The L2 self of Omani college and university students: An exploration on L2 Learning Experience

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**Abstract**

Most studies on L2 Motivational System focus on the ideal and ought-to self-guides leaving the L2 Learning Experience (L2LE) behind in that insufficient empirical information about it exists. The present study is a follow up study of Cruz and Shabibi (2019) to report on the L2 Motivational Self System of Omani college students; thus, a classification of the L2LE with respect to the learning context of Omani college students was developed. It specifically seeks to know which aspects of the students’ L2LE make an impact on their L2 motivation. Through the data obtained from 294 Omani college and university students, it was found that the Omani college and university students make use of their ideal self and L2LE more than the ought-to self. Statistical data found positive correlations between the L2 self-guides and L2LE components. It was also found that the formal and informal education are tantamount to being sources of L2 motivation for Omani students. Theoretical and pedagogical implications on the L2LE are also offered in the study.

Keywords: L2 Motivation, Learning Experience, Formal Learning, Informal Learning, Ideal Self, Ought-to Self, English in Oman, English Language Teaching, EFL

**Introduction**

In 2005, Dornyei conceptualized the L2 Motivational Self System that is known to explain the role of individual L2 learners’ self which is said to be a source of motivation in learning English. Linguistic scholars appear to be in approval of the concept as there already exists a plethora of studies (e.g. Kim, 2009; Dornyei & Ushioda, 2009; Papi, 2010; Cruz & Al Shabibi, 2019) that worked on the universality of the L2 self in various learning situations. Among these studies, the glaring fact is that of the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System, the L2 self and the ought-to self have been the dominant foci of investigation. The L2LE, according to Dornyei (2009), deals with ‘executive’ motives, likewise known as
the driving force that allows the learner to accomplish the necessary tasks for learning to occur in the long run, which is closely linked to the proximal learning environment and experience. Further, this variable is distinct from the two self-guides and that future studies are bound to explore the said self-aspect. Hence, it is the present study’s main objective to heed Hessel’s (2015), Taylor’s (2013) and Cruz and Al Shabibi’s (2019) call for the need to further elaborate on L2LE due to its seemingly outdated and broad nature.

Dornyei’s (2005, 2009) view on L2 Motivational Self System emphasizes the role of self in acting as motivation for learning an L2. It specifically claims that as a source of motivation, the ideal self deals with the integrativeness and instrumentality while the ought-to self is the intrinsic and extrinsic forms of motivation. Meanwhile, the L2LE is concerned with the impact of the learner's experience in and out of the classroom while learning an L2. Although Dornyei has worked on studies on motivation (1994) and motivational strategies (2001) in language learning (2001), it appears that the concept of L2LE still needs to be explored since learning experience is not exclusive in the classroom and that considering it that way seems very traditional since many digital and virtual learning resources provide L2 experience in this generation. Hence, the previous notion of L2LE as a motivational tool has gone a long way as it now includes a wide array of digital technology (Adolphs, Clark, Dörnyei, Glover, Henry, Muir, Sánchez-Lozanoc, & Valstarc, 2018).

In retrospect, Dornyei (1994) outlined motivational components regarding learning situations. The first is the course-specific motivational component which is concerned with the syllabus, the teaching facility and equipment, teaching method and learning activities. Secondly, the teacher-specific component includes the character trait, teaching style, method of giving feedback and establishment of rapport with the students. Finally, the group-specific motivational component deals with the dynamics of the learning group. On another note, teachers are said to be motivational factors through emotions, authority approach, and motivation through socialization. Further, the study highlighted how groups as organizational units in classrooms are equally powerful in motivating the students. For this reason, norm and reward system, goal-orientedness, group structure and classroom goal structures are said to be relevant in the construct of the motivational conditions of one's learning situation. Although it is acknowledged that the three components are indeed relevant to L2 learning, what seems notable is the use of the term “L2 classroom motivation” (p. 277).

In 2001, Dornyei discussed a wide range of techniques that could enhance one’s L2 motivation. He also demonstrated how learning experience materializes in the actional stage or stage in which the learner’s motivation should be to be sustained and secured as they become exposed to various influences while in the L2 classroom. Overall, Dornyei described how teachers can strategize in motivating L2 learners through the creation of basic motivation to the realization of executive motives. What can be deduced in the said manuscript is that a learner’s L2 experience appears to be controlled by the teacher as they must strive to be “good enough motivators rather than striving unreasonably to achieve ‘Supermotivator' status” (p.136). Saying this, however, makes it seem that the entirety of
L2LE relies on the teacher in the classroom. Subsequently, Dornyei (2009) himself posited that L2LE involves the contextual and environmental factors in the process of language learning as well as one’s subjective learning experience.

Understanding the concept of L2LE may be difficult to grasp, as its broad nature comprises countless elements of learning an L2. Kim (2012) describes L2LE as something that varies depending on the specifics of the situation that learners accumulate as their life progresses. He underscores its importance by stating that specific aspects of the possible selves can be created, reinforced, or aborted dependent on what the L2 learner experiences. Also, Calvo (2015) asserts that one's L2LE is in itself a source of motivation because of the satisfaction they get in the environment and that it is "related to intrinsic motivation, since the adequate environment or situation might make learner’s attitude or study improve” (p.6). Further, Dörnyei and Ushioda, (2011) stated that L2LE is the learning condition and learning environment of the learners. On the whole, the study operationalizes second language learning experience as any form of communication, course, program, or experience where learning occurs, whether it transpires in customary academic settings such as in schools or new avenues of learning which are held off-campus. This may also include tutorial sessions in public spaces or traditional learning communication in which students learning from their conversations with teachers and professors or nontraditional interactions in which students gain input through mobile app games and software applications.

