



# The Relationship between learning experiences, selves, and motivated learning behavior in Iranian EFL Learners

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## ABSTRACT

This study attempts to reinterpret language learning motivation through applying the new theory of the L2 Motivational Self System by Dörnyei (2005, 2009), which has not received due attention and consideration in the context of foreign language. The overriding aim guiding this research was to empirically examine how three main components of the mentioned theory, namely, the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self and the L2 learning experiences, were related to the motivated learning behavior among elementary and advanced EFL learners. The study was designed using a mixed methods approach, with a primary quantitative research instrument being supported by secondary qualitative data. The main quantitative instrument was an attitudinal questionnaire conducted among 142 elementary and advanced EFL learners in both sexes, in two English language institutions in Isfahan, Iran. The qualitative data was collected from a set of interviews with a total of 8 female learners of English in the same places. Analysis of the achieved data provided convincing support for four claims. Firstly, the findings confirmed that the Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System can be validated in the Iranian context. Second, the ideal L2 self and L2 learning experiences represented a significant relationship with motivated learning behavior in both groups, while the relation between ought-to L2 self and motivated learning behavior was significant but weak in case of elementary, and non-significant in case of advanced students. Third, the research found that among the three dependent variables, the L2 learning experiences had the most significant relationship with L2 motivation than the other two. Finally, it was shown by the achieved data that the L2 learning experiences and the ought-to L2 self were considerably higher for elementary students, whereas the ideal L2 self was fairly the same for both groups.

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## Introduction

The nature of language learning motivation and its role in the process of SLA have widely been presented and examined in Applied Linguistics since 50 years ago, because of the great importance given to it by practitioners and researchers (Dörnyei, 2010). Gardner and Lambert (1959) were the first investigators of L2 motivation. To determine the effect of attitudinal and motivational factors on language learning success, Gardner and Lambert (1972) identified 2 basic types of motivation as integrative and instrumental motivations (Brown, 2007). Gardner (1972, p.132) defined the 'integrative' type as "reflecting a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other group".

Although the integrativeness was a popular and greatly studied concept in L2 research, but a number of subsequent investigations quickly began to challenge such a claim (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). For instance, some researchers like Kachru (1992, 1977) and Lukmani (1972) noted that in some settings, English is better learned for instrumental purposes (Brown, 2007). Even Gardner himself found instrumental motivation as a useful factor for language success in certain contexts (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991), and integrative one as an effective situation in others (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992). They all concluded that

both integrative and instrumental motivations are significant factors in successful language learning, and that the degree of impact of either case depends on individual learners, educational and cultural settings, teaching methodology and social interaction (Brown, 2007). So, integrative and instrumental motivations were difficult to be distinguished (Lamb, 2004).

More importantly, the existence of English globalization has caused the debate about the integrative concept and the idea of its rethinking (Dörnyei, 2009). Before English became an international language, the concept of integrativeness implied identification with a) a specific target reference group of speakers (Gardner, 2001), b) the values of the L2 community or the language, and c) the language itself in the case of having no L2 community present in the immediate learning environment (Dörnyei, 1990). By the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, the globalization phenomenon, widespread migrations, advances in media technology and electronic communications, etc., all contributed to the emergence of 'global English'. English has become an international language and thus, detached from its native speakers and their cultures (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). So in many language learning situations, it is not clear who the L2 belongs to. Integrativeness, defined by Gardner (2001), is related to the language learner's identification with native

speakers of the L2, while in today's world, talking about 'World English identity' (Dörnyei, 2005) or 'International posture' (Yashima, 2002), which means "interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to study or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners ... and a non-ethnocentric attitude toward different cultures" (Yashima, 2002, p. 57), seem more appropriate (Csizér & Kormos, 2009). This way, the external reference group is broadened from a specific geographic community to a non-specific global community of English language users, and without a specific L2 community, the Gardner's (1985) concept of integrativeness can be problematic.

The starting point to answer these challenges and complement Gardner's theoretical framework was Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) new model of the L2 Motivational Self System, which has three main components: *ideal L2 self*, *ought-to L2 self* and *L2 learning experiences*.

