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Exploring the L2 Motivational Self System in Relation to the Variables Lexical Availability and Overseas Experience with English-Major Students in Gran Canaria

Explorando el sistema motivacional del Yo L2 a través de la disponibilidad léxica y la estancia en un país de habla inglesa de los estudiantes de Lenguas Modernas de Gran Canaria

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This article provides an analysis of the motivational nature of seventy-nine English-major students in the second year of their degree in Modern Languages at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria using Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System, in combination with an exploration of the variables of lexical availability and overseas experience in the target language context. Preliminary findings indicate the following: 1) L2 learning experience emerged as the most significant predictor of subjective intended effort in a model which showed that the relationship between the motivational variables considered was statistically significant; 2) the stronger a student's Ideal L2 Self, the wider their lexical availability, although analysis of the Ought-to Self showed its marginal relevance; 3) students who have been to an English-speaking country showed a stronger Ideal L2 Self and a richer lexical repertoire.[1]

Keywords*: English L2; lexical availability; L2 Motivational Self System; overseas experience*

Este artículo da a conocer el análisis de la motivación de setenta y nueve estudiantes de Inglés como Lengua Extranjera en su segundo año del grado en Lenguas Modernas en la Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria a través del Sistema Motivacional del Yo L2 de Dörnyei, la disponibilidad léxica y la variable de estancia en un país de habla inglesa Los resultados preliminares indican lo siguiente: 1) La experiencia de aprendizaje de L2 fue el predictor más significativo del esfuerzo en un modelo en el que la relación entre las variables de motivación consideradas fue estadísticamente significativo; 2) cuánto más fuerte el Yo Ideal, más amplia la disponibilidad léxica, aunque el análisis de Yo Deóntico mostró la relevancia marginal de este factor; 3) los estudiantes que han ido a un país de habla inglesa tienen un Yo Ideal más fuerte y un repertorio léxico más amplio.

Palabras clave: *Inglés L2; disponibilidad léxica; Sistema Motivacional del Yo L2; estancia en un país de habla inglesa*

[1] This article further develops and consolidates initial findings published previously (Sandu, B., & Oxbrow, G. (2020). Selected poster presentations from the British Association of Applied Linguistics conference, Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, August 2019: Lexical availability and the L2 Motivational Self System. *Language Teaching*, *53*(3), 378-382. doi:10.1017/S0261444820000154).

1. INTRODUCTION

The first lexical availability (LA) studies were undertaken in France as a means to be able to advance more effectively in the field of teaching French as a foreign language (Gougenheim, Michéa, Rivenc, & Sauvageot, 1967). This initial research focus on teaching French as a foreign language to the citizens of former French colonies in order to maintain Gallic language and culture outside France has been further expanded, not only to explore lexical acquisition in other languages, but also to other factors affecting learning, which have enhanced our understanding of the process of vocabulary building and the way in which a wide range of variables, such as gender, age, language level, first language (L1), foreign language (L2)[2], learning context (immersion versus non-immersion), teaching/learning materials or language exposure, among others, might affect language acquisition and, hence, what teachers and other professionals in the field can do to ensure that foreign language learners develop appropriate lexical knowledge as a way to enhance their communicative competence corresponding to their proficiency levels. As López Morales has indicated (2014: 7), "[t]ogether with basic vocabulary, the available lexicon allows vocabulary learning planners and vocabulary tasks designers to conduct a rigorous work both in mother tongue and in foreign languages".

In the current study reported here, an indication of our subjects' English (L2) LA was obtained by asking Spanish L1 learners to write down as many words as they could within a time period of two minutes, having previously been given a prompt such as 'food and drink'. LA was subsequently used as a direct measure of motivated L2 behaviour, which allowed us to explore the relationship between the learners' L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005) (L2MSS) and their vocabulary production. As Dörnyei points out, ″[…] if we want to draw more meaningful inferences about the impact of various motives, it is more appropriate to use some sort of behavioural measure as the criterion/dependent variable,″ and, in fact, one of the examples he provides is ″direct measures of motivated L2 behaviour″, for instance, the number of words used in a task (Dörnyei, 2001: 200). Thus, the research described here attempts to also shed some "[…] light on the multifaceted nature of motivation" (Al-Hoorie, 2018: 734) of our English (L2) learners by exploring not only 'intended effort' as a criterion measure, which has often been documented, but also the more objective variables of LA and previous overseas experience in the target language context.

2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS: LEXICAL AVAILABILITY AND THE L2 MOTIVATIONAL SELF SYSTEM

2.1 *Cognitive aspects of lexical availability in English L2*

With regard to the range of foreign languages that commonly represent the object of study of LA research, while there is a well-established body of research literature in Spanish as a foreign language (Carcedo, 2000; Samper Hernández, 2002; etc.), the exploration of LA in English (L2) has received relatively scant attention since the first related publication by Dimitrijévic (1969). As Martínez-Adrián and Gallardo-del-Puerto (2017: 64) highlight, "[…] the studies on lexical availability in L2 English are more limited than in L2 Spanish, and a call for more research has been made in recent investigations".

One contribution to the field of LA within the realm of psycholinguistics by Ferreira and Echeverría (2010) examined the semantic networks of words in English as an L1 and

[2] While we are aware of the frequently cited distinction between what constitutes a second (L2) or a foreign (FL) foreign language (e.g. Ellis, 1997: 3), in the present study both terms will be used interchangeably in order to avoid repetition.

