRODUCTION

The L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) proposed by Dörnyei (2005) places language learning motivation in the context of globalisation, emphasising individual initiative and personal self-realization as a source of motivation for learning behaviour (Xu, 2015). As the L2 Motivational Self System is premised on monolingualism (Alastair, 2017), it ignores the cross-cutting properties of multilingual contexts, and therefore a separatist approach does not provide sufficient insight for language learners when learning two or more languages. Researchers need to extend the theory to verify the extent to which it explains motivational factors in multilingual contexts. On the other hand, in previous studies, there has been a greater focus on university students with a higher level of proficiency in English (Papi et al., 2018; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013; Wei & Fan, 2016; Xu, 2015), or secondary school students in environments where English is widely used as a second language in everyday life (Thorsen et al., 2017), which undoubtedly neglects to focus on EFL learners in less economically developed areas, where students often have low English proficiency, low motivation to learn English and use English infrequently.

The study of the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) becomes more complex in areas of China populated by ethnic minorities. Guizhou province, located in south-western China, is a province with a high concentration of ethnic minorities, with the largest population of Miao and Buyi. English language education in ethnic minority communities has a complex relationship with cultural value orientations, economic income levels and ethnic identity. For Han Chinese students in the region, English is the second language they learn at school, while for ethnic minority students, who speak their mother tongue (the minority languages) and Mandarin Chinese, English is the third language they learn. When ethnic minority students learn English, they are engaged in a cross-language learning process. In this context, most junior high school students in minority populated areas do not perform well in English (Yang & Zhou, 2012), have

* Corresponding Author. Email: gs58879@student.upm.edu.my

weak motivation to learn English (Cheng, 2016; Xiang, 2020), and even show negative motivation (Cai, 2021). The general psychological resistance of students to learning English is partly due to their psychological distance from the English language and culture (Cui, 2021; Liu & Tian, 2019; Xiang, 2020; Yuan, 2019). It is extremely important and urgent for local frontline teachers to foster strong and persistent motivation in their students to overcome these difficulties and barriers to language learning.

Several studies have shown that the Ideal English Self should have a positive effect on English learning (Papi et al., 2018; Peng, 2015; Takeuchi, 2013; Wei, 2013). As for students in ethnic minority areas, low levels of English Learning Self do not promote and sustain their English learning motivation and behaviour (Wei, 2013). In this study, we selected junior high school students from an ethnic minority region in China as the target population, specifically, by analysing the situation in the Buyi Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Guizhou Province, to study the motivational characteristics of local students in English learning and to compare the differences in motivational factors among students from different ethnic and language backgrounds.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), motivation is conceptualized to be generated by discomfort associated with the learner's experience of a discrepancy between their Present L2 Self, and their Ideal L2 Self (Dörnyei, 2005; Thorsen et al. 2017). The system consists of three parts: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. More specifically, Dörnyei (2009) defined the Ideal English Self as "a powerful motivator to learn the L2 because of the desire to reduce the discrepancy between our actual and ideal selves" (p. 29), and the Ought-to English Self as "attributes that one believes one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes" (p. 29).

Regarding the Ideal L2 Self, researchers generally agree that the concept is closely related to the future, but they have divided it from different perspectives. From a temporal perspective, Ueki and Takeuchi (2013) surveyed 302 Japanese university students and distinguished between macro and micro conceptions of the Ideal L2 Self, with the former spanning a long period after graduating from university, while the latter focused only on the university period during which learners were able to imagine the level of the second language they are going to achieve. From the perspective of identity, Papi et al. (2018) divided the Ideal L2 Self into two distinct positions of learner and others important to the learner, and the validity of this division is supported by empirical data from 257 international university students studying in the United States. In contrast to neither Takeuchi (2013) nor Papi et al. (2018), who did not concretize the concept of the Ideal L2 Self into directly measurable indicators, Wei and Fan (2016) specifically categorized it into the Ideal L2 Communicator, the Ideal L2 Learner and the Ideal L2 Media User, through an open-ended questionnaire survey of 1,331 sophomore students from five Chinese universities.

The consensus among some researchers, regarding the Ought-to L2 Self, is that it should refer to the attributes that learners believe they should have to meet the expectations of others. Wei and Fan (2016) pointed out that the Ought-to L2 Self should include the factors of meeting others' expectations and avoiding negative evaluations, which is largely similar to Dörnyei's (2005) definition. Papi et al. (2018) proposed that Ought-to L2 Self should be distinguished between meeting others' expectations and meeting one's expectations in terms of stance.