At present, the L2LE component does not seem to have abundant empirical studies that clearly outline its sub-components despite its importance considering that it is this facet of the L2 motivational self system that shows to have the hugest impact on learner motivation (Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Islam, Lamb & Chambers, 2013). Recent studies on L2LE were conducted to come up with a holistic description of one’s L2 self. One of which is Bodnar (2016) who looked into the affective factors of the L2LE through computer assisted learning among L2 Dutch Learners. Two of the foci of the study were on the learners’ feeling while engaged in digital learning and emotional states while in the process of practicing the language. The study also targeted to capture the affective experiences of the learners in relation to digital oral grammar practice. It was also found that practice with the computer assisted learning system employed in the study commonly show improvement in learning and affective experiences. Additionally, the corrective feedback the students received during the experiment demonstrated positive effects in their learning experience. Another is Calvo (2015) who found that the Spanish students enjoyed their classes in English due to factors such as the teacher, classmates and curriculum. It also expressed that L2LE may be related to L2 anxiety and students’ personality. In another study, Brander (2013) sought the effects of L2LE on the self of Swedish L2 learners using a questionnaire, interviews and observation. According to the data, components such teacher, classmates cohesiveness and orientedness, and the school facilities impacted considerably on the learners’ L2 self. On the other hand, the students’ course material did not seem to make an impact which implies that teachers may need to undergo trainings regarding the maximization of L2LE in order to create positive effects on the students.
Further, studies such as those of Asker (2011) and Cruz and Al Shabibi (2018) contributed to the exploration of L2 experience of Arab students, i.e. Libyan and Omani respectively, through quantitative and qualitative means. Highlights of Asker’s study include the categorization of learners’ L2 learning situation in Libyan context. According to Asker, the macro context comprises social factors such as background, personality traits, and educational experience while micro context includes the classroom, the teacher, the environment and the peers. A salient finding was the students did perceive the classroom as an effective provider of tools they need to achieve goals related to their ideal-self. While the study considered the situated perspectives that would possibly contribute to the construct of the L2LE, there were language learning experience factors which were missing. Meanwhile, Cruz and Al Shabibi sought-to examine the seemingly lack of motivation of Omani college students through the L2 self-motivational system framework. It was revealed that materials, teachers and some activities done in the classroom cause the lack of motivation of the learners. The information on L2LE was obtained from the bottom up process, and it appears that more factors will be acknowledged in a study of a larger scale.

Assessing the aforementioned studies, more investigations need to be done in order to make the findings on L2LE more comprehensive. For instance, some instruments have been produced to empirically analyze the possible selves (e.g. Papi, 2010; Madkhali, 2016), but it has been scarce for L2LE. Also, the literature shows that the L2 self-guides have overshadowed the L2LE in terms of being a research agenda in order to gather empirical data for the L2 Motivational System. Thus, the study aims to complement if not improve the L2LE component as evident in its unexplored nature. Moreover, it is the study’s intention to come up with a clear sub-categorization of the L2LE that can welcome improvements, considering the differences in the context of various learning situations. It specifically answers the following questions:

1. Which components of L2LE impact Omani college students?
2. What components of the ideal self and ought-to self impact Omani college students?
3. Is there a correlation between the three L2 motivational self system components of Omani college students?

Classification of L2LE

This section of the paper discusses a proposed classification of the L2LE because of the premise that it needs to be as detailed as the ideal and ought-to self. This classification is derived from Dornyei’s (1994, 2001, 2009) descriptions of L2LE. Dornyei posits that L2LE refers to particular conditions and environment in which the learner undergoes while in the process of L2 learning. The study also adapts Asker’s (2011) macro and micro contexts of the L2LE, though it centers on the specific elements that a learner experiences while in the process of learning English. Thus, the study considers tangible and intangible features of learning in formal and informal settings which are utilitarian in nature. Table 1 features the classification of L2LE.

Table 1
Classification of L2LE

|                | Formal Education                                                                 | Informal Education                                                                 |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Teacher     | includes macro and micro skills, classroom management skills, etc.               | 1. Family                                                                        |
| 2. Classroom and Facility | e.g. classroom structure, wi-fi, projector                                   | 2. Digital tools—e.g. tablets, mobile phones, social networking sites             |
| 3. Classmates/schoolmates |                                                                              | 3. Friends/peers                                                             |
| 4. Feedback/assessment | type of feedback and assessment provided                      | 4. Media—e.g. news reports, television shows                                     |
| 5. Educational System | e.g. enrollment process, stipend, tuition and fees.            | 5. Texts for pleasure—e.g. novels, songs                                         |
| 6. Activities | e.g. lectures, games                                                                | 6. Real life experience—e.g. shopping, visit to the museum                      |
| 7. Materials   | e.g. books, handouts                                                               | 7. Extra-Curricular activities—e.g. student organizations                       |
| 8. Texts for academic purposes | e.g. prose and poetry            |                                                                                  |
| 9. Administration |                                                                              |                                                                                  |
| 10. Curriculum  |                                                                              |                                                                                  |
| 11. Culture—e.g. religious practices |                                          |                                                                                  |
| 12. Achievements |                                                                              |                                                                                  |
| 13. Tutorial sessions |                                                |                                                                                  |

As seen in Table 1, the L2LE is classified into formal and informal learning. In second language acquisition, formal language learning is held in the traditional classroom environment while informal language learning usually occurs outside the classroom environment (Bahrani, Sim, & Nekoueizadeh, 2014), and the emphasis is not on the language structure (Marsick & Watkins, 1990). Under the formal learning are components that according to Dornyei (2009) are typically experienced in the classroom environment, i.e. teachers, facility, learning materials, classroom activities and curriculum. Based on the aforementioned descriptions of formal and informal learning, the researchers sought to classify the learning environments as these are the closest possible major components of L2LE.