English as an L2. The software programme DispoGrafo allowed them to observe how vocabulary was organised in the semantic categories 'body parts' and 'pollution and the environment' and to compare the semantic relations of the same word used by L1 and high-level L2 speakers. The results revealed that native speakers appear to organise their available lexicon in semantic categories and sub-categories with a higher level of precision than high-level L2 speakers. From a pedagogical perspective, these results are encouraging as they provide characteristics of the lexical configuration of native speakers and, therefore, these could be extrapolated to the possibility of designing effective teaching methods (Ferreira & Echeverría, 2010: 151). Ferreira and Echeverría (2014) also explored the nature of the different prompts used in the study and concluded that even though native speakers outperform non-native speakers in each semantic category, both groups produced more words in basic than advanced categories. A more recent study by Ferreira, Garrido Moscoso, and Guerra Rivera (2019), based on the findings of Hernández-Muñoz, Izura, and Ellis (2014) in Spanish L1 and L2, studied the extent to which the cognitive factors of 'familiarity', 'imageability', 'word frequency' and 'age of acquisition' might affect and explain the availability of a word in L1 English learners of Spanish in the semantic categories 'body parts' and 'food and drink'. 'Age of acquisition' and 'word frequency' were found to be variables that could predict LA in English L2, although their level of association differed in the two semantic categories.

2.2 *The L2 Motivational Self System*

The catalyst for the current research can be found in previous findings regarding the relationship between the variable of 'having visited an L2-speaking country' on the lexical availability of Romanian L1 secondary-school students who were learning Spanish as a foreign language (Sandu, 2013). In this research project, it was shown that foreign language learners who had visited a Spanish-speaking country produced a higher number of lexical units than their counterparts. Apart from this, the type of vocabulary retrieved by this group was closely related to the target language culture, but unknown to their peers. These results led to the conclusion that direct contact with the target language and culture had a significant effect on vocabulary acquisition.

One of the seemingly indisputable tenets in the search for more effective foreign language learning and teaching procedures is that motivation is the basic ingredient of self-directed behaviour and achievement and an essential element of successful language learning. Yet, as the authors of a study addressing motivational levels in the same research context as the one reported here have highlighted, "motivation is, in effect, a highly complex concept which regularly features in discussions of effective language learning or teaching as much recent research has testified […], and which can also be viewed from a variety of perspectives" (Oxbrow & Rodríguez Juárez, 2010: 59).

Distinguishing between types of motivation such as integrative/instrumental, or intrinsic/extrinsic may not be so useful as the key predictor of learning success (Gardner, 2007: 19); it seems that the crucial factor is the intensity of motivation, in all its cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Oxbrow & Rodríguez Juárez, 2010: 62). Gardner's original concept of integrativeness, which involves "the individual's orientation to language learning that focuses on communication with members of the other language group, a general interest in foreign groups, especially through their language, and favourable attitudes toward the target language group" (2005: 10), could explain our findings (Sandu, 2013). This "openness to other cultures in general and the target culture in particular" (Gardner, 2005: 10) is believed to influence the student's level of motivation in the long, uphill process of gaining a good command of a foreign language. In Gardner's (2005) Socio-educational Model,

'integrativeness' and 'attitudes to learning situation' are the two variables related to the individual's motivation, and hence to language achievement.

After extensive research on motivation in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), as well as exploring the parallel concepts of language identities and the L2 self, Dörnyei (2005) developed the L2MSS aiming to re-theorise L2 motivation, bearing in mind our new reality of rapidly escalating globalisation. His proposed L2MSS is made up of the following three main components:

1) *The Ideal L2 Self* enables learners to imagine themselves as successful English speakers, which will drive them to reduce the discrepancy between their actual self and their desired future self-image. The role of integrativeness, which would belong to this component according to Dörnyei (2009: 29), has been addressed in other studies (e.g. Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; Brady, 2019) which found significant correlations between this variable and the Ideal L2 Self, and which led to the conclusion that they can be equated (Ryan, 2009: 132; Taguchi et al., 2009: 77). This means that the Ideal L2 Self also measures L2 learners' openness to other cultures in general and the target culture in particular. We might therefore expect to find a strong relation between this motivational variable and the variable of 'having visited an English-speaking country' (VESC).
2) *The Ought-to L2 Self* refers to those expectations L2 learners believe they should meet in order to avoid negative learning outcomes as well as causing negative impressions in others in terms of success or failure. Oyserman and Markus (1990) believed that the Ideal Self should be offset by the Ought-to L2 Self. This means that students learn English because they want to, but also because, for instance, if they stop doing it, the people they care about will respect them less or because these significant others will be disappointed. This variable would correspond to the more extrinsic types of instrumental motives (Dörnyei 2009: 29).
3) *L2 Learning Experience* involves the inevitable impact of teachers, the methodology and content chosen for instruction in a given learning context, along with other classmates or the experience that success, or failure, has on the learner. Gardner's (2005) 'Attitudes to Learning Situation', assessing affective reactions to teachers and learning situations, would correspond to this component of the L2MSS. Statements such as "I really like the actual process of learning English" or "I think time passes faster while studying English" were used to measure the reactions of the participants and the way this variable might influence their level of motivation, and hence language achievement.