However, some scholars have questioned the interpretation and completeness of Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS model. Xu (2015) pointed out the bias in the integration of the theory with the process-oriented motivation research model, and the lack of a corresponding L2 self-motivational element in the action phase. Because the Ideal Self and Ought-to Self in the L2MSS are both Possible Self, and the L2 Learning Experience, related to the immediate learning environment and experience, belongs to a Past Self. The Present Self is ignored and not covered under this systematic framework. Xu's (2015) validation results using more than 1000 Chinese university students as participants suggested that the L2 Motivational Self System should consist of the Possible Self, the Present Self and the Past Self. The L2 Present Self and the Past Self cyclically and repeatedly transformed with the Possible Self to provide continuous motivation for L2 learning. Thorsen et al. (2017) declared that the discrepancy between the Present L2 Self and the Ideal L2 Self is not operationalized, thus they suggested the inclusion of a variable measuring the Present L2 Self, and drew on two independent samples, namely the seventh-grade cohort and the ninth-grade cohort of students learning English in Sweden.

Further investigation of motivational dynamics should take into account the gaps and limitations of the previously mentioned literature. Firstly, Ueki and Takeuchi's (2013) participants of the study were English majors who had planned to join a study abroad programme, excluding learners' EFL proficiency or achievement in the model. Secondly, because the participants were not learning English in an instructional setting, such as an ESL centre, Papi et al. (2018) suggested that investigating in instructional settings is likely to result in a different range of strategies predicted by selves from the standpoint of others. Thirdly, Xu (2015), whose participants were Chinese university students, assumed that learners had a clear understanding and goal for their possible English Learning Self, so this study could not explore the various forms of motivational selves that they had not yet recognised but that had been influencing their English learning. Lastly, a particular limitation in Thorsen et al.'s (2017) study is that, for the ninth-grade cohort, data were not collected at two of the schools. To further ensure that cohort effects did not affect the results, the analysis sample in the report excluded those two schools with missing data for the ninth grade.

Despite the considerable progress in relevant studies, researchers have struggled to reach a complete agreement on the attributes and types of L2 Motivation. The literature reveals little research on the motivation of learners with relatively low proficiency in English and even less research on junior high school students from ethnic minority areas in multilingual contexts.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION

To increase sensitivity to the L2 Motivational Self System, this study proposes to investigate the following question regarding the cohort of Han Chinese students and the cohort of ethnic minority students:

What are the structure of the Ideal English Self and Ought-to English Self of junior high school students in such an ethnic minority populated area?

IV. PARTICIPANTS

From September to December in the year 2021, the eighth-grade students from a junior high school in the Buyi Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Guizhou Province participated in this study. In the first round of the reliability measurement phase, the researcher randomly selected a class of 20 Han Chinese students and 24 ethnic minority students. In the second round, excluding the 44 participants mentioned above, all other students in the eighth grade participated in the data collection process, including 159 Han Chinese students and 274 ethnic minority students. Among the ethnic minority students, 101 were Miao students, 166 were Buyi students and 7 were students of other ethnic groups. For this research project, an intact and convenient sampling method was used to select student participants. This sampling was purposeful because this cohort of students was in their second year of study in junior high school, they had experience in learning English and were less stressed about the high school entrance exam. A convenience sampling method was also used as one of the researchers was also the English teacher for some of the students in the junior high school.

V. INSTRUMENTS

The English Learning Self Scale (hereafter referred to as ‘the scale’, see Appendix 1) used in this study was mainly administered through a top-down approach in which the researcher synthesised the previous findings (Taguchi et al., 2009; Wei & Fan, 2016; Xu, 2015). Firstly, regarding future careers, Taguchi et al. (2009) did not provide some specific career images, which hindered the participants’ responses. In this case, the scale further elaborated the career images into specific categories, such as diplomat, interpreter, white-collar worker, English professor and CEO of a multinational company. Similarly, the straight-A student image in Wei and Fan’s (2016) study, was categorised according to different academic achievements as the best English language learner in school, a straight-A college student majoring in English, a student who obtained the TEM-8 (Test for English Majors-Band 8) qualification, and a student who scored a perfect score on an English test. Finally, a new and relevant item was added to the scale, responding that being good at English will enable them to make more friends in the future. The final version of the scale consisted of 16 items on the Ideal English Self and 13 items on the Ought-to English Self, using a five-point Likert scale. “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Not necessarily”, “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” were marked as 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively.