#### **The ideal L2 self**

The *ideal L2 self*, according to Dörnyei (2005, p. 106), is 'the L2-specific aspect of one's ideal self'. It is representative of the ideal image that L2 learners wish/hope/desire to approach in the future. In other words, if an L2 user wants to be a fluent speaker of that language, the picture that s/he imagines of his/her future self as a fluent L2 speaker, plays the role of a strong motivator to reduce the gap between the current or actual self and the ideal image (Papi, 2010). Having shown to be the most powerful of the three, as well as a significant factor of contemporary motivation research, the ideal L2 self can be seen as a modern interpretation of integrativeness (Tghuchi *et al.*, 2009; Ryan, 2009, Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). In other words, "integrativeness can be interpreted as an idealised view of the L2 self" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 49). But, in today's globalized world it is difficult to identify the target community; therefore the concept provides a better tool and a deeper perspective for researchers to examine language learning motivation (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). Thus, the central idea of the new theory was the equation of the traditional interpretation of motivation termed 'integrativeness/integrative motivation' with the *ideal L2 self* (Dörnyei, 2010). Some researchers like Herbst *et al.* (2003) empirically validate the reinterpretation of integrativeness as the Ideal L2 Self. They believed that every learner desires to integrate with those who have similarity with the person that learner wants to be, rather than the person s/he actually is.

#### **The ought-to L2 self**

The *ought-to L2 self* is "the L2-specific aspect of one's ought-to self" (Papi, 2010, p.469). This less-internalized aspect of the L2 self refers to the attributes one perceives important from an instrumental perspective. In other words, it refers to "the qualities one perceives one ought to possess to meet expectations and to avoid possible negative outcomes" as a language learner (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009, p. 29). For instance, if one wants to learn an L2 in order to meet expectations of his/her boss or teacher, the ought-to L2 self plays the role of an effective motivator to do so (Papi, 2010). This kind of L2 self may be highly dissimilar to the person's own desires. The more extrinsic types of instrumental motives are included in this dimension (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009).

#### **The L2 learning experiences**

Learning environment has long been pointed out as a motivating factor (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991). According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009), the *L2 learning experiences*

concern learners' attitudes toward second language learning. It is also affected by situation-specific motives that incorporate factors related to the immediate language learning environment and learners' perceptions of their previous language learning experiences (e.g. the impact of the L2 teacher, the curriculum, the peer group, the teaching materials, and the experience of success or failure). To put it differently, the L2 learning experiences explain how learners evaluate their former experiences to plan future-directed goals (Ryan, 2009). Csizér and Kormos (2009), and Tghuchi *et al.* (2009) showed in the mentioned-above studies that this component of the L2 Motivational Self System had the strongest impact on motivated behavior. As Dörnyei (2009) put it, the initial motivation for language learners emerges from successful engagement in the process of language learning, rather than the other two self-related components.

#### **Statement of the problem**

This study aims to offer an overall validity of Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) tripartite model of the L2 Motivational Self System in an Asian context. It also intends to present evidence that individuals' thinking of their selves can greatly influence individuals' motivated learning behavior and claims to investigate the relationship between learning experiences and L2 motivation. Finally, the motivation of two groups of elementary and advanced levels is compared in order to examine the importance of sustaining effort and motivation during various educational periods while learning an L2.

#### **Research questions**

To investigate the role of language learning experience and selves in creating motivated behavior, the following questions are raised:

Research Question #1: Is there a significant relationship between the ideal L2 self and students' motivated learning behavior?

Research Question #2: Is there a significant relationship between the ought-to L2 self and students' motivated learning behavior?

Research Question #3: Is there a significant relationship between the L2 learning experiences and students' motivated learning behavior?

#### **Methodology**

##### **Participants and data collection procedures**

A total number of 150 learners, both males and females, were randomly selected to serve as the participants of the present study. They ranged in age from 15 to 30 years. To ensure the homogeneity of the subjects, they were tested on OPT (Oxford Placement Test) and accordingly, the participants were divided in two groups of 86 and 64, studying English at elementary and advanced levels respectively, with 4 students in each level participating only in interviews. A total of 142 learners of English, both males and females, participated in the main questionnaire study. Of these, 82 were elementary and 60 were advanced students.

