

Factors Influencing Motivation in Korean Adults' English Language Learning

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Abstract: Second language learner motivation is a substantial subject in the second language (L2) acquisition research and has been extensively researched in different learning contexts. While previous L2 motivation research, generally focused on various age groups in school settings, only a few studies have investigated the motivational orientations of post-college level adult learners of English. Considering the scarcity of studies on motivation with adult learners, and the need to examine motivational issues from a recent motivational theory perspective, this study explores adult learners' motivational orientations and strategies in learning English, and the difficulties they encounter in their re-learning process. For this purpose, four adult learners of English were recruited. The information was gathered through interviewing participants and a survey. The data were analyzed in terms of Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System concept to capture the correlation among learner motivation and contextual factors. The outcomes presented that the participants' Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self was shaped by a sociocultural perspectives in which English was emphasized as a crucial tool for competitiveness in academic and business sectors. Among the participants, Danny and Marie did not show much difference between their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. Their motivation is linked to their desired self as "a world man" and "a lone traveler," respectively. Also, Minnie and Ollie were motivated to study English to be "an ideal mom" for their children. It is notable that the parental obligation for their juveniles' English education was a primary source of motivation, which is unique to the English learning situation in Korea. The participants' motivation for improving their communication ability is thoroughly associated to the learning situations in which English is a key to academic success and career advancement. Though the research was directed with a lesser number of adult learners, the results can contribute to understanding Korean adult learners' motivational orientations and providing new possibilities to investigate adult motivational issues from the hypothetical structure of the L2 Motivational Self System.

Keywords: English, Korean Adult Learners, L2 Learning Theory, Motivation, Second Language, Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, L2 Learning Experience

1. Introduction

For instance globalization creates interaction among people and countries, English has been emphasized as an international language for communication. Accordingly, English became a mandatory requirement in the public and private learning curriculum in South Korea. It also became the prerequisite for employment and career advancement[1]. Tests of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) were two examples of consistent proficiency assessments that are generally utilized to gauge an individual's level of English ability[2]. Thus, Koreans invest a great deal of time and money learning English, which has led to the

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phenomenon called 'English fever'[3]. That is, Korean parents' investment for their kids' English education is so extensive that it is termed as fever. In addition to the regular classes at school, parents send their children to English institutes, or even overseas programs to improve their children's English ability[4][5]. As parents are considered responsible for their children's English education, they feel that they also need to improve their own English. In addition to this parental responsibility, there is a growing tendency to travel abroad and use English for communication purposes. This global trend motivates Korean adults to continue or restart their English learning again after their completion of university education. In fact, there are a lot of private English institutes that offer courses and programs for post-college level adult learners.

[6] defined motivation as the reason for human behavioral occurrences. He also affirmed that most psychologists and educators believe the word 'motivation' describes those processes that can (1) stimulate a need to explore behavior, (2) provide way and determination to behavior, (3) uphold behavioral persistence, or (4) selecting or preferring a particular behavior. He defined motivation as the general aspiration of someone to learn a second language. Therefore, motivation is the fundamental and vital part of learning, since it encompasses the learner's bearings with objective of acquiring another language (L2)[7][8].

[9] L2 Motivational Self System theory focuses to the process of motivational changes and second language learners' self-images. The concept of L2 self-images is based on [10] concept of possible and future selves:

The feared potential versions were the lonely oneself, the hopeless self, the inept self, the alcoholic self, the jobless self, or the thin self. Conversely, the hoped-for probable characters could be the effective self, the innovative self, the wealthy self, the thin self, or the cherished and esteemed self.

A potential selves mean that if an L2 student foresees its positive outcomes after successful learning, they can make an Ideal L2 Self. Also, an Ought-to L2 Self is formed when a learner is scared of negative future events such as failing in the exam, losing a chance to get a desired job due to lack of proficiency. The Ought-to L2 self is particularly noticeable when a learner is being pressured by external forces such as parents or peers. Dörnyei's (2005) L2 Motivational Self System theory is comprised of three scopes:

(1) Ideal L2 Self, discusses to the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self: The need to lessen the gap among our real and best selves is a strong encouragement to acquire the L2, especially if the individual want to become says it. This is especially true if our ideal self speaks it.

(2) The term "ought-to L2 Self" explains the qualities that one feels and must have (for instance, dissimilar commitments, responsibilities, or tasks) to avoid probable bad outcomes.

