A Study on the Relationship Between Foreign Language Learning Burnout and L2 Motivational Self System Among Chinese University and College Students

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This research aims to explore the relationship between foreign language learning burnout (FLLB) and L2 motivational self system (L2MSS), adopting quantitative research method with two questionnaires. The research question is focused on the influences of L2 motivational self system on foreign language learning burnout. The research finding is that ought-to L2 self has significant influence on foreign language learning burnout, while ideal L2 self or second language learning experience has no significant influence on it among college and university students.

Keywords: L2 motivational self system, foreign language learning burnout, ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, L2 language experience

Introduction

Motivation is one of the most important factors influencing learning efficiency, widely studied by domestic and foreign researchers. The latest motivational model, proposed by Dörnyei (2005), L2 motivational self system (hereafter abbreviated as L2MSS), consists of ideal L2 self (hereafter abbreviated as IL2S), ought-to L2 self (hereafter abbreviated as OL2S), and second language learning experience (hereafter abbreviated as SLLE). The IL2S refers to individual’s aspirations and goals as a language learner (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009b). The OL2S is the product of individual’s perceived responsibilities as a language learner who believes one ought to possess (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009b). The SLLE derives from the learning environment and experience (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009b).

Foreign language learning burnout (hereafter abbreviated as FLLB), is a common stage in the process of language learning. Students who have this symptom are weary of learning English. They would feel depressed, low-spirited, and complaining, finally leading to absent-minded state.

Literature Review

As to L2MSS, Yashima (2009) put forward that L2 self was unrelated to the L2 motivational behavior among Japanese high school students. Azarnoosh (2014) probed into L2 motivational fluctuation of junior and
senior high school students in Iran, concluding junior high school students had stronger L2 motivation than senior high school students. Moskovsky et al. (2016) studied the relationship between L2MSS and L2 achievement of Saudi learners. They found L2MSS did not always have direct relation with L2 learners’ achievement. Nader and Mostafa (2018) initiated a theoretical basis to find explanations for the growing number of Iranians learning German. Findings demonstrate that the motivation for learning German has an important relationship with IL2S, OL2S, and SLLE.

With regards to FLLB, Pavlakis and Kaitelidou (2012) studied levels of stress, anxiety, and depression of students and possible factors affecting the emotional state of students within the framework of distance learning at the Open University of Cyprus. Huang and Lin (2010) assessed the current states and factor structures of college students’ learning burnout, exploring the relationship between life stress and learning burnout. Stoliker and Lafreniere (2015) probed into students’ feelings of stress and loneliness to determine whether factors are related to students’ academic coping ability, overall academic performance, and educational engagement. Meriläinen and Kuittinen (2014) examined the relation among study-related burnout (SRB) and perceptions of the teaching-learning environment (TLE) and perceived achievement motivation (AM).

In China, Wang (2014) investigated the complicated inter-relationship among L2MSS, anxiety, and L2 Willingness. Xu et al. (2017) studied the structure of college students’ learning burnout, concluding that the learning burnout of college students were composed of emotional exhaustion, low self-efficacy, learning neglect, and lack of motivation. Liu (2017) studied the situation of non-English majors’ English learning burnout and influential factors, professional factors, students’ self-evaluation, peer relationship, and teachers’ care.

Research Method

This paper aims to explore the relationship between FLLB and L2MSS among Chinese university and college students, and the research question is: What are the influences of L2MSS on FLLB?

Research Instrument

The instruments were two questionnaires with two parts: the background information about the participants and the Likert items. One was English learner questionnaire for university and college students (ELQUC), adopted from Dörnyei (2005, 2009b), involving four subscales: L2M, IL2S, OL2S, and SLLE; the other was foreign language learning burnout questionnaire (FLLBQ), adopted from Yang (2010). These two questionnaires were written with the format of six-level Likert item, with 1 standing for “Completely untrue with me”; 2 standing for “Untrue with me”; 3 standing for “Slightly untrue with me”; 4 standing for “Slightly true with me”; 5 standing for “True with me”, and 6 standing for “Completely true with me”.

Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered in electronic version beginning on 15, September 2018 and ending on 1, October 2018. Deleted from the final analysis for various reasons, Some participants chose more than one choice; some others chose one particular choice for all the items; some items were also deleted because one of items was missed, and 209 questionnaires finally were taken into the statistical procedure.
Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics

As shown in the Table 1, for OL2S, the mean score is 3.98, followed by IL2S (3.95), SLLE (3.66), and L2M (3.38), which can be explained by the fact that university and college students are afraid of being failed on examinations. For FLLB, the mean score is 3.1085. A person, bearing strong ideal self in mind, is likely to keep positive attitude toward English learning. For OL2S, if someone always accomplishes things in accordance with wills of others, he or she must be exhausted in some day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3.38</td>
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<td>IL2S</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>FLLB</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.1085</td>
<td>0.80729</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. OL2S = ought-to self; IL2S = ideal L2 self; SLLE = second language learning experience; FLLB = Foreign Language Learning Burnout.

The Influences of L2 Motivational Self System on Foreign Language Learning Burnout

As illustrated in the Table 2, it can be seen that only OL2S makes significant contribution to FLLB ($p < 0.05$). It can be interpreted by the fact that students would feel tired and unhappy if they always finish tasks in order to live up for or satisfy others in the long run.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
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<th>Standardized coefficients</th>
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<th>Sig.</th>
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<td>Std. error</td>
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<td>-0.184</td>
<td>-1.673</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes. OL2S = ought-to self; IL2S = ideal L2 self; SLLE = second language learning experience.

Conclusion

The finding is that only ought-to L2 self has significant influence on foreign language learning burnout among university and college students. Taking the significant influence of ought-to L2 self on foreign language learning burnout into consideration, students are advised to construct moderate ought-to L2 self to avoid foreign language learning burnout.

References