The qualitative data of this research was collected through conducting a series of interviews with EFL learners in language institutes. A total number of 8 female EFL learners, 4 in elementary (A, B, C, & D) and 4 in advanced level (E, F, G, & H) ranged in age from 15 to 28, participated in these interviews (Table 6.2.). Interviewees were chosen to provide insight into a range of English language-learning experiences in Iran. Interviewees were not participants in the questionnaire. In order to introduce a broader range of experiences into the data,

interviewees were not part of the other previous samples in the study. Since these interviews were designed to be the main qualitative component to the research, profiles of the participants are provided in Appendix G.

**Table 3.2. Level distribution of interview participants**

Frequency	Level
4	Elementary
4	Advanced
8	Total

## Data Analysis and Results

### Reliability of variables

As mentioned previously, the present study is a replication of Hungarian study based on Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) L2 Motivational Self System. In order to investigate whether the scales used in the original Hungarian study operate successfully in Iranian context, the internal reliability for both research variables are compared.

**Table 4.1. Reliability for variables used in the present study**

Variables	Number of items	$\alpha$ Cronbach
Ideal L2 self	6	.75
Ought-to L2 self	6	.78
Learning experience	9	.70
Motivated learning behavior	9	.77

Table 4.1. presents the reliability for the items, both imported directly from the Hungarian studies and newly designed. Firstly, the reliability of ideal L2 self questionnaire was equal to 75%. Secondly, the reliability of ought-to L2 self questionnaire was equal to 78%. Thirdly, the reliability of L2 learning experiences questionnaire was equal to 70% and finally, the reliability of motivated learning behavior questionnaire was equal to 77%. Bearing in mind that having an  $\alpha$  Cronbach higher than 0.6 makes the test reliable, it is possible to conclude that the scales used in the Hungarian motivation questionnaire have operated successfully in the Iranian context.

### The first null hypothesis

#### A) The correlation between the ideal L2 self and motivated learning behavior in the whole sample

The first null hypothesis states that the ideal L2 self has no relationship with students' motivated learning behavior. In order to examine this null hypothesis, the mean, frequency and standard deviation were separately calculated (see table 4.5.), and the Pearson Correlation was measured (see table 4. 6.). Accordingly, tables and figures have been displayed to clarify the relationship in question.

**Table 4.5. Descriptive statistics**

Variables	Mean	Std. deviation	N
Ideal L2 self	26.8944	3.28700	142
Motivated learning behavior	38.0845	5.36272	142

**Table 4.6. Correlations**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Ideal L2 self	Motivated learning behavior	.628(**)	.000	142

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

According to the Pearson Correlation in the table 4.6., the first hypothesis  $h_0$  is rejected. Therefore, it is shown that the correlation coefficient between the ideal L2 self and motivated learning behavior is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$ . To put it differently, there is a significant relationship between the ideal L2 self and motivated learning behavior.

In brief, the first null hypothesis of the present study is rejected on the account of the fact that the study reveals that the ideal L2 self has a significant impact on students' motivation in learning English.

#### B) The correlation comparison between the ideal L2 self and motivated learning behavior in elementary and advanced levels

In order to compare the correlation between the ideal L2 self and motivated learning behavior in two elementary and advanced levels, the following statistical analyses were computed.

**Table 4.8. Correlations**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Level
Ideal L2 self	Motivated learning behavior	.648(**)	.000	82	Elementary
Ideal L2 self	Motivated learning behavior	.616(**)	.000	60	Advanced

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

The Pearson Correlation in both elementary and advanced levels is significant, showing the close relation between the ideal L2 self and motivation in both groups. The higher .32 of the Pearson Correlation in the elementary level indicates that the ideal L2 self is a little more effective for EFL learners in elementary level than those in advanced one, which can be neglected. The figures below are illustrations of these outcomes:

### The second null hypothesis

#### A) The correlation between the ought-to L2 self and motivated learning behavior in the whole sample

The second null hypothesis maintains that the ought-to L2 self has no relationship with students' motivated learning behavior. Thus, the mean, frequency and standard deviation were separately calculated (see table 4.9.) and the Pearson Correlation was measured (see table 4.10.). Accordingly, tables and figures have been displayed to clarify the relationship in question.