VI. PROCEDURE

To demonstrate the reliability of the instrument, researchers distributed the scale to a class of students in the school. The quantitative data was then entered into SPSS 23.0 and further analysed to test its internal consistency. As shown in Table 1, Cronbach’s α coefficients were both greater than 0.80. According to Qin (2003), Cronbach’s α values above 0.70 are acceptable for the social sciences. Therefore, we consider the Cronbach’s alpha values for these two dimensions to be acceptable and reliable, and the scale is suitable for use in the second phase of the study.

TABLE 1
RELIABILITY OF THE PILOT TEST

Dimension of the Scale	n	Cronbach’s α coefficient value
Ideal English Self	16	0.826
Ought-to English Self	13	0.847

The formal round of data collection was conducted in December 2021. When the paper version of the scale, written in Chinese, was distributed to the students, the researcher first explained the purpose of the study to the participants to ensure that the data would be used for research purposes only. Next, the content of the scale was explained to the students when it was necessary, to ensure that authentic and valid data could be collected. Finally, students were asked to complete it within 20 minutes. The researcher collected the data on the spot and then entered it into the software packages of SPSS 23.0 and AMOS 24.0 for further analysis.

VII. RESULT

To investigate the structures of Ideal English Self and Ought-to English Self, exploratory factor analysis was conducted using the software package SPSS 23.0.

The Bartlett's sphere test for the Ideal English Self was significant ($\chi^2 = 225.262$, $df = 97$, $p = .000$) with a KMO coefficient of 0.911 (> 0.80), making the data suitable for factor analysis. A principal component factor analysis with maximum variance rotation was used and the total variance explained by the three factors was 53.796% and the eigenvalues of each factor were 36.779%, 9.922% and 7.095%, respectively. The factor naming and data analysis are shown in Table 2.

The three factors of the Ideal English Self are as follows: (1) Ideal English Learner (IEL) is the best level students believe they can achieve during their studies, for example, "When I study English, I imagine I am the best English language learner in our school"; (2) Ideal English Career (IEC) is the image students have in their future English-related careers, for example, "When I study English, I imagine I am an English-Chinese translator"; and (3) Ideal English User (IEU) is the image of the student in a future life where he or she can communicate fluently in English, for example, "I can imagine myself speaking English with international friends or colleagues". As Table 3 shows, the Cronbach's α values for the three factors analysed for Ideal English Self were 0.825, 0.813 and 0.784, respectively, so the data have a high degree of reliability (Qin, 2003).

TABLE 2
EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS OF IDEAL ENGLISH SELF

	Ideal English Learner		Ideal English Career		Ideal English User	
	Item No.	Factor load	Item No.	Factor load	Item No.	Factor load
	IES 16	0.795	IES 2	0.773	IES 6	0.789
	IES 4	0.764	IES 1	0.734	IES 10	0.590
	IES 15	0.662	IES 3	0.729	IES 7	0.524
	IES 5	0.589	IES 8	0.636		
	IES 11	0.610	IES 9	0.448		
	IES 12	0.617	IES 14	0.510		
	IES 13	0.496				
Eigenvalues	5.885		1.588		1.135	
Variance (%)	36.779		9.922		7.095	
Cumulative (%)	36.779		46.701		53.796	

TABLE 3
RELIABILITY OF IDEAL ENGLISH SELF

Ideal English Self's Factor	n	Cronbach's α coefficient value
Ideal English Learner	7	0.825
Ideal English Career	6	0.813
Ideal English User	3	0.784

The Bartlett's sphere test for the Ought-to English Self was significant ($\chi^2 = 91.697$, $df = 46$, $p = .000$) with a KMO coefficient of 0.859 (> 0.80), making the data suitable for factor analysis. The results of the maximum variance rotation of the principal component factor analysis showed that there were three factors and the total variance explained by the three factors was 61.854%, with individual factor eigenvalues of 37.186%, 16.419% and 7.746%, respectively. The factor naming and data analysis are shown in Table 4.

The three factors of the Ought-to English Self are named as follows: (1) Meeting Others' Expectation (MOE) is related to the attributes that students should have in learning English to meet their family and friend's expectations, for example, "I study English because my friends around me think it is important"; (2) Self's Future Expectation (SFE) is related to the attributes that students should have in learning English to achieve their aspirations, for example, "I should learn English because it will enable me to make more friends in the future"; and (3) Self's Present Demand (SPD) is related to the attributes that students believe they should have during their English learning, for example, "I have to learn English because, if I don't, I think my parents will be disappointed with me". Analysis of the three factors for Ought-to English Self, as shown in Table 5, revealed Cronbach's α values of 0.806, 0.829, and 0.751, respectively, thus giving the data high reliability (Qin, 2003).

