



## Dörnyei's Motivational Self-System Theory and EFL learners' L2 Selves

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### ABSTRACT

Trying to motivate language learners is one of the most demanding yet vital challenges faced by L2 teachers. Dealing with Dörnyei's motivational theory, the current research was an attempt to ponder the ideal-self, ought-to-self, and L2 experience orientations of Iranian EFL high-school students. Moreover, this study examined whether there was any relationship among three L2 motivational variables across gender and residential background. To this end, 200 male and 184 female junior-high-school students were selected through cluster sampling. The newly designed L2 motivational self-system questionnaire consisted of three main variables, in which 13 items were related to Ideal L2 Self, 12 with ought-to L2 Self, and the other nine with L2 Learning Experience. The findings revealed no significant difference between male and female students in L2 motivational orientation for English learning, and female learners' L2 motivation in English language learning was affected by L2 motivation compared to male learners. Furthermore, there was a significant difference between female and male students' scores in ought-to L2 self. Moreover, it was found that there was no significant difference between female and male learners' L2 experience. Regarding residential background, there was a significant difference among the mean ranks of the city participants at three L2 Motivational Orientations but there was no significant difference among the mean ranks of the rural participants at three L2 Motivational Orientations.

**Keywords:** Educational transition; Gender; Residential background; Second language (L2) motivation; Second language (L2) selves

### INTRODUCTION

Nunan (2003) stressed that for education around the world, the effect of English as an international language on the learning experiences of educational institutions should be acknowledged. Since previous studies (Safari & Rashidi, 2015b) reported that Iran's ELT curriculum failed to develop the language proficiency of students for using in genuine communicative contexts and motivating graduated students from high schools for successful communication, the newly designed

English textbooks called English for School in late 2012 aimed to develop oral communication skills and language use in authentic situations.

In this sense, after learning English for six years, it would be important to address the (Second Language) L2 motivation of students towards English through this ELT reform. Motivating students is one of the most demanding yet vital challenges faced by L2 teachers. Dörnyei (2005) asserted that motivation offers the key catalyst for starting L2 learning and subsequently the main driver

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for the long and often difficult learning cycle to undergo (p. 68).

Gardner and Smythe (1975) found that among EFL learners, motivation can be a valuable tool for determining the possible outcome of this strategy. Mastering a second language (L2) is a challenging phase in which the desire of students to practice is a primary determinant of the progress of language learners. Irrespective of language skills, several highly motivated language learners can attain high levels of language skills, while even skilled learners cannot master an L2 without appropriate motivation. Because many researchers have added crucial importance to it, language motivation has been the subject of many studies in language studies over the past decades.

Dörnyei (2005) suggested that L2 motivation has developed as a paradigm for interpreting long-term learning which is focused on the idea that potential representations of themselves encourage people and these representations will direct learners' motivation. The model assumes that if the image of people includes an L2 aspect, learners would be inspired to learn the language on the basis of their motivation to minimize the distance between their present and forthcoming selves. Therefore, as the previous approach in Iran has struggled to improve the learners' L2 motivation in language learning, the primary objective of the research was to test whether the underlying English language teaching that began at the end of 2012 has motivated learners to study English or not. In fact, this research investigated the ideal, ought-to-self, and L2 experience of Iranian students to know how these are influenced by school communicative language instruction. As noted, studies on the issue of L2 motivation are rare, so it was hoped that this research would prompt more studies on L2 motivation. The current research study also intended to include some relevant information into English decision making and can also give recommendations for Iranian English syllabus and content developers; materials can be designed in such a manner that they are in harmony with L2 learners' motivation toward English as a world language.

This research study is also critical from the viewpoint of methods. This research explored the motivation of learners to assess whether or not the fundamental method of teaching English as a global lingua franca is effective with respect to the CLT-based curriculum in Iran. If it shows itself to be promising, it can be applied to the curriculum of colleges and institutions.