**Table 4.10. Correlations**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
Ought-to L2 self	Motivated learning behavior	.390(**)	.000	142

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

According to the Pearson Correlation in the table 4.10., the second hypothesis  $h_0$  is rejected. Therefore, it is shown that the correlation coefficient between the ought-to L2 self and motivated learning behavior is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$ . In other words, there is a significant relationship between the ought-to L2 self and motivated learning behavior, but totally, this correlation is weak compared to that for the ideal L2 self.

In sum, the second null hypothesis of the present study is rejected on the account of the fact that the study reveals that the

ought-to L2 self has an impact on students' motivation in learning English, however, this impact is considered not very strong and powerful.

#### B) The correlation comparison between the ought-to L2 self and motivated learning behavior in elementary and advanced levels

In order to compare the correlation between the the ought-to L2 self and motivated learning behavior in two elementary and advanced levels, the following statistical analyses were computed.

**Table 4.12. Correlations**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Level
Ought-to L2 self	Motivated learning behavior	.466(**)	.000	82	Elementary
Ought-to L2 self	Motivated learning behavior	.299	.020	60	Advanced

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

The higher 1. 67 of the Pearson Correlation in the elementary level lends credence to the fact that the ought-to L2 self is considerably more effective for EFL learners in elementary level than those in advanced one. It must be noted that correlation coefficient in elementary level is significant, whereas it is not so in the case of advanced group.

#### The third null hypothesis

#### A) The correlation between the L2 learning experiences and motivated learning behavior in the whole sample

The third null hypothesis presumes that L2 learning experiences have no relationship with students' motivated learning behavior. To check this hypothesis, the mean, frequency and standard deviation were separately calculated (see table 4.13.) and the Pearson Correlation was measured (see table 4.14.). Accordingly, tables and figures have been displayed to clarify the relationship in question.

**Table 4.14. Correlations**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
L2 learning experiences	Motivated learning behavior	.760(**)	.000	142

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

According to the Pearson Correlation in the table 4.14., the third hypothesis  $H_0$  is rejected. Therefore, it is shown that the correlation coefficient between the L2 learning experiences and motivated learning behavior is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$ . In other words, there is a significant relationship between the L2 learning experiences and motivated learning behavior.

To put it in a nut shell, the third null hypothesis of the present study is rejected on the account of the fact that the study reveals that the L2 learning experiences have a significant impact on students' motivation in learning English.

#### B) The correlation comparison between the L2 learning experiences and motivated learning behavior in elementary and advanced levels

In order to compare the correlation between the L2 learning experiences and motivated learning behavior in two elementary

and advanced levels, the following statistical analyses were computed.

**Table 4.16. Correlations**

Independent variable	Dependent variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Level
L2 learning experiences	Motivated learning behavior	.808(**)	.000	82	Elementary
L2 learning experiences	Motivated learning behavior	.671(**)	.000	60	Advanced

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $P \leq 0.01$  (2-tailed).

The higher 1. 37 of the Pearson Correlation in the elementary level lends credence to the fact that the L2 learning experiences scale are considerably more effective for EFL learners in elementary level than those in advanced one. The figures below are illustrations of these outcomes:

#### Qualitative findings

As discussed in chapter three, the quantitative component of my research project was accompanied by a subsequent secondary qualitative phase. The focus of this phase was on those areas requiring further support than what was obtained through the interpretation of the qualitative data.

In the rounds of administered interviews, the fundamental issues underpinning this study, including language learning experiences and attitudes to English, goals and orientations, obligations and need to learning English and ideal L2 self, were addressed. In the following, the findings gathered by the interviews will be classified under related issues.

#### The L2 learning experiences

The L2 learning experiences, as elaborated in the previous chapters, were found to have the strongest effect on Iranian L2 learners. According to Papi and Teimouri (in press), the English learning experience involve learner's attitudes toward learning English and can be affected by several situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience. Language learners' attitudes towards learning English is considered as a key issue because "for some language learners the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self images but rather from successful engagement with the actual language learning process" (Dömyei, 2009, p. 29).