In the context of the study, the curriculum may naturally differ per educational institution as some participants may come from private or public institutions; for instance, some Omani colleges have what are termed as General Foundation and Post-Foundation which other Asian higher education institutions do not have. Also, the facility covers the things that the students have access concerning their learning experience and the physical aspect of classroom is integrated here. Materials are the things that aid in the teaching and learning process while a separate entity is considered in the form of text, such as prose and poetry, chosen by teachers to be discussed in the classroom. In addition, the teacher factor deals with their macro and micro skills, and classroom management skills among others. Additional factors are achievements, educational system, administration and feedback and
assessment. The term achievements may refer to what Dornyei (2009) initially termed as experience of success, which understandably may become a source of motivation when sustained all throughout the learning process. Meanwhile, educational system and administrators are also included in this classification because of their role in the education of the Omani students. Firstly, the educational system may differ from others in terms of government support such as monthly stipend and free tuition fee for all enrollees. In addition, the administration is considered a part of the L2 learning process because of the college administration’s consistent face-to-face communication with the students and consistent visibility and availability in all of the affairs of the students. Feedback is also classified under formal education. According to Salipande (2017), feedback empowers the students to learn more, and this identifies the role of the way the students are assessed and the kind of feedback provided in their L2LE. Culture, which includes religion, also plays as a factor that may impact the learning environment through different practices observed within the classroom. An example would be the way Omani students are seated separately based on gender as part of religious considerations. Finally, tutoring considered part of the formal learning component because these supplemental form of learning is facilitated by a teacher and the lessons are likely focused versions of what is taken in the classroom.

The informal learning component is composed of several factors that are perceived to impact the students’ L2LE. Explicably, some components that are found in the formal learning component such as teacher and curriculum are not present in this component due to the fact that it happens outside the school, after-school activities, community-based groups, galleries, public and private libraries, and even a learner’s home (Bahrani, Sim, & Nekoueizadeh, 2014). The family and friends are the primary social aspects of the informal learning component by means of assistance, encouragement or collaboration in L2 learning related activities. It has to be noted that friends in this category may also refer to the classmates that the learners interact with outside the formal learning environment. Since the learning instruments are not the traditional type in the informal learning context, media in the form of films and television shows and self-preferred materials used for indirect learning and are mainly for pleasure such as novels, songs and short stories not provided in the students' formal learning environment are also considered to be part of the informal L2LE. Moreover, informal learning context in this day and age capitalizes on the digital component since this form of technology “can exert considerable motivational impact” (Adolphs et al., 2018, p. 174). On a regular basis, students are exposed to various digital tools such as virtual games and social networking sites that may also influence their L2LE. The same is true for the real life situations of the students which can potentially entail learning. This includes interaction with English-speaking expats in supermarkets or in shopping centers. Lastly, although the educational institutions may encourage the students to join organizations, no formal lesson is facilitated, and activities are usually not centered on academics; thus, it is categorized as informal type.
Methods
The study was set in a college and a university in Ibra and Sohar, respectively, in the Sultanate of Oman. The two institutions were chosen due to the similarities in their curriculum, programs offered, and student profile. Two hundred ninety-four (294) Omani foundation students, 121 males and 173 females, were randomly selected to participate in the data gathering process after being allowed by the respective heads of administration of both institutions to conduct the study. There were 149 students from the college and 145 students from the university. All participants whose ages range from 18 to 22 took their primary and secondary education in Oman. Based on their reports, the participants were specializing in the fields of Language Studies, Engineering, IT and Business. It also has to be noted that the participants had an average of 19 hours of English lecture and tutorial classes per week for the semester when the study was conducted.

A four-section questionnaire (See Appendix A) was devised to obtain answers for the research questions. The first section was used to obtain the participants’ socio-demographic background (e.g. age, gender, name of institution). The two succeeding sections were a 20-item likert-scale type of questionnaire adapted from Cruz (2016), Papi (2010) and Taguchi et al. (2009) that intended to seek information about the participants’ L2 selves, i.e. ideal self and ought-to self. The ideal self focused on how the participants perceive themselves as English speakers in the future, while the ought-to self focused on their obligations and duties as they learn English. The last part is a 19-item likert scale questionnaire, which focuses on the L2LE, developed specifically for the study. Additionally, an interview adapted from the manuscript of Cruz and Al-Shabibi (2019) was used to obtain a deep understanding of the quantitative data considering the relevance of deep interviews in acquiring rich data for studies on L2 Motivational Self System. Moreover, the interview is an avenue to welcome ideas for possible inclusions in the list of components of the L2LE. All questions of the questionnaire and the interview were translated to Arabic by an Omani college lecturer who holds an MA in TESOL. This step was done in order for the participants have an alternative way of answering the questionnaire in case they did not understand the English version. Then, the translation was verified by another Omani university assistant professor who has a doctorate degree in Linguistics.

The participants were scheduled to answer the survey questionnaire in selected English classes in the Spring Semester of Academic Year 2018-2019. In a span of four weeks, the researchers sought the help of their colleagues to distribute the questionnaires. Collectively, eight (8) classes or groups of students took part in this process. All instances of questionnaire distribution took place in the participants’ respective classroom. Necessary instructions were given to the participants and no questions were raised. The participants took approximately 25 minutes to complete the questionnaire. In answering the questionnaire, the participants had the option to choose 5 if they ‘Strongly Agree’ to the statement, 4 if ‘Agree’, 3 if ‘Moderately Agree’, 2 if ‘Disagree’, and 1 if ‘Strongly Disagree’. Before the participants submitted their questionnaire, it was made sure that all items were answered. Then, 20 randomly selected participants were interviewed. For easier understanding, the
The aforementioned translator asked the questions in Arabic. Responses were recorded and later translated in English. Validation on the accuracy of the translation was done by a Tunisian lecturer who has a PhD in Linguistics.

The tabulation of quantitative data took place after the questionnaires were completed and compiled. The collective responses were interpreted as: (4.21 – 5.00) – Strongly Agree, (3.41 – 4.20) – Agree, (2.61 – 3.4) – Moderately Agree, (1.81 – 2.6) – Disagree and (1.0 – 1.8) – Strongly Disagree. In order to find the correlation of the data set, Pearson correlation coefficient was performed.