With regard to the contribution of these three L2MSS components to learners' motivated learning behaviour, both the Ideal L2 Self and L2 learning experience have been found to be strong predictors (e.g. Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009; Brady, 2019;), whereas the relationship between the Ought-to L2 Self and students' subjective effort in learning English was reported to be either exiguous (Taguchi et al. 2009; Papi, 2010; Brady, 2019;) or even non-existent (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Papi & Teimouri, 2012).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main aim of the research reported here is to explore the L2MSS through the measurement of the LA of a group of seventy-nine English-major Spanish L1 students in the second year of

their degree in 'Modern Languages' (English/French or English/Chinese) offered by the Faculty of Philology at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria.

The research questions we address are as follows:

1) How does each of the motivational variables studied contribute to learners' motivated behaviour (intended effort)?
2) What is the relationship between the L2MSS and LA?
3) What role does the variable of 'having visited an English-speaking country' ('VESC') play in participants' motivation and LA?

4. METHOD

4.1 *Participants*

Our sample is comprised of 79 students[3] (64 females, 15 males) enrolled in English as a Foreign Language ('Inglés III': B2) in the second academic year of their degree in 'Modern Languages' at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. All the participants in our study are native speakers of Spanish, with English as their second language. This obligatory integrated skills course requires an entry level of B1+, according to the *Common European Framework of Reference*, with a B2 exit level, if successful. A procedure aimed at testing their LA in different semantic areas on a general, non-level specific level was designed to be used as the main research instruments as a means to assess and measure these learners' lexicons, and hence their level in terms of vocabulary acquisition only. This procedure will be described more fully below.

4.2 *Material and design*

For further data gathering purposes, two types of closed questionnaires were administered, (i) to address the level and nature of the subjects' motivation and (ii) concerning LA. In the case of the former, participants' motivation was measured using a questionnaire which contained an initial section with six-point Likert scale items and a second section which consisted of questions eliciting students' background information. The statement-type instrument uses responses measured by the six-point Likert scales designed by You, Dörnyei, and Cziser (2016), ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', in order to provide a more accurate analysis of the following motivational variables[4] given below:

1) *Intended learning effort* (5 items): the amount of effort or time students are prepared to devote to learning English even if they expect or experience failure. E.g. "Even if I failed in my English learning, I would still learn English very hard" (Cronbach $\alpha = .77$).
2) *Ideal L2 Self* (5 items): e.g. "I can imagine myself in the future having a discussion with foreign friends in English" (Cronbach $\alpha = .82$).
3) *Instrumentality*: this concept, which occupies a significant role in the structural equation model of the L2MSS, is related to the perceived pragmatic utility of learning English. The 'approach/avoid' tendency (Higgins, 1998) led to a subsequent division of instrumentality into two types:

[3] Lexical availability studies in L2, given their complexity regarding data processing and editing, are sometimes carried out with fewer participants (see Ferreira & Echeverría, 2014: 50 students; Jiménez Catalán et al., 2014: 26 students; Samper Hernández, 2002: 45 students).

[4] For information regarding each item's mean and standard deviation, see Appendix 1. This study focused on these nine motivation variables, therefore only 43 items were analysed.

a) *promotion* (4 items), focusing on positive outcomes and related to the ideal self, e.g. “Studying English is important to me in order to achieve a personally important goal (e.g. a degree or scholarship)” (Cronbach α = .65).
b) *prevention* (5 items), focusing on avoiding negative outcomes and related to the Ought-to L2 Self., e.g. “I have to learn English because I don’t want to fail the English course” (Cronbach α = .77).

4) *Cultural interest* (5 items): how much learners seem to value the L2 culture, such as their interest in films or books in the target language. E.g. “I really like the music of English-speaking countries” (Cronbach α = .59).
5) *Travelling* (5 items): participants’ interest in travelling abroad or to English-speaking countries. E.g. “Learning English is important to me because I plan to travel to English-speaking countries in the future” (Cronbach α = .70).
6) *Ought-to L2 Self* (7 items): e.g. “Studying English is important to me because the people I respect think that I should do it” (Cronbach α = .86).
7) *Family influence* (5 items): the possible role parents might play in the process, and success, of their offspring’s language learning experience. E.g. “I have to study English because, otherwise, I think my parents will be disappointed with me” (Cronbach α = .76).
8) *L2 learning experience* (5 items), e.g. “I always look forward to English classes” (Cronbach α = .75).

In addition to these items, the background variable ‘having visited an English-speaking country’ (VESC) has also been explored with three options to select: 1. ‘No’ (42 students, 53%); 2. ‘Yes’ – less than a week (14 students, 18%); and 3. ‘Yes’ – more than a week (23 students, 29%).

LA was assessed using a paper-based test containing fifteen lexical domains. For each one, participants were allowed a total time interval of two minutes to write down as many words that came to their minds when thinking of each of these topics. This research study focuses on only four, namely 1) ‘body parts’ (BP), 2) ‘food and drink’ (F&D), 3) health and medicine' (H&M) and 4) 'social issues' (SI), following Ferreira and Echeverría’s (2014) classification of different semantic categories used in this type of test into basic and advanced ones. The basic ones here are the first two, 'BP' and 'F&D', while the semantic areas of ‘H&M' and 'SI' are more likely to be taught at advanced levels. Moreover, as shown in Hernández-Muñoz et al. (2014), 'familiarity' is an important factor to distinguish between semantic categories as it was found that the more familiar the topic, the greater quantity of words are activated. The reliability coefficient for the four topics studied was .816, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency and hence are closely related.