The findings of this analysis are also intended to be used in language pedagogy, the design of the syllabus, and the improvement of foreign languages in Iran, with regard to foreign languages in general and the English language in specific.

Therefore, the significance of the study resides in its analysis of ideal L2 selves, ought-to selves, and L2 experience. Indeed, the debate on gender and rural and urban learners has barely been extended to the current paradigm of Dörnyei (2009). To the knowledge of researchers, no analysis on the L2 motivation of high school students has so far been carried out through the prism of Dörnyei's Self System in Iran. The uniqueness of this research, therefore, stems from its aim to add analytical evidence to the field of L2 motivation, which will be obtained in the Iranian context at this specific educational stage.

*Q1. What are the overall ideal L2 self, ought-to self, and l2 experience orientations of Iranian EFL high-school students in learning English?*

*Q2. Is there any relationship between three L2 motivational variables of Iranian EFL high-school students: ideal-self, ought-to self, and L2 experience?*

*Q3. Is there any relationship between gender and Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English?*

*Q4. Is there any relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English and residential background?*

## **METHOD**

The participants were chosen based on the cluster sampling approach. The sampling system consisted of male and female Iranian

high school students, respectively 200 males and 184 females aged between 18 and 19 years.

The study adopted a quantitative approach to fill the gap in Iranian EFL high school students' L2 motivating orientations in learning English. This approach was chosen because a large amount of participants' data can be obtained easily. L2 MSS Likert-scale was the questionnaire used in the present analysis, consisting of three key variables of which 13 elements were linked to Ideal L2 Self, 12 to L2 Self, and 9 others to L2 Learning Experience. Five scales were used for the questionnaire, including strongly agree (five points), agree (four points), neither agree nor disagree (three points), disagree (two points), and strongly agree (one point).

The questionnaire items with reliability of 0.924 were mainly adapted from Taguchi et al.'s (2009) and Islam's (2013) studies. The main components of Taguchi et al.'s questionnaires were selected from Dörnyei et al.'s (2006) Hungarian studies. Because Taguchi et al. (2009) did not specifically provide L2 Learning Experience items and instead combined them into various categories concerning learners such as parents, instructors, and peers, for this context researchers adapted Islam's (2013) three items related to situation-specific motivations of learners and created six

other items on their immediate experience related to English class. The English questionnaire was translated into Persian, the mother tongue language in which the participants were much more fluent. To prevent any misinterpretations, back to English translation was done to guarantee that there was no alteration of context during the translation process. Then, as the key instrument, the Persian questionnaire was used. It was piloted in two classrooms in a school before conducting the questionnaire to the learners to see if there were any problems in answering the questions.

The targeted schools were selected to gather the data and were directly informed by official letters from each city's associated education agency. Then, the information about the research and details of administration were provided to school principals and teachers. After a short clarification of the analysis, during their daily class period, the students completed the questionnaires, which took about 30 minutes on average.

## RESULTS

To answer the first question, exploring the overall L2 motivational orientations of Iranian EFL high-school students, the descriptive analysis for the whole sample was calculated. Table 1 illustrates the results.

**Table 1**  
*Descriptive Analysis of Overall L2 Motivational Orientations*

| No            | M    | SD   |
|---------------|------|------|
| Ideal L2 Self |      |      |
| 1             | 2.11 | 1.22 |
| 2             | 2.64 | 1.54 |
| 3             | 2.09 | 1.12 |
| 4             | 2.28 | 1.87 |
| 5             | 2.59 | 1.15 |
| 6             | 2.11 | 1.07 |
| 7             | 2.89 | 1.28 |
| 8             | 2.22 | 1.92 |
| 9             | 2.15 | 1.44 |
| 10            | 2.08 | 1.77 |
| 11            | 2.25 | 1.65 |
| 12            | 2.66 | 1.42 |
| 13            | 2.53 | 1.08 |