The same questionnaire was used in a pilot study conducted among 27 (i.e. 19 males and 8 females) Omani university students of the Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) in January 2019. The administration of the survey was held in a classroom at SQU, and the duration was 15 to 20 minutes. Only the section of the L2LE was used in the survey since the sections on ideal self and ought-to self have been utilized in a previous study. Based on the results, the participants consider their professors for formal learning and social media for informal learning as top motivational factors. Three students were interviewed in order to test if their responses were congruent with the results of the survey. According to the qualitative data, the participants’ narratives somehow matched the quantitative data. Noteworthy to mention is the emphasis of two students’ motivation to learn English which is driven by the notion that SQU is the top university in Oman.

Results and Discussion

Table 2 highlights the quantitative data of the study pertinent to the L2 selves of Omani college students specifically their ideal selves. Based on the data, the Omani students seemed to have utilized their ideal selves to a certain degree as they agree (i.e. overall mean= 3.65) to most of the statements in the questionnaire. The statements regarding the participants’ education in an institution English is the primary language used (i.e. mean= 3.86) and the use of the English language as their dreams are realized (i.e. mean= 3.81) was considered by the participants to be the top factors for the use of this specific possible self. Meanwhile, the least favored item is the statement regarding their ability to speak like a native speaker (i.e. mean= 3.40). Although, it must be noted that statistically speaking, there is no huge difference among the responses.

Table 2

| Ideal Self of the Omani students                      | Mean | SD  |
|------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|
| 1. I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker. سنطبع أن أتخيل نفسي أتحدث الإنجليزية كما لو كنت متحدثًا أصليًا بها. | 3.40 | 1.07 |
|   |                                                                 | Mean | SD  |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|
| 2. | I can imagine myself speaking English friends, acquaintances or colleagues from other countries. | 3.61 | 1.11 |
|     | أستطيع أن أتخيل نفسي أتحدث الإنجليزية مع أصدقاء أو معارف أو زملاء من دول أخرى. |      |     |
| 3. | Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using the English language. | 3.62 | 1.18 |
|     | عندما أفكر في مسيرتي المستقبلية، أتخيل نفسي باني أستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية. |      |     |
| 4. | I can imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English language. | 3.86 | 1.21 |
|     | أستطيع أن أتخيل نفسي أدرس في جامعة حيث يتم تدريس جميع موادي باللغة الإنجليزية. |      |     |
| 5. | I can imagine myself writing e-mails in English correctly. | 3.57 | 1.15 |
|     | أستطيع أن أتخيل نفسي أكتب رسائل البريد الإلكتروني الإنجليزية بطلاقه. |      |     |
| 6. | I can imagine myself living abroad and using the English language effectively for communicating with the local and international community. | 3.63 | 1.24 |
|     | أستطيع أن أتخيل نفسي أعيش في الخارج وأستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل فعال لل التواصل مع السكان المحليين. |      |     |
| 7. | I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak the English language. | 3.68 | 1.11 |
|     | تصور نفسي كشخص قادر على التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية. |      |     |
| 8. | If my dreams come true, I will use the English language effectively in the future. | 3.81 | 1.24 |
|     | إذا تحقق أحلامي، فسأستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية بفعالية في المستقبل. |      |     |
| 9. | The things I will do in the future will require me to use the English language. | 3.80 | 1.21 |
|     | الأشياء التي سأفعلها في المستقبل سوف تتطلب مني استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية. |      |     |
| 10. | I can imagine myself living abroad and speaking the English language. | 3.55 | 1.15 |
|     | أستطيع أن أتخيل نفسي أعيش في الخارج وأتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية. |      |     |
| **TOTAL** |  | **3.65** |  |

*Adapted from Cruz (2016)*

Based on Table 3, the participants do not seem to use their ought-to selves compared to their use of their ideal selves (mean= 2.94). Notably, the participants consider their parents’ appraisal regarding their education (mean= 3.78) and the notion that their parents will be disappointed should they fail to study English (mean=3.53) to be the top factors that make them use their ought-to selves. It should also be noted that among the components of ought-to self, it is the statement regarding their friends’ thoughts about the importance of English (mean= 2.18) and the disappointment of their other people should they fail to study English (mean= 2.23) as the least considered components of their ought-to selves.
Table 3
Ought-to Self of the Omani students

| Statement                                                                 | Mean | SD  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-----|
| 1. I study the English language because my close friends think it is      | 2.18 | 1.35|
| important.                                                                |      |     |
| أنا أدرس الإنجليزية لأن أصدقائي المقربين يعتقدون أنها مهمة.                |      |     |
| 2. If I do not study the English language, my parents will be            | 3.53 | 1.37|
| disappointed with me.                                                     |      |     |
| فإذا كنت لا أدرس اللغة الإنجليزية، فإن والداي سيصابان بخيبة أمل معي.      |      |     |
| 3. Learning the English language is necessary because I am               | 2.96 | 1.22|
| expected by people around me to learn it.                                 |      |     |
| تعلم الإنجليزية ضروري لأن الناس المحليين بي يتوقعون ذلك.                |      |     |
| 4. I must study the English language because my parents believe          | 3.78 | 1.15|
| that I will be an educated person.                                        |      |     |
| يجب أن أتعلم الإنجليزية لأن والدي يؤمنان بأنني سوف أصبح شخص متعلم.     |      |     |
| 5. I have to learn English language because the people I respect         | 2.96 | 1.21|
| think that I should learn the English language.                          |      |     |
| يجب أن أتعلم الإنجليزية لأن الناس الذين أحترمهم يعتقدون أنني يجب أن أتعلمها. |      |     |
| 6. I want to learn the English language in order to be accepted by       | 2.84 | 1.30|
| my peers/teachers/family.                                                 |      |     |
| أريد أن أتعلم الإنجليزية لكي أقبل من قبل زملائي/ أساتذتي/ أسرتي.       |      |     |
| 7. I will get negative impact on my life if I don’t study the English    | 2.83 | 1.31|
| language.                                                                 |      |     |
| ستتأثر حياتي سلبًا إذا لم أدرس الإنجليزية.                             |      |     |
| 8. An educated person is supposed to be able to speak the English        | 3.39 | 1.23|
| language.                                                                 |      |     |
| من المفترض أن يكون الشخص المتعلم قادرًا على التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية. |      |     |
| 9. People will respect me more if I have knowledge of and can use         | 2.87 | 1.25|
| the English language.                                                     |      |     |
| سيحترمني الناس أكثر إذا كتبت ملم باللغة الإنجليزية.                     |      |     |
| 10. I will disappoint other people if I fail in English.                  | 2.23 | 1.34|
| سأخجل الآخرين في حال فشلت في اللغة الإنجليزية.                        |      |     |