4.3 *Data analysis*

The available vocabulary items noted down in the LA test by our informants were digitally transferred and edited. Some common criteria used in this research were the following: 1) words repeated by the same participant were deleted; 2) spelling was corrected; 3) nouns were typed in singular form, but irregular (e.g. feet, teeth) and plural nouns (e.g. jeans, shorts, etc.) were not; also, words that could be confused with adjectives were also kept in their plural form (e.g. sweets (n) and sweet (adj.); or 4) words written in their short and full form were unified (e.g. (ham)burger, (Coca-)Cola, etc.).

The IBM SPSS programme (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 25.0 and the formula developed by Gallego (2014) were used in order to carry out more sophisticated analyses, such as correlations or linear regressions. Correlation coefficients were calculated to

describe the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the two variables. Dörnyei's indications were similarly considered when assessing possible relationships between motivation variables; accordingly, correlations of 0.3 to 0.5 are thought to be meaningful, whereas results of 0,6 or above imply that two variables are strongly correlated, and can even measure the same concept (Dörnyei, 2007: 223). Multiple linear regression analysis was also performed in order to explore the role of the motivational variables in the participants' intentions to invest effort in learning English L2. Finally, the relationship between the L2MSS, and the variables of LA and overseas experience in an English-speaking country was explored through non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis tests, boxplots and logistic regression.

5. RESULTS

5.1 *The L2MSS*

With reference to the questionnaire data pertaining to our subjects' motivation profile, analysis of Table 1 reveals that the strongest of all motivational variables corresponds to our students' Ideal L2 Self, followed by the variables of cultural interest, travelling, instrumentality (promotion), intended effort and L2 learning experience. Instrumentality (prevention) is slightly lower, although it is still above the agreeing cut-off point (4 = 'slightly agree').

Analysis of the second component of Dörnyei's L2MSS, the Ought-to L2 Self, shows an average answer of 2.40. Our findings corroborate those obtained in Brady's study (2009), similarly carried out with Spanish students studying an English major at university. Another factor which is strongly related to the Ought-to L2 Self is family influence. Its low mean value of 2.23 shows that most participants disagreed with statements such as ″Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my family″.

Table 1: ***Motivational variables: mean and standard deviation (SD)***

Factor name	Mean	SD
Ideal L2 Self	5.30	0.71171
Cultural interest	5.28	0.57177
Travelling	5.24	0.67194
Instrumentality (promotion)	5.11	0.72257
Intended effort	5.03	0.70098
L2 learning experience	4.78	0.71819
Instrumentality (prevention)	4.09	1.10467
Ought-to L2 Self	2.40	1.00576
Family influence	2.23	0.89295

Furthermore, as can be seen in Table 2, there is a lack of correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self and the participant's expended effort in learning English. Effort correlates with all variables except Ought-to L2 Self and family influence. Csizér and Kormos (2009) also found the Ought-to L2 Self plays ″a limited role in predicting the effort Hungarian students invest in language learning as in the university student sample its relation to motivated behaviour is very weak″ (105). They later report that ″the Ought-to L2 Self is not an important component of the model of language learning motivation in the investigated Hungarian sample″ (107). Similarly, the Ought-to L2 Self, which can also refer to family members as relevant others, showed low correlations with intended effort and achievement in Al-Hoorie's (2018) meta-analysis of 32 research reports between 2005 and 2014 in Middle East, Asia and Europe.

Table 2 also shows a strong correlation between the Ought-to L2 Self, family influence and instrumentality (prevention), although the correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and these three factors is not significant. Yet, as far as strong correlations are concerned, Table 2 shows

that the variable of L2 learning experience is the factor that correlates the strongest with our university students' effort in learning English as a foreign language. L2 learning experience and cultural interest also correlate strongly with the Ideal L2 Self.

Table 2: ***Spearman's rho correlations between motivational factors***

	Ideal L2 Self	Instrum. (prom.)	Cult. interest	Travelling	Ought-to L2 Self	Intrum. (prev.)	Family influence	L2 Learning experience
Intended effort	.372**	.363**	.386**	.257*	.124	.312**	.097	**.654****
Ideal L2 Self		.289**	**.579****	**.442****	.094	.080	.014	**.572****
Instrumentality (promotion)			.223*	.339**	.399**	**.484****	.141	**.443****
Cultural interest				.381**	.040	.031	-.075	**.573****
Travelling					.020	.196	.154	.184
Ought-to L2 Self						**.526****	**.527****	.091
Intrumentality (prevention)							.254*	.216
Family influence								.009

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

With regard to the two types of instrumentality, Table 2 displays a strong correlation between Ought-to L2 Self and instrumentality (prevention) (0.526**), which was expected. However, the weak correlation between the Ideal L2 Self and instrumentality promotion (.289**), together with the meaningful inter-correlation of the two types of instrumentality (.484**) as opposed to findings reported in other studies (e.g. Taguchi et al. 2009: 67), indicates that the two aspects of this type of motivation are, in fact, related in the current study.

Multiple linear regression was performed with all the motivational variables, except for Ought-to L2 Self and family influence, due to their lack of correlation with intended effort, the dependent variable. The total variance explained by this model was 49% (adjusted R^2 = .495) and the relationship between the variables analysed was statistically significant F (11.619 >/=3.84 / p = .000 < .05 / NC 95%). Partial regression plots showed that L2 learning experience made a significant contribution to the model (R^2 Linear = 0.306).