The situation-specific motives arisen in this thesis in the form of interview are attitudes to language, curriculum, class atmosphere, L2 teacher, peer group and teaching materials, mainly books. All students participated in the interviews mentioned the importance and impact of L2 learning experiences in learning English. Concerning the whole sample of 8 learners, the following results were found: 7 students attributed their great effort in learning English to classes' atmosphere (87.5%), 6 students highlighted the motivational effect of language itself (75%), 6 students found the teacher's role vital in learning (75%), 3 students pointed out the impact of peer group very strong (37.5%), 2 students focused on English books as an attractive factor (25%) and finally, 1 student considered the strict curriculum as a demotivator (12.5%). The table below demonstrates each item's percentage of importance according to the whole sample.

Table 4.16.

Selected items	No. of students selecting the item	Percentage
Class atmosphere	7	87.5%
Teacher	6	75%
Language	6	75%
Peer group	3	37.5%
Teaching materials	2	25%
Curriculum	1	12.5%

It can be concluded that class atmosphere occupies the most significant role in eliciting motivated behavior and is the strongest predictor of the learners' effort investment in learning. Factors like teacher and language take the second place in this arrangement. Peer group and teaching materials are found to be less important than others, and curriculum is the least influential factor in this respect.

The distinctive investigation of the sample concerning the students' levels results in the following findings: the impact of class atmosphere was considered as a powerful motivator by 4 students in advanced (100%) and 3 in elementary level (75%), the effect of language was emphasized by 3 students in each group (75%, each), the motivational force of the class teacher was mentioned by 3 students in each group (75%, each), 3 students in elementary level (75%) found the peer group effective in the process of learning, the teaching materials were equally important in learning by 1 learner in each group (25%, each) and the curriculum was viewed as influential only by 1 elementary student (25%). The table below demonstrates each item's percentage of importance according to the learners' levels.

Table 4.17.

Selected items	No. of elementary students	No. of advanced students	Percentage (Elementary)	Percentage (Advanced)
Class atmosphere	3	4	75%	100%
Teacher	3	3	75%	75%
Language	3	3	75%	75%
Peer group	3	0	75%	0%
Teaching materials	1	1	25%	25%
Curriculum	1	0	25%	0%

Taking the obtained data into consideration, it is evident that factors like class atmosphere, teacher and language were considered as the most significant ones by both groups of elementary and advanced students, yet the class atmosphere was greatly emphasized by advanced learners. Peer group played an important role to motivating elementary students, while the advanced learners did not even care about it. Likewise, teaching materials item was considered the least effective factor among both groups' learners and finally, curriculum was of minimum importance in elementary group and of no significance among advanced learners. In general, the findings in this section are consistent with what Kormos and Csizér (2008) stated that language learning experiences are slightly more important for younger learners.

### The ideal L2 self

The ideal L2 self, in this study, was ranked as the second important and effective factor in eliciting motivated behavior. The main future goals set by internally motivated learners to learn English are improvements in job and income, life promotion, higher education, better social status, knowledge gaining, traveling abroad and international media usage. Concerning the whole sample of 8 learners, the following results were achieved: 7 students highlighted the improvement in job and income (87.5%), 6 students attributed their great effort in learning English to promote their lives (75%), 5 students considered gaining knowledge a significant motivational force (62.5%), goals like achieving higher education, travelling abroad and using international media, each were drawn into 4 different learners' attention (50%, each), reaching into a better social status had a strong effect on the amount of effort put forth towards learning English process for 2 students (25%) and finally, being interested in L2 culture was a motivation-oriented factor according to 1 learner (12.5%). The table below demonstrates each item's percentage of importance according to the whole sample.

Table 4.18.

Selected items	No. of students selecting the item	Percentage
Job and income	7	87.5%
Life	6	75%
Knowledge	5	62.5%
Education	4	50%
Travel abroad	4	50%
International media	4	50%
Social status	2	25%
Culture interest	1	12.5%

As shown in the table above, improvements in job and income, life promotion, knowledge gaining, the group of 3 factors of higher education, traveling abroad, as well as international media usage, better social status and finally, culture interest occupied the most to least influential roles in eliciting motivated behavior for the whole sample.