TOTAL 2.98

*Adapted from Cruz (2016)
In Table 4, it can be seen that the participants agree that their formal education is a valuable form of their learning experience that motivates them to learn English (mean=3.57). Among the sub components of the formal education, the participants referred to their teachers (mean=3.82) and the educational system (mean=3.81) as the top drivers in the L2LE aspect. Meanwhile, there are factors in the formal education component that the participants do not have the same opinion as the others, i.e. the participants’ classmates and the administration (mean=3.24) and the curriculum (mean=3.26).

Table 4
Formal L2LE of the Omani students

|   | Mean | SD  |
|---|------|-----|
| 1. | The teacher in my English language class serves as inspiration for me to learn English. | 3.82 | 1.28 |
| 2. | The facility such as wi-fi, projector and sound system in the classroom helps in my English language learning activities. | 3.75 | 1.28 |
| 3. | The educational system such as advising, online processes and free tuition fee that we have is beneficial for my English language learning goals. | 3.81 | 1.17 |
| 4. | My classmates are instrumental in learning the English language. | 3.24 | 1.20 |
| 5. | The assessment such as examinations and feedback that we have in the college are helpful in my English language learning experience. | 3.48 | 1.18 |
| 6. | The materials such as books and handouts that we use in the classroom are helpful in my English language learning experience. | 3.75 | 1.20 |
| 7. | The texts we use in the class such as novels, poems, songs and short stories inspire me to learn the English language. | 3.62 | 1.19 |
| 8. | The classroom activities such as homework, lecture and games that we do in the class are useful in learning the English | 3.68 | 1.23 |
The college administration influences our enthusiasm to learn the English language.

The curriculum of the college is beneficial to our English language learning motives.

Our culture we practice in the college is helpful in my English language learning activities.

The achievements I accomplish as a student inspire me to learn English.

The additional academic support sessions influence my English language learning experience.

**Table 5**

| Informal L2LE of the Omani students | Mean | SD |
|-------------------------------------|------|----|
| 1. My family serves as influence in my English learning goals. | 3.53 | 1.30 |
| 2. Digital tools such as mobile phones and tablets are useful in my goal to learn English. | 4.11 | 1.14 |
| 3. My friends serve as influence in my English language learning goals. | 3.27 | 1.19 |
| 4. Forms of media such as television drama and news reports are instrumental in my English language learning experience. | 3.69 | 1.20 |

Table 5 shows the opinion of the Omani students’ L2LE particularly their informal education. With a mean of 3.61, the students agree that their informal education also serves as motivation in learning English. Table 5 also features how new age gadgets have become a top motivating factor for the students (mean=4.11). Among the factors, the students do not seem to draw motivation from their friends as part of their informal education (mean=3.27).
Collectively, the study’s statistical results reveal the students’ use of their L2 motivational self system. Based on empirical tradition, the study also corroborates with previous studies like that of Papi (2010) and Islam et al. (2013) in which learners would use their ideal self more than their ought-to selves. It is possible that the Omani students value their success in the future more than what other people would say about their achievements or failures. Similar to Cruz and Al Shabibi (2019), the participants consider their career as a motivational factor to learn English. It is possible that the students have determination to succeed in the future and that English is instrumental in achieving this success. As Dornyei (2001) posits, learners “will only be motivated to do something if they expect success” (p. 12). In fact, instrumentality can be found in most of their narratives, and these come in the form of academic success or their success in the future. Excerpt 1 shows these manifestations.

<Excerpt 1>
S1: In my university, all subjects need English. I need pass…English is important
S6: I know that if I write good, speak English good, I will have good position
S7: When I have chance, I talk to teachers. I want to be like them. I can be like them.
S19: If I know how to speak English, I can get a good job…
S20: We cannot use Arabic in college… all people speak English

Moreover, specific aspects of these imagines selves in other learning contexts (e.g. Korean learners in Cruz, 2016) are seen to have striking resemblance with that of the present study. For instance, similar to other Asian contemporaries, the Omani students have sufficient motivation to learn English because of what their parents have to say. Perhaps this can be attributed to Dornyei’s (2009) contention that the ought-to self could mean that learners
attempt to prevent their parents from being disappointed due to academic failure, and the participants’ responses attest to this. While it was pointed out in Cruz and Al Shabibi (2019) that the parents do not appear to be too much of a concern for college students, the current study presents a more generalized result regarding this matter. Shown in Excerpt 2 are some of the interview responses in the current study which feature their parallelism with the quantitative results.

<Excerpt 2>
S3: My parents pay for my university. I need pass my diploma…
S8: I want show my parents that I am good daughter so I study very well
S9: My family, my father and mother want me to get my diploma.
S11: They work hard…my father especially…

Apparently, the responses in Excerpt 1 come from university students. Incidentally, these students are not fully subsidized in the university in comparison to those from the college which is financed by the government. Those from the university had a mean of 3.94 and 4.05 in their responses for Items 2 and 4, respectively while the responses of college students had a mean of 3.13 and 3.50 for the same items, respectively. This angle may be a reason why university students consider what their parents have to say about their studies more than the college students as a motivational factor.