5.2 *The L2MSS and LA*

As can be observed in Table 3, basic and more familiar semantic categories (i.e. 'BP' and 'F&D') provide a higher number of tokens than advanced and less familiar ones (i.e. H&M' and 'SI'). These results confirm both Hernández-Muñoz et al.'s (2014) and Ferreira and Echeverría's (2014) findings. These authors found a strong effect of semantic category and familiarity on LA since basic and familiar topics generate a higher amount of words than advanced and less familiar ones. 'BP' is a closed cue word with a COHI of 0.178409, whereas 'F&D' is more diffuse; the advanced semantic categories H&M' and 'SI' generate a quite varied number of different words.

Table 3: ***LA: number of tokens and types, mean number of tokens, standard deviation and cohesion index***

Cue words	Total number of tokens	Types	Mean number of tokens	SD	COHI
BP	1494	106	18.91	4.453	0.178409
F&D	1750	302	22.15	5.104	0.073351
H&M	1187	346	15.03	4.411	0.043426
SI	944	349	11.95	4.457	0.034239

On focusing on the correlation between the three constituents of the L2MSS and LA, Table 4 reveals that the Ideal L2 Self correlated with three of the four semantic categories we analysed in this study, namely 'BP', 'F&D' and 'SI', while L2 Learning Experience correlated with 'BP' and 'SI'. The second constituent of this theory, the Ought-to L2 Self, showed no correlation with any of the four cue words, which is consistent with the previous finding. Thus, this factor does not seem to affect our students' effort in language learning and we can see that there is no relationship between this variable and the participants' LA in any of the four topics explored.

Table 4: ***Spearman's rho correlations between the three constituents of the L2MSS and LA***

	'BP'	'F&D'	'H&M'	SI
Ideal L2 Self	**.329****	**.299****	.163	**.237***
Ought-to L2 Self	.204	.097	.041	.040
L2 learning experience	**.287***	.058	-.022	**.236***
'BP'		.568**	.481**	.590**
'F&D'			.415**	.437**
'H&M'				.625**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 displays the mean number of available words in each category from the Likert scale of the three L2MSS components. With regard to the Ideal L2 Self, apart from the two notably prolific students in the category of '3: slightly disagree', there is an increase in the number of words in the four cue words for the rest of the subjects. The stronger their Ideal L2 Self, the larger their vocabulary seems to be, as students who strongly agree produced a total of almost five words more than those who slightly agree.

Table 5: ***LA and the L2MSS***

			'BP'	'F&D'	'SI'	H&M'	Total
		N	Mean number of words				
	All students	79	18.91	22.15	11.95	15	68.01
Ideal L2 Self	3 Slightly disagree	2	21.5	25.5	17.5	19	83.5
	4 Slightly agree	10	**16.1**	**18.9**	**9.9**	**12.4**	**57.3**
	5 Agree	27	**18.56**	**21.07**	**10.89**	**14.2**	**64.72**
	6 Strongly agree	40	**19.73**	**23.53**	**12.9**	**16**	**72.16**
Ought-to L2 Self	1 Strongly disagree	18	17.5	21.78	11	14.8	**65.08**
	2 Disagree	27	18.81	21.67	12.3	14.7	**67.48**
	3 Slightly disagree	23	19.65	22.35	12.17	14.5	**68.67**
	4 Slightly agree	9	19	22.33	12.33	18	**71.66**
	5 Agree	1	25	29	15	18	87
	6 Strongly agree	1	23	29	8	10	70
L2 learning experience	3 Slightly disagree	4	18.25	20.75	8	13	**60**
	4 Slightly agree	25	17	21.2	11.4	14.9	**64.5**
	5 Agree	34	**20.26**	**23.09**	**12.85**	**16.4**	**72.6**
	6 Strongly agree	16	19.19	22	11.88	12.9	65.97

Table 5 also shows a subtle increase in the total mean number of words as we move up the Likert scale of the Ought-to L2 Self, excluding the only two, similarly productive cases of 'agree' (5) and 'strongly agree' (6). The 'slightly agree' group retrieve 6.58 words more than their 'strongly disagree' counterparts, although the difference seems minor when each cue word is analysed separately. In the case of the L2 learning experience variable, Table 5 reveals that 'agree' responding students are the most productive as they write 12.6 words more than their 'slightly disagree' peers. Boxplots are included for a better view of the relationship between

LA and the Ideal L2 Self and L2 learning experience as these two motivational variables show more significant differences (see Figures 1 and 2).