TABLE 4
EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS OF OUGHT-TO ENGLISH SELF

	Meeting Others' Expectation		Self's Future Expectation		Self's Present Demand	
	Item No.	Factor load	Item No.	Factor load	Item No.	Factor load
	OES 3	0.748	OES 8	0.827	OES 11	0.723
	OES 1	0.725	OES 9	0.856	OES 12	0.681
	OES 6	0.698	OES 10	0.704	OES 13	0.680
	OES 2	0.668			OES 4	0.591
	OES 5	0.778			OES 7	0.528
Eigenvalues	4.834		2.134		1.002	
Variance (%)	37.186		16.419		7.746	
Cumulative (%)	37.186		53.605		61.351	

TABLE 5
RELIABILITY OF OUGHT-TO ENGLISH SELF

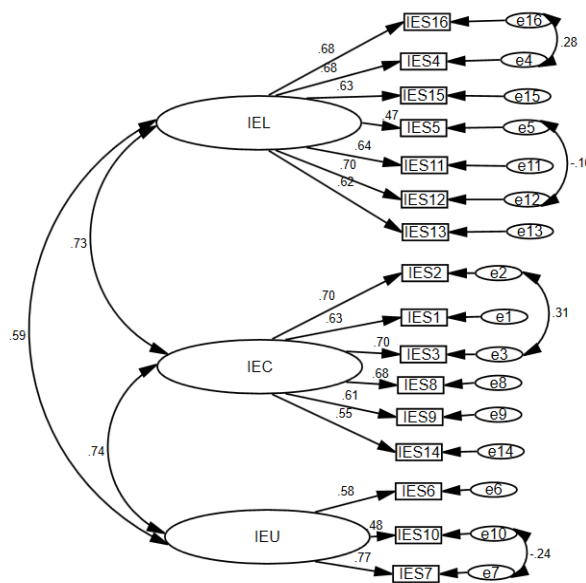
Ought-to English Self's Factor	n	Cronbach's α coefficient value
Meeting Others' Expectation	5	0.806
Self's Future Expectation	3	0.829
Self's Present Demand	5	0.751

To validate the results of the exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using the software packaged AMOS 24.0. As shown in Table 6, this study used the three-factor validation model of the Ideal English Self and the three-factor validation model of the Ought-to English Self. Generally, a p-value of greater than .05 is required to conclude that there is no significant difference between the theoretical model and the data. However, when the sample size increases, the cardinality value also increases, resulting in a p-value of less than .05 to reach a significant level, so this study will refer to another value, the ratio of cardinality to degrees of freedom (CMIN/DF), when it is less than 5, the theoretical model is considered to fit well with the data (Xu, 2019). The goodness of fit index (GFI) indicates whether the theoretical model fits the data well and ranges from 0 to 1. It is generally considered that the theoretical model fits the data well when it is greater than or equal to 0.90 (Wu, 2009; Xu, 2019). Another important indicator is the comparative fit index (CFI), which assumes that the theoretical model is the worst of all models and examines the degree of discrepancy between the theoretical model and the data, and takes a value between 0 and 1. It is generally accepted that when the CFI is greater than or equal to 0.90, the difference between the worst model in the hypothesis and the data is greatest, implying that the theoretical model is supported by the data (Wu, 2009; Xu, 2019).

As can be seen from Table 6, all the indicators of the three-factor structural model of the Ideal English Self are in the good range and are valid. In the three-factor structural model of the Ought-to-English Self, all indicators were in the valid range except for the AGFI and RMR, which were close to the standard values. Xu (2019) suggests that when conducting SEM analysis, one needs to refer to most indicators and adapt them to circumstances based on the theoretical basis, rather than mechanically using the indicators as the only criteria. GFI as the goodness-of-fit index is in the valid range, while AGFI as an adjusted index is usually slightly smaller. Wu (2009) states that "RMSEA is more stable and less susceptible to sample effects than RMR, and is, therefore, more accurate when evaluating model fit" (p. 44). The values associated with the GFI and RMSEA in this study were in line with the criteria and therefore the three-factor structural model of the Ought-to English Self was judged to be acceptable. The path diagrams of the three-factor model for the Ideal English Self and the Ought-to English Self are shown in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