The study also reveals the nature of L2LE that serves as a portion of the participants’ L2 motivational self-system. This is also in consonance with Calvo (2015) in stating that L2LE is a good motivating component alongside the ideal self. In the classroom setting, the teachers appear to be the top factor that motivates the learners. It should be noted that in both the university and the college setting in Oman, there are more expatriates than local teachers. It is possible that Omani students look up to their teachers in terms of their English language abilities. Dornyei (2001b) adds that the teachers are the ones who could demonstrate the importance of English and create a positive classroom environment; hence, the students have a model as they progress in their language learning sojourn. Some participants explain this aspect in Excerpt 3.

<Excerpt 3>
S4: My teachers are very good…they teach me many things…
S9: The teachers from different countries…they speak English…very good
S13: I have teachers from India, London, some are Filipini… I study with them…

The educational system in the participants’ respective institutions seems to have a strong impact on their L2LE. Although the higher education institutions in Oman are relatively young compared to those in other countries, it seems that the students from both the private and public sectors are in approval of the manner the institutions are run. Rind (2016) argues that the institution itself is a variable that may influence a student’s L2LE. He adds that this is the structure that produces an impact on the teaching and learning that transpire within the institution. Among the examples he provided are selection or entry policies and
procedures and institutional policies. Understandably, the institution or the system as a motivational factor in the L2LE may be a new variable that needs further confirmation, as there is scarcity of discussion about it in previous literature. Although it can be deduced that due to the identical responses of the participants, there could be aspects in the higher education system in Oman that is worthy of being a source of motivation. Excerpt 4 features the explanation of some participants.

<Excerpt 4>
S2: I am scholar and I pay 50 percent…
S11: We get salary every month…
S13: I can see my marks using my mobile phone, if I pass or not… I can do registration using my mobile phone
S15: If you leave far, you get more salary…
S16: You want to change your mark… you log in to (college) website…

Among the formal education components, the participants’ classmates, the administration and the curriculum appear to be the least source of motivation. Several reasons could be cited for this. The students in the tertiary level, although it is co-educational in nature, are not allowed to have direct communication with the opposite gender due to religious reasons. In a typical classroom, the males sit on one side of the room, and the females on the other side. As all Omani students come from gender exclusive schools; hence, they attend college or university with a bit of repulsiveness towards the opposite gender such as during classroom presentations and oral recitations. According to Harter (1996), the reception of classmates may affect an adolescent learner’s motivation. Some students demonstrate this situation in Excerpt 5.

<Excerpt 5>
S7: There are more girls but I cannot focus when the boys are there
S19: During the presentations, the boys look at me… maybe they laugh…
S20: If I sit with girls, it’s problem

The study also intends to theorize on the participants’ view of their curriculum and the college or university administration. The foundation students in the college are required to take four level IELTS-type English course which may take at least four semesters. The repetitive nature of the lessons may take a toll on the learners which consequently makes them demotivated or bored. As for the students’ opinion on the administration as a source of motivation, the generation gap or age difference could have affected this aspect. According to Schmit, Leonard and Boren (1978), it is a known issue as this factor may have something to do with the institution’s policies, the opportunity for students’ participation in the decisions of the administration and the administration’s leadership quality. In one of the narratives, S15 remarked, “they (administration) did not listen to students when we go to their office”. The statement provides an implication that students may have aired complaints or suggestions, which are not acted upon by the administration. These kinds of concerns will have to be
further confirmed in future studies as there was a scarcity of information on it in the participants’ accounts.

The preference of Omani students for certain variables concerning informal education also manifests in the study. One of which is the use of technology, which has the highest statistical preference among all factors in the present study. Unsurprisingly, the study participants, whose ages range from 18 to 22, are considered millennials. The millennial generation, according to Prensky (2010), is composed of people who are inclined to use digital technology. The same results can be seen in Cruz (2016) and Cruz and Parina (2018) in which it was found that digital gadgets are widely used as a learning resource. Undeniably, the aspect of technology in ESL, in both formal and informal settings, is a constant fixture in the current generation, and it demonstrates a possible dynamic characteristic of such component. Moreover, with the abundance of positive results that technology reportedly provides to learners, the participants seem to unconsciously get motivated by the employment of a non-structured digitally mode of learning. The use of digital learning is seen in the participants’ narratives in Excerpt 6.

<Excerpt 6>
S12: I play games in computer… I speak other players from other countries… they speak English.
S15: I use my mobile phone all the time… I play games… Some are not in Arabic....
S16: When I use my phone, I chat with other people.

The participants also appear to be motivated by the literature that they read outside the classroom setting. It is possible that the students find pleasure in reading and access to reading materials outside the classroom environment. Although studies such as Shakfa (2012) have shown that Arab students do not have a positive attitude toward English literature, the participants in the present study demonstrate their favorable use of this medium to motivate themselves as they learn English. As far as the complex nature of students’ perception is concerned, it could be that the Omani students, unlike other learners, believe that they can benefit from reading literature. In this case, the way the students develop their positive attitude toward literature, as suggested by Alfauzan and Hussain (2017), is something that parents and teachers of the English language can foster because this entails the learners’ increased motivation to achieve their desired English proficiency.

Meanwhile, the participants’ friends outside the learning environment appear to be the least source of motivation in the informal L2LE component. Although it has been found that friends motivate learners (Dornyei, 2009), the participants appear to be consistent that even their friends in the informal learning environment of the ones in their neighborhood or villages do not contribute to their motivation in learning English. It is possible that due to the EFL environment in Oman, the friends of the participants do not use English when they communicate to each other; consequently, they do not become the primary source of motivation. This idea can be seen in a couple of students’ narratives. According to S13,
“When we talk, we do not use English because we use Arabic.” In addition, S8 remarked, “Some friends do not study…they do not know how (to) speak English.”