The distinctive investigation of the sample concerning the students' levels results in the following findings: improvement in job and income as the first internalized value was viewed as important by 4 students in both levels (100%, each), second was life promotion selected by 3 students in each group (75%, each), the third factor was knowledge gaining desired by 3 advanced students (75%) and 2 elementary students (50%), higher education, ranked next, was mentioned by 3 elementary learners (75%) and 1 advanced learner (25%), the eagerness to travel contributed 2 learners in each group to study English as the fifth factor (50%, each), next, ability to use international media motivated 2 students of each group to improve their English (50%, each), seventhly, the better social status was a predictor in L2 motivation for 1 student in each group (25%, each) and finally, 1 student in advanced level found herself interested in L2 culture (25%). The table below demonstrates each item's percentage of importance according to the learners' levels.

Table 4.19.

Selected items	No. of elementary students	No. of advanced students	Percentage (Elementary)	Percentage (Advanced)
Job and income	4	4	100%	100%
Life	3	3	75%	75%
Knowledge	2	3	50%	75%
Education	3	1	75%	25%
Travel abroad	2	2	50%	50%
International media	2	2	50%	50%
Social status	1	1	25%	25%
Culture interest	0	1	0%	25%

In terms of the strength of the related variables in predicting the level-related variance in the ideal L2 self, some consistency with the quantitative data was observed. As the results show, the given internalized values attached to the ideal L2 self are approximately parallel in both groups. As stated previously, the students reach at their ideal L2 self pinnacle in their adolescence period (Carlson, 1965). To be more precise, the ideal L2 self is at its highest level during high school turns to its stable level by university period and slows down from then on.

To support this idea, Papi and Teimuri (in press) conducted another study among Iranian secondary school, high school, and university students. They found that the ideal L2 selves that the high school and university students tend to develop are not different from each other, but different from that of the secondary school students.

#### The ought-to L2 self

The significant others in this study includes parents, siblings and spouses (referred to as family members), teacher, peers, relatives, boss, and people surrounding learners. Some interviewees were encouraged by these others and the rest were under their pressure. Concerning the whole sample of 8 learners, the following results were obtained: 7 students attributed their great effort in learning English to parents' encouragement and satisfaction (87.5%), 6 students highlighted the motivational effect of family members' expectations to learn English (75%), 3 students considered the impact of peer group very strong (37.5%), 3 students focused on people surrounding them as a motivator (37.5%) and finally, the teacher, the relatives and the boss's satisfactions of one's effort in learning English were each chosen by 1 student (12.5%, each). The table below demonstrates each item's percentage of importance according to the whole sample.

Table 4.20.

Selected items	No. of students selecting the item	Percentage
Parents	7	87.5%
Family members	6	75%
Peer group	3	37.5%
People	3	37.5%
Teacher	1	12.5%
Relatives	1	12.5%
Boss	1	12.5%

In conclusion, parental and family influences occupy the most significant roles in eliciting motivated learning behavior

for the whole sample. Among other factors, peer group and surrounding people are introduced as the predictors of the ought-to L2 self, yet much less than the first two. Finally, teacher, relatives and boss all possess the same level of focus as the least influential items.

With regards to two types of instrumentality as preventive and promotional commented by Higgins (1987, 1998), the ideal self has a *promotion* focus, that is related to hopes, aspirations, advancements, growth, and accomplishments (i.e. approaching a desired state); while ought-to self has a *prevention* focus, that controls the absence or presence of negative outcomes (i.e. avoidance of a feared state). It is evident that these two opposite types are traditionally attributed to instrumentality, but in the new theory, the promotional type predicts the ideal L2 self, and the preventive one contributes the ought-to L2 self.