TABLE 6
CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS

Index name	CMIN/DF	p	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA
Common standard	≤ 5	> 0.05	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≥ 0.90	≤ 0.10	≤ 0.08
IES	2.322	0.000	0.941	0.918	0.944	0.080	0.055
OES	3.710	0.000	0.934	0.894	0.928	0.127	0.079



CMIN/DF=2.322 p=.000
GFI=.941 AGFI=.918 CFI=.944
RMSEA=.055 RMR=.080

Figure 1 The Three-Factor Model Path Diagram of Ideal English Self

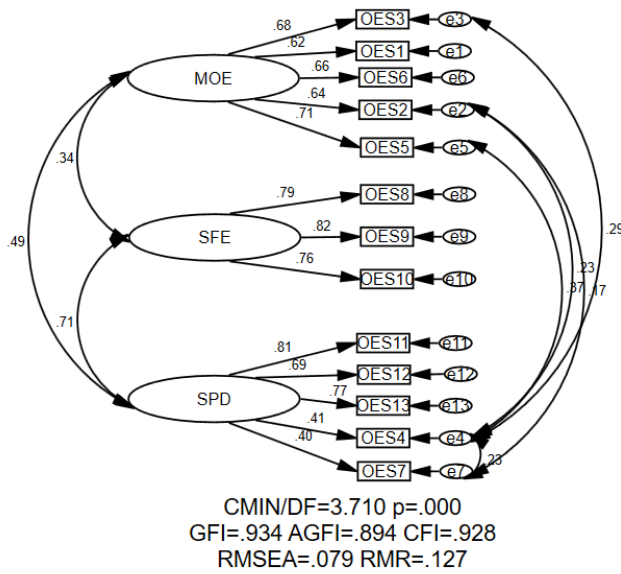


Figure 2 The Three-Factor Model Path Diagram of Ought-to English Self

Considering that local Han Chinese students learn English as their second language while ethnic minority students learn English as their third language, the latter may have a different English Learning Self due to a greater psychological distance from English. To determine whether there were significant differences in the self-perceptions of Ideal English Self and Ought-to-English Self between Han Chinese students and ethnic minority students, this study conducted an independent samples t-test on the collected data using the software package SPSS 23.0, as Table 7 shows, there was no significant difference between the two cohorts of students ($df=431, p > .05$).

TABLE 7
COMPARISON OF HAN CHINESE STUDENTS AND ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS' IDEAL ENGLISH SELF AND OUGHT-TO ENGLISH SELF

		Han Chinese (n=159)		Ethnic Minority (n=274)		MD	t	Sig.
		M	SD	M	SD			
IES	Ideal English Learner	2.76	.95	2.70	1.00	.06	.659	.510
	Ideal English Career	1.88	.80	1.94	.85	-.06	-.731	.465
	Ideal English User	1.84	.81	1.86	.89	-.02	-.128	.898
OES	Meeting Others' Expectation	2.69	1.00	2.60	1.07	.09	.836	.404
	Self's Future Expectation	2.81	1.14	3.02	1.18	-.21	-1.735	.083
	Self's Present Demand	2.45	.98	2.38	.92	.07	.763	.446

*p<0.05

VIII. DISCUSSION

The Ideal English Self in this study can be distinguished from micro and macro perspectives, as well as short-term and long-term perspectives. On the one hand, Ideal English Learners (IEL) are those who can imagine the level of English they can achieve from a micro perspective when learning English; while Ideal English career (IEC) and Ideal English User (IEU) are the macro ideal L2 selves for students who can imagine they can achieve long after they graduate from university (Takeuchi, 2013). The image of the Ideal English User (IEU) also validates that people are no longer motivated to learn English to integrate with native English speakers in the future but to use English with people from other countries for education and cultural exchange (Yashima, 2009). On the other hand, in terms of short-term and long-term goals for the Ideal English Self, research has shown that language learners with short-term goals are more motivated in task achievement than those with long-term goals, while long-term goals consistently improve motivation and language proficiency, so the effect of motivation may vary depending on the duration of learners' goals (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013). The Ideal English learner (IEL) related items in this scale include being the best English learner in school and being the best student in English among my peers, which are short-term goals that students want to have in school (Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013). On the contrary, The Ideal English Career (IEC) include being an English-Chinese translator and being an English professor, which is related to the students' images of themselves after they leave school, thus it can be categorized as long-term goals.