(3) L2 Learning Experience: This refers to context-specific motivations according to the current learning context and experiences. While Dörnyei's (2005) study focused solely on general objectives, meaning that it did not address situation-specific objectives, it lacked information about immediate motivators. However, other research that was carried out in line with the situated approach previously discussed has shown a great deal of evidence regarding the widespread executive motivations' effects on the current learning environment as well as skills.

Furthermore, the Ideal L2 Self is the symbol of one's personal optimisms, desires, wishes or aspirations. Ought-to L2 Self is the symbol of one's sense of duties and responsibilities required to avoid negative consequences. The L2 learning practice denotes incentive stemming from the learner's direct learning situation and knowledge.

In the Korean context, second language learner motivation has been most extensively studied in elementary, secondary, and university level students[11-14]. Since the studies were mostly conducted in school settings, learner motivation was found to be exaggerated by school-related factors such as teachers' attitude, grades, and classroom activities. However, with a few exceptions, little attention has been paid to post-college level learners[15-17]. The result of this study will help us to understand why

post-college level adults relearn English and what strategies they employ to become successful learners. It will also help to understand how post-college level adults' learning strategies are different from learners of different age groups studied in previous research. Based on the findings, suggestions can be made to help Korean adult learners in learning English.

Therefore, the present study aims to outline post-college level adult learners' motivations for learning English, the motivational strategies they employ to achieve their goals, their difficulties in maintaining their English learning motivation and the coping mechanisms they use when confronted with such difficulties.

2. Contents

2.1 Participants

This research was showed in 2015 at Keimyung University in Daegu, South Korea. It involved four Korean adult learners assigned with unofficial English names; Danny, Minnie, Ollie and Marie. Danny was the single male participant and the other three were females. Danny was a native of a small city in Gyeonggi province in Korea. He was 50 years old at the time of the study. He is married and works as a professor in Korea. He has a post-graduate degree and has been overseas to study English. Minnie was 39 years old and she lives in a small city in Korea. She is a housewife and a mother. She finished a bachelor's degree and has been to another country to study English. Ollie was 39 years old, a housewife, and a resident of one of the metropolitan cities in Korea. She's not been to another country to study English. Finally, Marie was 48 years old, married, and from a metropolitan city. She works as a university professor with a post-graduate degree. She has never been to a study-abroad program. All four participants speak English at an elementary level [Table 1].

[Table 1] Summary of Study Participants' Profile

Characteristics	Danny	Marie	Minnie	Ollie
Age (years)	50	48	39	39
Sex (M/F)	M	F	F	F
Education (High school/Bachelor/Post-graduate)	Post-graduate	Post-graduate	Bachelor	Bachelor
Occupation	Professor/Businessman	Professor	Housewife	Housewife
Marital status (Single/Married)	Married	Married	Married	Married
Study-abroad experience (Yes/No)	Yes	No	Yes	No
English level (Elementary/Pre-intermediate/Intermediate/Advance)	Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	Elementary

2.2 Data Analysis

The questionnaire responses were analyzed to calculate the mean scores. Interview notes were transcribed several times to find the recurring themes. Then, normal words and phrases were highlighted and those highlighted words were coded for further categorization. The coded labels were taken directly from the participants' words to avoid invalid classification or confusion in the coding process. These labels were grouped together using Dörnyei's (2005) constructs of Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience.

2.3 Results

2.3.1 Questionnaire Results

[Table 2] below shows the participants' reasons for studying English. The highest mean score was

found in item 5. The participants wanted to help their children to learn English. They conceived of raising their English abilities as means to provide a better English learning environment for their children. They also confirmed the desire to travel abroad, speak English fluently, and enviousness of Koreans who speaks English very well (items 3, 4, and 7) as motivations for learning. These motivators might even encourage adult learning in the absence of the belief that most Koreans aspire to learn English. While they wanted to be fluent in English and they felt envious of other Koreans who speak English well, their desire to have a conversation with foreigners is relatively low with (mean = 2.75) compared to other items.

[Table 2] Participants' Reasons for Studying English, N=4

Questionnaire Items	Mean
1. It is fun to learn English.	3.75
2. I love to talk to a foreigner.	2.75
3. I love to travel abroad.	4.75
4. I want to be self-assured in English.	4.75
5. I want to help my children with their English.	5.00
6. Most Koreans are learning English these days.	3.25
7. I am envious of those Koreans who speak English well.	4.75

2.3.2 Difficulties in learning English

[Table 3] shows the difficulties that the participants perceived in learning and using English. Participants not having opportunities to use English (item 6), comprised the highest mean score of any response. This perceived lack of opportunities to speak the language was related to their low of confidence in their pronunciation as well as their fear of speaking to foreigners (items 3 and 7). Also, their command of grammar was very limited, and they did not know how to start a conversation and gave up on learning English easily. Although their command of grammar was bounded, they seemed to perceive that they did not have serious problems with their vocabulary because they had learned a sufficient number of English words (mean = 2.50).