The study also explores the correlation of the L2 Motivational Self System components with respect to Omani students. As can be seen in Table 6, it is seen that there is generally a positive and significant relationship among all elements of the L2 Motivational Self System. Specifically, there is a moderate positive correlation, a highly significant relationship between the ideal self and the formal education and the informal education. Weak positive correlation emerged between the ought-to self and the two components of the L2LE. Both correlations also demonstrated a highly significant relationship. These findings may then elaborate on the relationship among the variables of the L2 Motivational Self System. Further, the positive correlation of the ideal self and the formal education may suggest that the motivation the Omani learners get with regard to how they see themselves in the future increases as their motivation resulting from formal education intensifies. The same is true with the ideal self and the motivation drawn from the Omani learners’ informal education. On the other hand, though results show a positive correlation between the ought-to self and the formal education, and informal education, it is weak in nature. This elucidates that as the students become strongly motivated by their L2 informal education, it cannot be deduced with much certainty that they will be motivated by the way people around them expect them to be as an English language user. The same explanation can be used for the relationship between the informal learning experience and ought-to self.

Table 6

|                     | FORMAL | INFORMAL |
|---------------------|--------|----------|
| **IDEAL SELF**      |        |          |
| Pearson Correlation | .551 **| .577 **  |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   | .000     |
| N                   | 269    | 269      |
| **OUGHT-TO SELF**   |        |          |
| Pearson Correlation | .291 **| .282 **  |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   | .000     |
| N                   | 269    | 269      |

The statistical findings of the present study are both an extension of previous observations and an additional data on the L2 Motivational Self System framework. In particular, the study results conform to studies like that of Matusin (2014), Cruz (2016) and Martinovic (2018) which found correlations between the L2 Motivational Self System components and other predictors pertinent to L2 learning. It is also possible that similar to other studies, the ideal self is seen to establish a stronger correlation with other attributes compared to ought-to self because according to Kim (2012), “if the learner genuinely wishes
to learn English, he or she can imagine a prosperous, ideal English self” (p. 38). Meanwhile, the current study shows that there is stronger correlation between the ideal self and the two L2LE components compared to the ought-to self and the said L2LE components due to the lesser importance that the learners give to what the people around them expect them to be as an English speaker. For instance, it was demonstrated in Cruz and Shabibi (2019) why Omani students appear to dismiss the comments of their friends and other significant people regarding their success in learning the English language. Furthermore, it is likely that the positive correlation of the L2LE with the self guides is a manifestation that such factors are key factors in strengthening the L2 motivation of the learners. As what is suggested in studies on L2LE (e.g. Brander, 2013; Tan, Lim, & Hoe, 2017), the learning experience can be maximized to produce positive outcomes vis-à-vis the learner’s goals.

As a whole, the present study features parallelism with previous literature with respect to EFL learners’ L2 motivational self. It is not to say, however, that the study lacks novelty as it offers considerable insights on the L2LE which Dornyei (2009) and other advocates of the L2 Motivational System have yet to provide. Firstly, the L2LE concept is broad that its definition is usually in the form of exemplification. (e.g. Cruz, 2016; Cruz & Al Shabibi, 2019). While the examples provided are excellent means to visualize the L2LE, they vary from study to study. Hence, in the present study, it attempted to classify the Omani students’ L2LE into formal and informal settings. Moreover, as the study has proposed the components of the L2LE, it is noticed that there can be overlaps of variables in the three major components, which cannot be avoided. For instance, classmates are integral in the Ought-to self component, and the same can be said in the L2LE. Higgins (1987) himself acknowledged the possibility of theoretical overlaps concerning the learners’ imagined selves, and it is not farfetched that the L2LE may have qualities present in the possible selves. It is also noteworthy to mention that the participants in the study seemed to concur with the variables under the L2LE component. This is evident in their responses in both the quantitative and qualitative methods, and no additional variables were revealed during the interviews that transpired. Nevertheless, the study is in the context of higher education students in Oman, and different variables may be utilized by learners. Calvo (2015), for instance, suggested that the results of the studies concerning L2LE may be distinct because of the learners’ learning situation and environment.

**Conclusion**

The study is an investigation on the L2 motivational self which Omani college and university students demonstrate. It specifically sought to obtain a comprehensive discussion on the L2LE since much of related studies have paid attention to the imagined selves. Thus, a classification of the L2LE was developed. Since L2LE is not narrowed to the classroom alone, the component was mainly classified into formal and informal learning. With the questionnaire responses of 305 participants and interview narratives of 12 participants, it was found that the Omani students do make use of their L2 selves as motivation for second language learning. In the same way, the stated components of the L2LE that the students
utilize as motivation. Addressing Kim’s (2012) suggestion of a qualitative and quantitative means to conduct a study of such nature, it was found that the outcome of the statistical data coincides with what was reported in the interviews as the participants were able to rationalize with how they responded to the questionnaire.

Some theoretical implications can be obtained from the present study. One is that Dornyei’s (2009) L2 Motivational Self System serves as an effective construct in obtaining an overall picture of the Omani learners’ L2 learning motivation, given the non-static nature of motivation and the changing educational contexts. Another is that the Ideal Self and the L2LE are good sources of motivation among Omani Students as demonstrated by the positive correlation among the said components. Moreover, the informal and formal learning environments seem to have similar leverage among the learners. This may mean that the Omani learners consider the informal learning environment to be tantamount to the formal learning environment as a plausible source of motivation for English language learning. The study also attempted to provide a more comprehensive questionnaire that will allow scholars to capture the three components of the L2 Motivational Self System, which previously focused on the ideal and ought-to self. Moreover, college and university administrators may include programs that may capitalize on the preferred sources of motivation to sustain the students’ enthusiasm to learn English and strengthen the least preferred components. For instance, a more regulated scheme on the use of social media can be used to further motivate the students.

The present study also offers pedagogical implications. Firstly, teachers in the Sultanate of Oman can capitalize on the L2LE variables that are believed to strongly motivate the learners in their English language learning goals. In addition, it is an opportunity for them as well as the policymakers to work on the variables that have a potential to make an impact among the learners. Particularly, a re-visit on the curriculum may be necessary. The teachers should also make an attempt to improve the formal learning component of their L2LE. Between the formal and informal contexts of learning, it is in the classroom that the learners are expected to draw a greater source of motivation.