The three factors of the Ought-to English Self in this study have the attributes of others and the attributes of the learners themselves with a special emphasis on the Present Self (Xu, 2015). Taking family expectations as an example,

which represents the other person's attribute of Meeting Other's Expectation (MOE), while the other two factors, Self's Future Expectation (SFE) and Self's Present demand (SPD), belong to the attributes that the learner believes he or she should have from his or her perspective. This result is in line with Papi et al.'s (2019) research, which proposed a 2×2 model of the L2 self, arguing that the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self contain the positions of others and the self. The concept of the Possible Self in response to the previous L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) ignores the role of the Present Self (Xu, 2015). The Ought-to L2 Self works alongside the Present self to ensure that learners do not move in a bad direction during the learning process (Xu, 2015). This study places particular emphasis on the Present Self, the attributes that learners believe they should currently possess, including expressions such as "I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me".

Through comparative analysis, this study found that there was no significant difference between the English Learning Self of Han Chinese students and ethnic minority students in this school. Previous studies on ethnic minorities declared that Mandarin Chinese has become the main language of communication for all ethnic minority groups, playing an increasing role in all aspects of politics, economy, culture, education, science and technology, and is the main tool for acquiring knowledge and transmitting information, and those ethnic minority students and their families make great efforts to learn Mandarin Chinese before enrolling in school (Hao, 2010; Liu & Tian, 2019). For the Buyi and Miao students in Guizhou province, the younger generation enrolls in school to learn Chinese culture and have more opportunities to speak Mandarin Chinese, resulting in significant changes in the use of minority languages (Zhong, 2013). Ethnic minority students are in a mixed learning environment with Han Chinese students from the age of seven when they officially start school, and the campus is the main place where Mandarin Chinese is used and learned (Yang & Zhou, 2012). It is for this reason that there is no difference between the Mandarin Chinese proficiency of the ethnic minority students and the Han Chinese students in this school, which may make no significant difference in the psychological distance between the two cohorts in relation to English.

IX. CONCLUSION

Motivation has been the focus of research on second language acquisition and is one of the most important factors for successful language learning (Peng, 2015). In recent years, the L2 Motivational Self System has been a popular topic in second language motivation research, yet few studies have focused on junior high school students from ethnic minority populated areas in China who have considerable difficulties in learning English, with low achievement levels, low motivation to learn English and few opportunities to use English (Liu & Tian, 2019; Xiang, 2020; Yuan, 2019). One of the researchers in this study, as an English teacher in a local junior high school, feels deeply concerned about these students' English learning and hopes to use this study to better understand these students' motivation to learn English and to draw the attention of the academia to this EFL cohort.

In this study, we developed the English Learning Self Scale by synthesising the instruments from previous studies. The results of the exploratory factor analysis and the validated factor analysis indicate that junior high school students' Ideal English Self consists of three factors, Ideal English Learner (IEL), Ideal English Career (IEC) and Ideal English User (IEU). It can also be concluded that their Ought-to English Self consists of three factors, Meeting Others' Expectation (MOE), Self's Future Expectation (SFE) and Self's Present Demand (SPD). The results of the independent sample t-test showed that there was no significant difference between Han Chinese students and ethnic minority students in their self-perceptions of Ideal English Self and Ought-to English Self.

By focusing on a specific cohort of junior high school students in an ethnic populated area, this study highlights the urgent need for further research on the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) in multilingual environments. However, the current study also has some limitations. The present study is a cross-sectional study with limitations in data that do not reflect the changes in students' English learning progression as they grow older. A longitudinal study is one of the directions for future research, which could be expanded by following specific English learners and observing the perception changes in students' self-images over time. In addition, this study does not delve into the reasons for the formation of their English Learning Self. Qualitative triangulation such as classroom observation, self-reflective reports and one-on-one interviews with purposefully selected students could be used to explore students' English Learning Self, considering the differences between English language learners, to obtain results with depth, detail, vividness and nuance. Based on these limitations, future extensions of this study would be valuable not only for the development of the theory but also for the pedagogical needs in such a pervasive presence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Xu Hongchen for his insightful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

APPENDIX. ENGLISH LEARNING SELF SCALE

Ideal English Self:

IES 1. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a businessman giving a presentation in English.

IES 2. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a diplomat.