[Table 3] Participants' Difficulties in Learning and using English, N=4

Questionnaire Items	Mean
1. I have narrow understanding of grammar.	2.75
2. I have narrow understanding of English vocabulary.	2.50
3. I cannot enunciate properly.	3.25
4. I do not know how to start a conversation.	2.75
5. I get easily tired of studying English.	2.75
6. I do not have chance to use English.	3.75
7. I am afraid of speaking to foreigners.	3.25

2.3.3 Perceived Method in Learning English

The participants' perception of effective method in learning English is summarized in [Table 4]. It was shown that the participants believed that taking English classes online (item 4) could be the best way to cope up with their difficulties in learning and using English (mean = 4.25). The participants

also believed that studying English abroad is the second-best way to improve one's English (mean = 4.00). The participants also responded that using English more often with their children, doing a lot of listening activities, and memorizing words every day would be helpful. They also seemed to acknowledge that they should not be afraid to commit mistakes. They believed that watching English TV programs or movies and reading English materials were ineffective ways to learn English, and writing a diary in English was considered the least effective method (mean = 2.50).

[Table 4] Participants' Ways to Cope with Difficulties in Learning and using English, N=4

Questionnaire Items	Mean
1. I should study abroad.	4.00
2. I should remember that mistakes are normal.	3.00
3. I should use English more often with my children.	3.25
4. I should take English classes online.	4.25
5. I should meet more foreigners.	3.50
6. I should do a lot of listening exercises.	3.25
7. I should read English materials.	3.75
8. I should watch English TV programs.	2.50
9. I should watch English movies.	3.00
10. I should memorize English words everyday.	3.25
11. I should write a diary in English.	1.25

2.3.4 Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self

We selected excerpts from the interview transcripts [Table 5]. Danny and Marie responded that traveling was their main reason for learning English, while Minnie and Ollie's mainly wanted to learn English to aid their children. Danny, a 50-year-old businessman responded that he wanted to set up businesses abroad. Perfectly illustrating the power of the Ideal L2 Self category, Danny expressed a desire to see himself as, "a world man." For him, speaking English fluently would enable him to talk to foreigners more comfortably. Danny used the words "a world man" to express his desire to do business outside Korea and to talk to people outside Korea. Being a businessman, an extrinsic motive also motivated him. His Ideal L2 Self closely reflected the necessity of mobility that the current global society requires. But ultimately, the businessman status only had importance as it bolstered his Ideal L2 Self-identity. He did not want to remain as a person who had to be confined inside Korea due to his lack of English ability. Among the four participants, Danny was the most ambitious to establish his goal to become like a native speaker.

While Danny expressed his ideal image of an English learner as, "a world man," Minnie and Ollie described their Ideal L2 Self in relation to their desire to help their children learn English. Minnie mentioned that she wanted her son to study English abroad. So, it was important for her to have enough English ability to manage her child's logistical needs a foreign country. Ollie felt that she could not help her son with his English homework due to her insufficient English. These participants' Ideal L2 Self-centered on being a good mother who can always cater to the needs of their children and guide them in their study by providing an optimal learning environment. Minnie and Ollie also strove to be role models for their children as part of their Ideal L2 Self. Although Ollie did not mention of her son studying abroad, she vividly stated that her English learning played an important role in her son's English learning. Therefore, these two mothers Ideal L2 Self can be described as strongly related to their parental aspirations to be "an ideal mom."

Unlike Minnie and Ollie, Marie did not need to teach or help her son in English learning as her son

was already a college student. She wanted to go to Canada to learn English so that she could speak English well. Like the male participant, her ideal self-image was more focused on her personal goal: to be a relaxed and comfortable traveler. Her Ideal L2 Self particularly paralleled Danny's Ideal L2 Self in that they both wanted to travel abroad. But Marie did not have the functional 'businessman' component to her Ideal L2 Self-image; her Ideal L2 Self was purely comprised of being able to travel easy without communication problems.