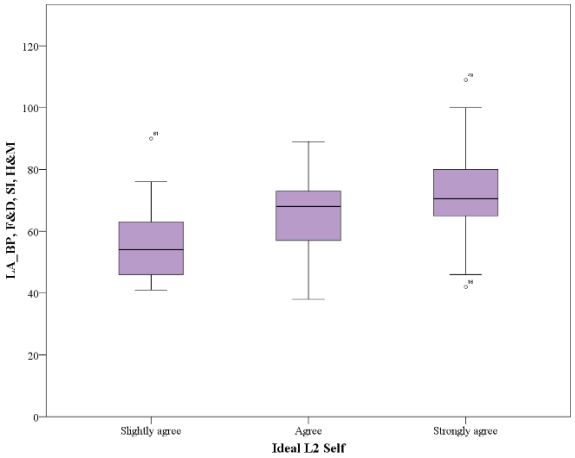

Figure 1

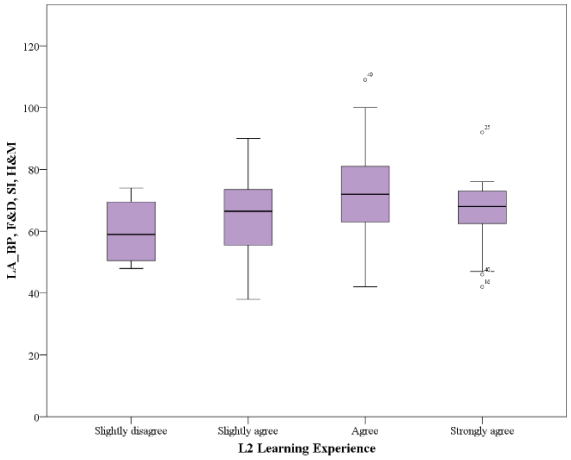

Figure 2

5.3 *The L2MSS and 'VESC'*

Correlation analysis (Pearson) revealed that the variable 'VESC' presented the strongest correlation with the Ideal L2 Self (.395** / .000), followed by the Ought-to L2 Self (.305** / .006) and then by L2 learning experience (.223* / .048). The Kruskal-Wallis test was also conducted in order to find the relationship between our participants' overseas experience in an English-speaking country and the three constituents of the L2MSS (Ideal L2 Self χ^2=11.819 / Sig. = .003; Ought-to L2 Self χ^2=7.214 / Sig. = .027). The Kruskal-Wallis test showed homogeneity between the mean values of the three groups with regard to the influence of L2 learning experience, therefore the ANOVA test was used in this analysis. The result obtained (Sig = .146) revealed that the variable 'VESC' had no effect on participants' L2 learning experience, which was rather unexpected as we imagined that experience in the target language context would influence our participant's attitudes more and they would display greater openness to other cultures from an integrative perspective, thus enhancing their motivation to learn.

Figures 3 and 4 offer a better picture of the heterogeneity found in the case of the Ideal L2 Self and, to a lesser extent, in the case of the Ought-to L2 Self. Figure 3 shows that none of the students who have had overseas experience responded below the agreeing cut-off line. Additionally, the subjects responding 'yes (for more than a week)' show the highest Ideal L2 Self (5.8) displaying a strong level of agreement with each other, whereas the 'no' group hold quite different opinions concerning this variable. Figure 4 shows that students who have been to an English-speaking country tend to slightly move up toward the agreeing line of the Ought-to L2 Self, although the median is still below the disagreeing line.

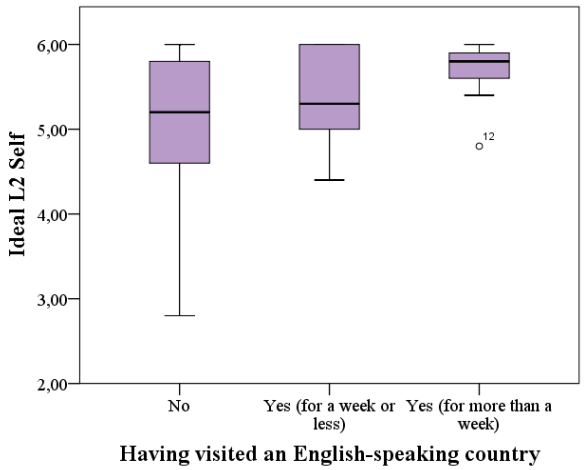

Figure 3

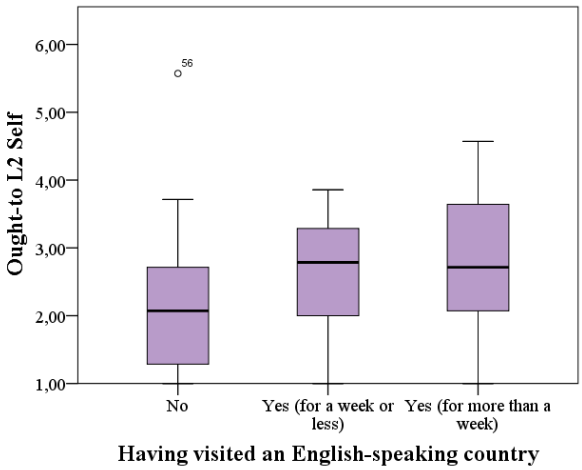

Figure 4

5.4 *LA and 'VESC*

Correlation analysis showed that of the four cue words analysed only 'BP' correlated (p = .248* / sig. = .028) with overseas experience. Independent sample t-tests were performed in order to attempt to understand the differences between the three groups; Levene's test also assumed equal variances in the four cue words, hence the difference regarding the mean values for the number of words produced by students who have been to an English-speaking country for more or less than a week and by those who have not is not significant (sig < 0.05).

Yet, both Table 6 and Figure 5 display a divergence in the mean number of words each group retrieve: the group of students who have not been to an English-speaking country produce an average of 8.34 words less than their 'less than a week' peers, who seem to be the most prolific, and 7.72 words less than the 'more than a week' ones. These results coincide with those previously obtained by Sandu (2013) in which Romanian students who had had direct contact with the target language and culture were more prolific in producing lexical items than those who had not, also retrieving words that are closely related to the target language culture. Figure 5 also reveals that the 'less than a week' and the 'more than a week' groups show a higher level of 'agreement' with each other than those who have not.