For future studies, the universality or flexibility of the classification of L2LE can be tested. Perhaps other variables can be included or omitted in both learning contexts depending on the circumstances. Additionally, it can be modified by means of using different sets of categories apart from the formal and informal learning components. This can be achieved by testing it among learners of distinct profile. Furthermore, attempts can be made to verify correlations between the components of the L2LE with other variables such as academic achievement and learner characteristics.
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**Appendix**

Dear student,  

We are college teachers in Oman and we are conducting a research on Omani students’ English learning experience. We are kindly requesting some of your time by helping us answering the following questions regarding your English language learning experience. This is not a test so there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. Rest assured that your identity and answers will not be disclosed. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

---

Dear student,  

نحن محاضرين في سلطنة عمان نجري أبحاثًا حول تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية للطلاب العمانيين. نود طلبك بضعة دقائق من وقتك لمساعدتنا من خلال الإجابة على الأسئلة التالية المتعلقة بتجربتك في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. هذا ليس اختبارًا لذا لا توجد إجابات "صحيحة" أو "خاطئة". أطمئن بأن هويتك واجاباتك ستبقى غير مكشوفة. شكرا لتعاونك.

تحياتنا:

د. سيلوين كروز.
د. كريستين د. ليون.
د. جينفر أباتيو.

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Part 1. Please provide the following information. This portion of the questionnaire serves to properly profile the respondents. However, your information will not be disclosed in the study.

الجزء 1. يرجى تقديم المعلومات التالية. هذا الجزء من الاستبيان يعمل على تعريف المستجيبين بشكل صحيح. ومع ذلك، لن يتم الكشف عن معلوماتك في هذه الدراسة.

Name: ________________________________
Birthday: ____________________________
تاريخ الميلاد: ____________________
Gender: ____________________________
النوع: ____________________________
Part 2. Please check the box that corresponds to your opinion regarding each number.

|   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I can imagine myself speaking English as if I were a native speaker. | | | | |
| 2. | I can imagine myself speaking English friends, acquaintances or colleagues from other countries. | | | | |
| 3. | Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself using the English language. | | | | |
| 4. | I can imagine myself studying in a university where all my courses are taught in English language. | | | | |
| 5. | I can imagine myself writing e-mails in English correctly. | | | | |
| 6. | I can imagine myself living abroad and using the English language effectively for communicating with the local and international community. | | | | |
| 7. | I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak the English language. | | | | |
8. If my dreams come true, I will use the English language effectively in the future.
   إذا تحقق أحلامي، فسأستخدم اللغة الإنجليزية بفعالية في المستقبل.

9. The things I will do in the future will require me to use the English language.
   الأشياء التي سأفعلها في المستقبل سوف تتطلب مني استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية.

10. I can imagine myself living abroad and speaking the English language.
    أستطيع أن أتخيل نفسي أعيش في الخارج وأتحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.

Part 3. Please check the box that corresponds to your opinion regarding each number.
الجزء 3. الرجاء تحديد المرتب الذي يتوافق مع رأيك في كل رقم.
Part 4. Please check the box that corresponds to your opinion regarding each number.

| 6. | I want to learn the English language in order to be accepted by my peers/teachers/family. |
|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | أريد أن أتعلم الإنجليزية لكي أقبل من قبل زملائي/ أستاذي/ أسرتي.                           |
| 7. | I will get negative impact on my life if I don’t study the English language.              |
|    | ستتأثر حياتي سلبا إذا لم أدرس الإنجليزية.                                               |
| 8. | An educated person is supposed to be able to speak the English language.                  |
|    | من المتوقع أن يكون الشخص المتعلم قادراً على التحدث باللغة الإنجليزية.                    |
| 9. | People will respect me more if I have knowledge of and can use the English language.     |
|    | سيحترمني الناس أكثر إذا كنت ملم باللغة الإنجليزية.                                       |
| 10.| I will disappoint other people if I fail in English.                                       |
|    | سأążثال الآخرين في حال فشلت في اللغة الإنجليزية.                                        |

Legend:
5- Strongly agree 4- Agree 3- Moderately Agree 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

| 1. | The teacher in my English language class serves as inspiration for me to learn English. |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | معلمي للغة الإنجليزية بمثابة مصدر إلهام بالنسبة لي لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.               |

| 2. | The facility such as wi-fi, projector and sound system in the classroom helps in my English language learning activities. |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | تساعد المرافق مثل نظام wi-fi وجهاز العرض والصوت في الفصل الدراسي في أنشطة تعلم لغتي.                            |

Formal Learning

| 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5 |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 6   | 22  | 33  | 44  | 55 |

Legend:
5- Strongly agree 4- Agree 3- Moderately Agree 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree
3. The educational system such as advising, online processes and free tuition fee that we have is beneficial for my English language learning goals.

4. My classmates are instrumental in learning the English language.

5. The assessment such as examinations and feedback that we have in the college are helpful in my English language learning experience.

6. The materials such as books and handouts that we use in the classroom are helpful in my English language learning experience.

7. The texts we use in the class such as novels, poems, songs and short stories inspire me to learn the English language.

8. The classroom activities such as homework, lecture and games that we do in the class are useful in learning the English language.

9. The college administration influences our enthusiasm to learn the English language.

10. The curriculum of the college is beneficial to our English language learning motives.

11. Our culture we practice in the college is helpful in my English language learning activities.

12. The achievements I accomplish as a student inspire me to learn English.
13. The additional academic support sessions influence my English language learning experience.

Informal Learning

1. My family serves as influence in my English learning goals.

2. Digital tools such as mobile phones and tablets are useful in my goal to learn English.

3. My friends serve as influence in my English language learning goals.

4. Forms of media such as television drama and news reports are instrumental in my English language learning experience.

5. The texts I read outside the classroom such as novels, poems and songs are useful in my English language learning experience.

6. The activities I do outside the classroom such as shopping and visiting the park or museums are beneficial to my English language learning experience.

7. Extra-curricular activities such as student organizations make an impact to my English
language learning experience.
 الأسبوعة الالصافية مثل الجماعات الطلابية تؤثر على تجربتي في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

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