- IES 3. When I learn English, I imagine myself as an interpreter.
- IES 4. When I learn English, I imagine myself as the best English learner at school.
- IES 5. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a famous English learner in China.
- IES 6. When I learn English, I imagine myself talking with friends or colleagues around the world in fluent English.
- IES 7. When I learn English, I imagine myself speaking English as fluently as a native speaker.
- IES 8. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a white-collar employee at a multinational company being promoted due to my fluent English.
- IES 9. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a university English language professor.
- IES 10. When I learn English, I imagine myself travelling around the world.
- IES 11. When I learn English, I imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English.
- IES 12. When I learn English, I imagine myself as the English class representative.
- IES 13. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a straight-A college student majoring in English.
- IES 14. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a CEO of a multinational company, conducting international trades in English.
- IES 15. When I learn English, I imagine myself getting full marks on the English test.
- IES 16. When I learn English, I imagine myself as a student who has obtained the qualification of TEM-8 (Test for English Majors-Band 8).
- Ought-to English Self:
- OES 1. If I don't learn English well, I will let others down.
- OES 2. I should learn English well because my family wants me to be an educated person.
- OES 3. I should learn English well because people around me want me to do so.
- OES 4. To meet my parents' expectations, I should learn English well.
- OES 5. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
- OES 6. It will have a negative impact on my life if I don't learn English.
- OES 7. I should learn English well because that is what I should do as a student.
- OES 8. To make more friends in the future, I should learn English well.
- OES 9. To have a better career development in the future, I should learn English well.
- OES 10. Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a good knowledge of English.
- OES 11. I have to study English, because, if I do not study it, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.
- OES 12. If I score poorly on an English test, I would feel ashamed.
- OES 13. Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.

REFERENCES

- [1] Alastair, H. (2017). L2 Motivation and Multilingual Identities. *Modern Language Journal*, 101(3), 548-565.
- [2] Cai, L. (2021). Min zu di qu chu zhong sheng yingyu xue xi fu dong ji ying xiang yin su yan jiu - Ji yu gui zhou sheng qian nan bu yi zu miao zu zi zhi zhou liu suo zhong xue de diao cha yan jiu [On Junior High School Students' English Learning Demotivators in Ethnic Areas: A Case Study of Six Middle Schools in Qiannan Autonomous Prefecture in Guizhou Province]. *Cheng du shi fang xue yuan xue bao*, 37(5), 7-7.
- [3] Cui, Y. (2021). Shao shu min zu xue sheng ying yu xue xi de te su xing yan jiu [A study on the Special Characteristics of English Learning for Ethnic Minority Students]. *Zhong xue jiao yu*, 70-70.
- [4] Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The Psychology of the Language Learner: Individual Differences in Second Language Acquisition*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- [5] Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (Eds.) (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Multilingual Matters.
- [6] Hao, J. (2010). Duo yu yan huan jing xia shao shu min zu er tong ji qi jia ting yu yan xuan ze xing wei de fen xi [An Analysis of Language Selection of Ethnic Minority Children and Their Families in Multilingual Environment]. *Min zu jiao yu yan jiu*, 3, 4-4.
- [7] Liu, Y. & Tian, Y. (2019). Miao zu gao zhong sheng ying yu ci hui xue xi ce lve shi yong xian zhuang diao cha yu fen xi [Survey and Analysis of the Current Situation of Using English Vocabulary Learning Strategies among Miao High School Students]. *Ji chu wai yu jiao yu*, 21(6), 12-12.
- [8] Papi, M., Bondarenko, A. V., Mansouri, S., Feng, L. & Jiang, C. (2018). Rethinking L2 motivation research: the 2x2 model of L2 self-guides. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 41, 337-361.
- [9] Papi, M., Bondarenko, A. V., Mansouri, S., Feng, L., & Jiang, C. (2019). Rethinking L2 motivation research: The 2 × 2 model of L2 self-guides. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 41(2), 337-361.
- [10] Peng, J. (2015). Er yu dong ji zi wo xi tong, guo ji zi shi ji nu li cheng du guan xi de jie gou fang cheng mo xing yan jiu [Structural Equation Model of Motivation Self-System, International Posture and Efforts]. *Wai yu jiao xue li lun yu shi jian*, 1, 8.
- [11] Qin, X. (2003). *Wai yu jiao xue yan jiu zhong de ding liang shu ju fen xi* [Quantitative data analysis in Foreign Language Teaching Studies]. Hua zhong ke ji da xue chu ban she.
- [12] Taguchi, T., Magid, M. & Papi, M. (2009). The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. In Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (eds.), *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self* (pp. 66-97). Multilingual Matters.
- [13] Takeuchi, O. (2013). Exploring the concept of the ideal I2 self in an Asian EFL context: the case of Japanese university students.