Logistic regressBion was carried out between the variables of LA and 'VESC' to try to shed further light on these findings, but this time with 'having been to an English-speaking country' / 'not having been to an English-speaking country'; this analysis showed that 72.1% of the students who have not been to an English-speaking country were well predicted, meaning their vocabulary is rich despite not having spent time in the target language context, which might explain the lack of statistical significance; on the other hand, the least productive students for the four cue words are in this group and this triggers a decrease in the mean number of words of all the students who have never travelled to an English-speaking country. This also explains the lower level of 'agreement' shown in Figure 5.

Table 6: ***LA and 'VESC'***

			'BP'	'F&D'	'SI'	H&M'	Total
		N	Mean number of words				
	All students	79	18.91	22.15	11.95	15	68.01
	1 No	42	17.79	20.98	11.64	14.2	64.61
'VESC'	2 Less than 1 week	14	**21.57**	**23.64**	**12.14**	**15.6**	**72.95**
	3 More than 1 week	23	19.35	23.39	12.39	16.2	71.33

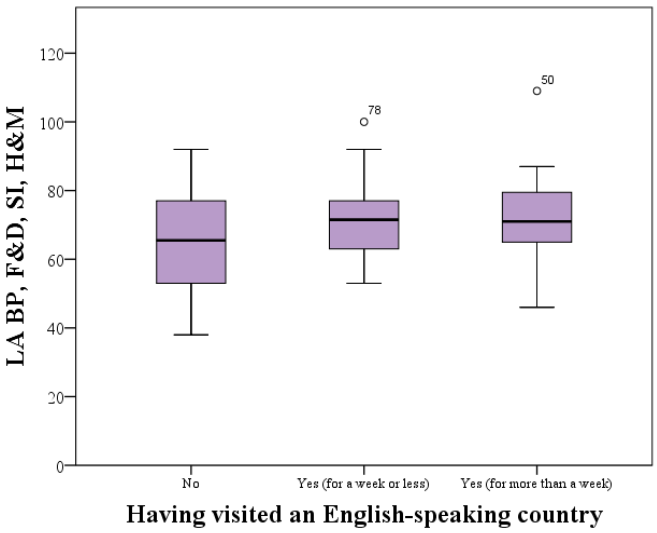

Figure 5

6. CONCLUSIONS

As discussed above in our analysis of the data, it appears that in terms of our exploration of Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System in relation to the variables of LA and overseas experience (VESC) in our own teaching/learning context, the variable of Ideal L2 Self offers the highest mean value, which indicates that most subjects agree, or strongly agree with items related to their ability to conjure up a future self-image as a successful English speaker. As far as the contribution of each of the motivational variables studied to the learners' motivated behaviour ('intended effort) is concerned, all the variables under consideration except for the Ought-to L2 Self and family influence, correlate with effort; L2 learning experience shows the strongest correlation (above .60), whereas Ideal L2 Self, cultural interest, and instrumentality (promotion and prevention) show meaningful correlations (above .30). Multiple linear regression analysis confirms the strong impact of L2 learning experience as it offers a significant contribution to the model. This means that the more students enjoy learning English, the more effort they expend, as a means to develop their Ideal L2 Self. Ensuring 'student engagement' in teaching and learning contexts is hence crucial in the challenging pedagogical journey towards language learners' desired future selves, thus specific programmes should be designed to improve various aspects of the language learning process, such as student-teacher rapport, classroom management, motivational teaching approaches, or the creation of learner-centred syllabuses based on students' needs to enable students to look forward to, and fully enjoy, English classes (Dörnyei, 2019: 25).

In answer to the second research question addressing the relationship between the L2MSS and LA, while the Ideal L2 Self correlates with three of the cue words (BP, F&D, SI), and L2 learning experience with two (BP, SI), the Ought-to Self shows no correlations with LA, which could indicate a marginal relevance this factor might bear concerning the effort our students devote to learning English, and, by default, to vocabulary acquisition. Although boxplots show that the stronger the participants' Ideal L2 Self and L2 learning experience, the more productive they seem to be regarding the total mean number of words retrieved, caution is obviously required when interpreting these data as the sub-groups are not equal in number.

With regard to the influence of VESC, the three main constituents of the L2MSS were all found to correlate with this variable, although the Ideal L2 Self stands out as the most significant; boxplot analysis also showed that students who had been to an English-speaking country for more than a week had the highest Ideal L2 Self and showed a higher level of

agreement with each other. Interestingly, logistic regression analysis revealed that 72.1% of the students who had no overseas experience wrote as many words as those who had been to an English-speaking country. The fact that so many of the 'no' responding students have a high LA might mean that they exploit other, more autonomous, ways of gaining overseas experience via informal exposure to the target language (cinema, listening to music, or watching series or YouTube videos) in the original undubbed version, which compensates for the lack of possibilities of travelling. Therefore, foreign language learners should be encouraged to embark not only on study abroad, or mobility programmes, but also online exchange programmes or increase their informal foreign language learning opportunities, either online or by audiovisual means (see Arndt & Woore, 2018).