[Table 5] Excerpts from Interviews with Participants

Interview Questions	Responses
Interviewer: Could you share some experiences during the first time you learned English?	Marie: When I had something to say but I cannot express it, I feel abrupt and mad. For example, I wanted to say, "오랜만에 만나, 반갑다" (long time no see or nice to meet you) but I could not say them, so I could not express my gladness.
Interviewer: How does learning English make you feel?	Marie: I feel shy when I could not understand.
Interviewer: How do you feel when you are in an English conversation?	Marie: I am happy when I can speak in English.
Interviewer: Have you tried speaking English with foreigners?	Ollie: A little afraid. But if foreigner ask to me I can answer.
Interviewer: Can you answer?	Ollie: I want to. I try to answer to them.
Interviewer: How about asking? Do you ask questions to foreigners?	Ollie: Huh? Sometimes, for kids. I want my son brave.
Interviewer: What did you do to improve your English?	Minnie: Ah! I read English books with my son. And watching English DVD.
Interviewer: Could you share your experience in studying abroad?	Danny: I study in Korean language school. I have another experience. Many foreigners abroad. I want many experience because abroad. For example, in the Philippines culture, society and many people meet. I want to study in a school owner is not Korean. I think it's better if the owner is Filipino or foreigner. Because I can speak English not Korean.
Interviewer: So, are you still learning English until now?	Danny: Yes.
Interviewer: With who? Alone?	Danny: No, with a private tutor. Foreign online English teacher. She is from the Philippines.
Interviewer: How many times a week?	Danny: Three times a week for one hour.
Interviewer: What else?	Danny: I practice memorizing words.

3. Discussion

This research is to discover some reasons of Korean adult English pupils and to understand the contextual issues that affect learners' motivation. With the general goal, this study attempted to address the issues of post-college level learners' motivational reasons for learning English, their motivational strategies to achieve the goal, and the difficulties in maintaining their motivation. The interview data gathered from four post-college level Korean adult learners, it was shown that their motivation was associated to their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self-images.

For Danny, an image of being "a world man" was a strong motivational reason that forced him to study conversational English. His Ought-to L2 Self was also related to the want to communicate in English with the many foreigners at his workplace. On the other hand, Minnie and Ollie wanted to set

an example for their children. They wanted to develop their English proficiency to help with their children's English education. It can be extrapolated that Minnie and Ollie were obliged to learn because they were primarily responsible for their children's learning English. Their motivation in learning English reflects the prevalent beliefs about the Korean mother's role. Thus, Minnie and Ollie's Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self can be best designated as "an ideal mom." It is generally assumed that the mother has the responsibility of taking care of their children and should provide appropriate learning environments for them. According to [18] many Korean mothers particularly those in Gangnam, the richest part of Seoul, were learning in order to help their children achieve academic excellence. For Marie, English was an important tool for traveling around the world. She wanted to have sufficient communication ability in English so that she could travel alone. Her Ideal L2 Self can be described as "a lone traveler." Marie considered English communication ability as a medium to gain more independence. Her Ought-to L2 Self was related to her sense of living in the globalized society.

Danny and Marie's Ideal L2 Self motivation seemed to be nearer to the concept of the integrative orientation because they were learning English to achieve their own personal desires, while Minnie and Ollie's Ideal L2 Self seemed to be closer to the instrumental orientation because they were learning English to help their children. It was shown that the participants' motivational reasons were related to their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. It was noted that the motivational strategies and difficulties were related to their learning contexts in which the participants were inspired to study English mainly to develop their speaking skill.

The participants showed similar paths in learning English though they differed in terms of age, gender, career, and the length of time they were exposed to English. Yet, typical of Korean learners, passing school exams constituted the motivation for their study of English. After college, they tried to improve English at private institutes or via employing private tutors. They were also similar in that they had rarely had opportunities to use English for communication purposes. Danny was the lone exception in this study as he had had opportunities to live abroad and to use English for communication purposes in his workplace; the other participants did not have chances to use English. Therefore, it was difficult for them to see the tangible improvement with their English. Danny's immediate experience with his foreign colleagues and friends had shaped his Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. Also, Minnie, Ollie, and Marie's L2 learning experiences apparently did not shape their self-images. Minnie and Ollie's self-images were strongly influenced by their obligation to set as a good language learner for their children, while Marie's self-images were influenced by a globalized society.

Among the participants, Danny was the most ambitious L2 learner. His desire was influenced by his career as a professor. In his job, he was surrounded with foreigners in his department and foreign friends who could not speak in Korean. Therefore, he was obliged to learn English. He believed that the only way for him to be able to talk with foreign colleagues and foreign supports was to learn English. Similarly, [19] investigated two Korean students (Chang and Hana) and the part of their Ideal L2 Self in English learning motivation. It is found that Chang was not specific about his reasons for studying English, whereas Hana was clear about her specific desire to become an English teacher. The study shows that Hana's clear vision of her Ideal L2 Self helped maintain her motivation while learning English. [20] had similar results. Additionally, they looked into the inspired conduct and L2 motivation for learning of 495 South Korean secondary school learners. It was discovered that the student's motivation seemed to stem from their Ideal L2 Self, which included having fluency in English.