Journal of Asia TEFL, 10(1), 25-45.

- [14] Thorsen, C., Henry, A. & Cliffordson, C. (2017). The case of a missing person? the current L2 self and the L2 motivational self system. *International Journal of Bilingual Education & Bilingualism*, 1-17.
- [15] Ueki, M. & Takeuchi, O. (2013). Forming a clearer image of the ideal L2 self: the L2 Motivational Self System and learner autonomy in a Japanese EFL context. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 7(3), 238-252, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2013.836205>.
- [16] Wu, M. (2009). *Jie gou fang cheng mo xing: AMOS de cao zuo yu ying yong* [Structural equation modeling: Operations and applications of AMOS]. Chongqing University Press.
- [17] Wei, X. (2013). Da xue sheng er yu dong ji zi wo xi tong yu zi zhu xue xi xing wei de guan xi yan jiu [Study on the Relations between the Self-System and Independent Learning Behavior]. *Wai yu yu wai yu jiao xue*, 5, 52-56.
- [18] Wei, Y. & Fan, W. (2016). Zhong guo da xue sheng li xiang er yu zi wo yu ying gai er yu zi wo liang biao de bian zhi [The Compilation of the Ideal Self and Should Self Scale of Chinese College Students]. *Jie fang jue wai guo yu xue yuan xue bao*, 39(6), 77-85.
- [19] Xiang, D. (2020). Xiang xi miao zu di qu nong cun ying yu ji chu jiao yu xian zhuang diao cha yan jiu [A Study on the Current Situation of English Basic Education in Rural Miao Areas of Xiangxi]. *Ying yu jiao shi*, 20(11), 4-4.
- [20] Xu, H. (2015). *Zhong guo da xue sheng ying yu zi wo dong ji xi tong shi zheng yan jiu* [English Learning Motivational Self System: A structural Equation Modeling Study On Chinese University Students]. Shi jie zhi shi chu ban she.
- [21] Xu, H. (2019). *Di er yu yan yan jiu zhong de jie gou fang cheng mo xing an li fen xi* [Structural Equation Modeling in Second Language Studies: Case Analysis]. Wai yu jiao xue yu yan jiu chu ban she.
- [22] Yang, Y. & Zhou, X. (2012). Gui zhou bu yi zu gao zhong sheng ying yu xue xi dong ji diao cha yan jiu [A Survey on English Learning Motivation of Buyi High School Students in Guizhou Province]. *Dian zi shi jie*, 20, 2-2.
- [23] Yashima, T. (2009). International Posture and the Ideal L2 Self in the Japanese EFL Context. In Dörnyei, Z. & Ushioda, E. (eds), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 Self* (pp. 144-163). Multilingual Matters.
- [24] Yuan, H. (2019). Gui zhou qian nan zhou miao zu yu yan dui xiao xue sheng ying yu xue xi de fu qian yi [Negative transfer of Miao Language on Primary School Students' English Learning in Qiannan Prefecture, Guizhou]. *Hai wai wen zhai xue shu*, 9, 3-3.
- [25] Zhong, J. (2013). Yu yan zheng ce dui shao shu min zu yu yan de ying xiang [The impact of language policy on ethnic minority languages]. *Gui zhou min zu yan jiu*, 34(3), 218-222.



Yunyun Xuan is a PhD candidate majoring in the English Language, at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia. She graduated from Guizhou Minzu University and Qiannan Normal University for Nationalities. She has been an English teacher in secondary schools in Buyi Miao Autonomous Prefecture of Guizhou Province since 2011. She is interested in individual learner differences and L2 motivation. Email: gs58977@student.upm.edu.my



Xiao Xie (Orlando) is a PhD candidate majoring in the English Language, at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Malaysia. He graduated from Sichuan University and Sun Yat-sen University, China. He takes a lively interest in peer feedback, argumentative writing and language assessment literacy. E-mail: gs58879@student.upm.edu.my



Vahid Nimehchisalem holds a PhD in TESL. He's been involved in teaching English as a second and foreign language since 1996. He's currently Associate Professor at the Faculty of Modern Languages and Communication, UPM, Malaysia. English language learning-teaching materials evaluation and language assessment are his main areas of research interest. He's chief editor of the *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, managing editor of the *Journal of Language and Communication (JLC)*, and board member of some other journals in the area.