Language learning lessons should also be designed bearing in mind the importance of motivational factors such as students' Ideal L2 Self. Learners should encouraged to create vivid, detailed mental images of their future successful selves in English (Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013). Cultural interest and travelling also play a crucial role in the effort learners invest in learning a language, therefore constant links should be established between the lexical items taught and appealing cultural aspects or input related to the target language, which can contribute to stimulating and maintaining interest, as well as enriching lexical repertoires, and therefore language achievement.

Further studies are obviously required in order to analyse the relationship between motivational profiles and LA from a qualitative point of view, and possibly with a larger sample; a qualitative follow-up would allow for a more thorough inspection of the relationship between the L2MSS and LA. Different instructional levels would also need to be addressed in order to explore the effect of the L2MSS on LA at different educational stages. Similarly, other factors considered to be essential in a motivational model, such as learner's attitude, should also be explored in subsequent research studies.

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APPENDIX 1

Scales for our statement-type items: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (slightly disagree), 4 (slightly agree), 5 (agree), and 6 (strongly agree)

The learner's intended learning effort

Statements	**Mean and SD**
I am prepared to expend a lot of effort in learning English.	44 – 5.14 (.92)
I would like to spend lots of time studying English.	49 – 4.73 (1.06)
I would like to concentrate on studying English more than any other topic.	53 – 4.54 (1.19)
Even if I failed in my English learning, I would still learn English very hard.	58 – 5.16 (0.91)
English would be still important to me in the future even if I failed in my English course.	61 – 5.57 (0.63)

Ideal L2 Self

Statements	**Mean and SD**
I can imagine myself speaking English in the future with foreign friends at parties.	9 – 5.52 (0.79)
I can imagine myself in the future giving an English speech successfully to the public in the future.	18 – 4.8 (1.21)
I can imagine a situation where I am doing business with foreigners by speaking English.	28 – 5.16 (0.94)
I can imagine that in the future in a café with light music, a foreign friend and I will be chatting in English casually over a cup of coffee.	33 – 5.48 (0.84)
I can imagine myself in the future having a discussion with foreign friends in English.	40 – 5.51 (.78)

Ought-to L2 Self

Statements	**Mean and SD**
Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of the society.	4 – 2.72 (1.34)
Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my peers.	12 – 2.37 (1.33)
Studying English is important to me because other people will respect me more if I have a knowledge of English.	13 – 2.54 (1.28)
I study English because close friends of mine think it is important.	15 – 1.86 (1.08)
Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my teachers.	23 – 2.51 (1.43)
I consider learning English important because the people I respect think that I should do it.	32 – 2.14 (1.15)
Studying English is important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.	41 – 2.85 (1.59)

Family influence

Statements	**Mean and SD**
My parents / family believe that I must study English to be an educated person.	3 – 3.87 (1.59)
I have to study English, because, otherwise, I think my parents will be disappointed with me.	10 – 1.97 (1.21)
Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of my family.	16 – 1.75 (0.91)
I can feel a lot of pressure from my parents when I'm learning English.	35 – 1.77 (1.16)
My image of how I want to use English in the future is mainly influenced by my parents.	42 – 1.8 (1.25)

Instrumentality (prevention)

Statements	**Mean and SD**
Studying English is important to me, because I would feel ashamed if I got bad grades in English.	19 – 3.78 (1.55)
I will study English harder when thinking of not becoming a successful user of English in the future.	22 – 3.66 (1.67)
Studying English is necessary for me because I don't want to get a poor score mark or a fail mark in English proficiency tests (English III, Cambridge, Trinity, OTE, IELTS,…).	30 – 4.14 (1.48)
When thinking of not becoming a successful user of English in the future, I feel scared.	34 – 4.75 (1.38)
I have to learn English because I don't want to fail the English course.	39 – 4.13 (1.50)

Instrumentality (promotion)

Statements	**Mean and SD**
Studying English can be important to me because I think I'll need it for further studies.	5 – 5.25 (0.88)
Studying English is important to me because I am planning to study abroad.	8 – 5.27 (1.05)
Studying English is important to me in order to achieve a personally important goal (e.g., to get a degree or scholarship).	21 – 5.24 (1.02)
Studying English is important to me because my life will change if I acquire good command of English.	24 – 4.7 (1.14)

Travelling

Statements	**Mean and SD**
Learning English is important to me because I would like to travel internationally.	1 – 5.7 (0.58)
Studying English is important to me because without English I won't be able to travel a lot.	11 – 4.11 (1.34)
I like to travel to English-speaking countries.	17 – 5.61 (0.91)
I study English because with English I can enjoy travelling abroad.	29 – 5.34 (1.07)
Learning English is important to me because I plan to travel to English-speaking countries in the future.	36 – 5.48 (0.9)

L2 learning experience

Statements	**Mean and SD**
I always look forward to English classes.	6 – 4.54 (1.03)
I really like the actual process of learning English.	20 – 4.42 (1.09)
I find learning English really interesting.	27 – 5.52 (0.73)
I think time passes faster while studying English.	31 – 4.08 (1.31)
I really enjoy learning English.	38 – 5.39 (0.77)

Cultural interest

Statements	**Mean and SD**
I like English films.	2 – 5.48 (0.81)
I think learning English is important in order to learn more about the culture and art of its speakers.	7 – 5.18 (0.94)
I like TV programmes made in English-speaking countries.	14 – 5.13 (1.04)
I really like the music of English-speaking countries (e.g., pop music).	26 – 5.78 (0.47)
I like English-language magazines, newspapers, and books.	37 – 4.87 (1.18)