The participants in Kim and Kim's studied English from middle school and stopped learning English at the university. Each participant had different English learning paths since they graduated

from college. They also had different feelings towards and approaches to learning English. Despite the differences in their L2 learning experience, the L2 Motivational Self framework also encapsulated their motivation. The L2 Motivational Self System has three core contents: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. Ideal L2 Self is the combination of integrative and instrumental motivation as the L2 self-images made by the pupils can be connected to their objective of being successful in schools, work, and their future lives. L2 learners are encouraged to learn the L2 language as they see the positive outcome that they ideally like to acquire.

[21] showed the connection among different knowledge styles, Ideal L2 Self, and English skill. The study was conducted with 2,682 high school, junior high school, and elementary school students in Korea. It is found that among the participants, the basic school pupils showed the clearest Ideal L2 Self and that they were most driven to acquire English to achieve their desired proficiency. The high school students had the most difficulty in visualizing their Ideal L2 Self, which affected their decreased proficiency. However, junior high schools' Ideal L2 Self and motivated attitude did not influence their learning behaviors.

Learners' motivation is often influenced by external forces, such as parents, or societal situations. In his study with Korean learners in Canada, [22] showed that the participants' initial motivation was to get a good score on the TOEIC and to get a good job. Thus, social extrinsic social pressure was the source of much of their motivation. [23] affirmed that L2 knowledge skill could change the learners' motivational self-images from Ideal L2 Self to Ought-to L2 Self and vice-versa. Since an L2 student may build an Ideal L2 Self or an Ought-to L2 Self-images in the beginning stage of L2 learning, his or her self-image may not be nurtured without the relevant L2 learning experience being continuously practiced and perceived by the learner.

[23] reported that when the L2 lessons were on memorization of sentence structure procedures and terminology, the poignancy of the Ideal L2 Self could diminish previously the school year or semester ended. The learners might feel bored with the academic routine and lose motivation in learning. [24] investigated four Korean learners in Canada. The results showed that all participants in the research were subjective by Korean educational environment, which reinforced the idea that English is the key to employment. It was shown that the learners' English language learning motivation was initially an Ought-to L2 Self, which was socially driven because they need to learn English for employment. It was also shown that the learners' Ought-to L2 Self can be changed into their Ideal L2 Self if they internalized the importance of the language in their lives. [25] in his longitudinal study of Korean adults argued that richness of L2 interaction did not guarantee higher level or L2 proficiency, unless the L2 learners were aware that their L2 learning activities were significant to their L2 development. Unlike young L2 learners, as mentioned above, participants in our study had clear reasons to improve their English.

A few important limitations in this study need to be addressed. As this study was based on the recollection of the adult learners' experience in learning English, they might not have been able to accurately recall the details of their learning experiences. It should also be mentioned that as the study participants and the researchers did not share the same proficiency of English and Korean, the interview process had to be aided by a Korean-English bilingual interpreter. The language problem in the interview process might have limited the content of the interview between the researchers and the participants. Additionally, as the number of the participants is small, their experience in learning English may not represent a wide range of Korean adult learners. A more complete picture of adult learners' motivation, large scale quantitative studies or longitudinal studies with adult learners in different learning contexts need to be conducted to complement the results found in case study approach. Lastly, the English test scores can validate and reinforce their learning motivation; this was not explored in the present study.

4. Conclusions

Using Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System theory as an analytical tool, the study identified the Korean adult learners' motivational characteristics and the contextual factors that influenced the learner's 'motivation'. Among the participants, Danny and Marie did not show much difference between their Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. Their motivation were associated to their desired self as "a world man" and "a lone traveler," respectively. Also, Minnie and Ollie were motivated to learn English to be "an ideal mom" for their children. It is notable that the parental accountability for their children's English education being a primary source of motivation for learning English is unique to Korean culture. The participants' motivation for improving their communication ability is closely related to the social situations in which they study English, such as the possibility of academic success and career advancement. Despite the limitations of a small-scale case study, the results of the study provide useful insights into adult learners' L2 motivation. More longitudinal studies need to be conducted to investigate how adult learners' self-images and L2 learning context influence their motivational states.

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