The distinctive investigation of the sample concerning the students' levels results in the following findings: the impact of parents was considered as a powerful motivator by 4 students in elementary (100%) and 3 in advanced level (75%), the effect of family members (spouse and siblings) was emphasized by 2 students in each group (50%, each), the peer pressure and people's idea, each, were mentioned by 2 students in elementary (50%) and 1 in advanced level (25%), 1 student in advanced level (25%) found herself under the influence of her boss and finally, the teacher and relatives were viewed as equally influential in learning process by 2 different learners in elementary level (50%, each). The table below demonstrates each item's percentage of importance according to the learners' levels.

Table 4.21.

Selected items	No. of elementary students	No. of advanced students	Percentage (Elementary)	Percentage (Advanced)
Parents	4	3	100%	75%
Family members	2	2	50%	50%
Peer group	2	1	50%	25%
People	2	1	50%	25%
Teacher	2	0	50%	0%
Relatives	2	0	50%	0%
Boss	0	1	0%	25%

As the results show, the ought-to L2 self, through which the Iranian elementary students are supposed to become motivated to learn English, is significantly different from that of the advanced students whose score is lower in this variable than the elementary group, except for the first 2 items. This finding appears to be related to their age (Papi & Teimouri, in press) and higher academic status. Papi and Teimouri believed that the older students begin thinking autonomously and therefore, instead of being much under the influence of significant others (whose expectations shape the students' ought-to self), set their main goal to pursue the promotional outcomes related to learning English. In other words, the new ideal L2 self shaped by themselves overcomes the ideal L2 self supposed for them previously by their significant others. According to Pizzolato (2006), as social beings, most of us, especially teenagers, try to regulate our behaviors in order to be accepted to our peers' eyes. These findings strongly confirm the results obtained in this study.

In chapter four, the analysis of the obtained data was provided. The following chapter, however, gives a sketchy overview of the study, restates the problem, and discusses the results obtained. Conclusions are then drawn. Pedagogical implications, limitations of the study and suggestions for further research are also presented.

#### Discussion of results

The participants with high level of the ideal L2 self had significantly high L2 motivation. That is, based on the percentages of the results obtained, it is evident that there is a positive relationship between the ideal L2 self and L2 motivation.

Finally, the correlation comparison between the two variables showed a higher correlation of .648 in elementary group compared to .616 in advanced one (see table 4.8.), showing an almost higher yet non-significant effect of ideal L2 self on motivated learning behavior in the case of elementary-level students than for advanced-level learners. As regards to the age differences between the students in both groups (elementary students ranged in age from 15 to 17 and advanced students ranged in age from 22 to 30), younger English students in this study, are exactly at the age in which their self image undergoes changes and actually starts shaping.

The second null hypothesis, maintaining that the ought-to L2 self was not related to motivated learning behavior, was also rejected.

Finally, the correlation comparison between the two variables showed a higher correlation of .466 in elementary group compared to .299 in advanced one (see table 4.12.). This finding can be matched with Kormos and Csizér (2008) who investigated that adults' relatively stronger and more developed L2 concept can overcome the worries of fulfilling others' expectations in the process of learning. This supports the idea of having a more stable L2 self in adulthood mentioned by Carlson (1965).

As for the third null hypothesis, it was hypothesized that motivated learning behavior has no influence on student's L2 learning experiences.

Pearson Correlation between the L2 learning experiences and the motivated learning behavior led to the sustenance of this hypothesis. In other words, the participants with high level of the L2 learning experiences had significantly high L2 motivation. That is, based on the percentages of the results obtained, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between the L2 learning experiences and L2 motivation. Since the L2 motivation and learning achievement have been previously realized to be directly related (e.g. Johnson, 1996; Broussard and Garrison, 2004; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2004; Skaalvik and Skaalvik, 2006; Sandra, 2002), the L2 learning experiences are proved to be effective on learning achievement.

Finally, the correlation comparison between the two variables showed a higher correlation of .808 in elementary group compared to .671 in advanced one (see table 4.16.). In line with this, Kormos and Csizér (2008), in their study conducted among secondary school, university and adult learners, explained the fact that the language learning attitudes of younger students are primarily associated with classroom experience and teachers (e.g., Nikolov, 1999), whereas older students have clear goals with language learning, which are already shaped in their ideal L2 self and are less influenced by learning context. In general, they pointed out that language

learning experiences are slightly more important for younger learners.

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