|                         |       |      |      |
|-------------------------|-------|------|------|
|                         | Total | 2.35 | 1.28 |
| <b>Ought-to-L2 Self</b> |       |      |      |
| <b>1</b>                |       | 2.55 | 1.23 |
| <b>2</b>                |       | 2.69 | 1.58 |
| <b>3</b>                |       | 2.12 | 1.98 |
| <b>4</b>                |       | 2.11 | 1.22 |
| <b>5</b>                |       | 2.64 | 1.54 |
| <b>6</b>                |       | 2.09 | 1.12 |
| <b>7</b>                |       | 2.28 | 1.87 |
| <b>8</b>                |       | 2.59 | 1.15 |
| <b>9</b>                |       | 2.11 | 1.07 |
| <b>8</b>                |       | 2.22 | 1.92 |
| <b>9</b>                |       | 2.15 | 1.44 |
| <b>10</b>               |       | 2.06 | 1.45 |
| <b>11</b>               |       | 2.35 | 1.84 |
| <b>12</b>               |       | 2.09 | 1.54 |
|                         | Total | 2.83 | 1.62 |
| <b>L2 Experience</b>    |       |      |      |
| <b>1</b>                |       | 2.66 | 1.42 |
| <b>2</b>                |       | 2.11 | 1.22 |
| <b>3</b>                |       | 2.64 | 1.54 |
| <b>4</b>                |       | 2.09 | 1.12 |
| <b>5</b>                |       | 2.28 | 1.87 |
| <b>6</b>                |       | 2.59 | 1.15 |
| <b>7</b>                |       | 2.11 | 1.07 |
| <b>8</b>                |       | 2.89 | 1.28 |
| <b>9</b>                |       | 2.22 | 1.92 |
|                         | Total | 2.43 | 1.56 |

According to Table 1 above, the mean scores for subscales of the questionnaire include Ought-to-L2 Self (M=2.83, SD=1.62), L2 Experience (M=2.43, SD=1.56), and Ideal L2 Self (M=2.35, SD=1.28), respectively. In

addition, the Friedman Test was performed to understand the differences among three parts of L2 motivational orientation. Table 2 illustrates the results.

**Table 2**  
*Friedman Test for Overall L2 Motivational Orientation*

|                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| N                | 384     |
| Chi-Square       | 104.715 |
| Df               | 383     |
| Sig.             | 0.804   |
| a. Friedman Test |         |

The outcomes of the Friedman test demonstrate that the difference between these three parts of L2 motivational orientation is not substantial, as shown in Table 2 above ( $p > 0.05$ ). Thus, it can be inferred from this finding that the participants made use of the three parts of the overall L2 motivational orientation to nearly the same amount. The

findings favor the Ideal and Ought-to-L2 Selves of Dörnyei because there is quantitative support for the correlation between the dimensions of integrative and instrumental motivation of learners and those two selves. Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self system is proposed to be a stronger psychological framework than Gardner's socio-educational model for knowing

the L2 selves of Iranian high school students. The second question investigated if there's any correlation between the ideal L2 self, the should-to-L2 self, and the L2 experience of

Iranian learners. To this end, multiple correlations were run.

**Table 3**

***Multiple Correlation of EFL High-School Learners' Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Experience***

| Subscale                | Unstandardized Coefficients |            | Standardized Coefficients | t    | Sig. | Correlation Part |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------|------|------------------|
|                         | $\beta$                     | Std. Error | Beta                      |      |      |                  |
| <b>1 Constant</b>       | 12.88                       | 2.09       | 0.27                      | 6.10 | .000 |                  |
| <b>Ideal L2 self</b>    | 0.11                        | 0.02       | 0.43                      | 0.57 | 0.91 | .43              |
| <b>Ought-to L2 self</b> | 0.09                        | 0.08       | 0.11                      | 0.87 | .000 | 0.6              |
| <b>L2 experience</b>    | 0.05                        | 0.03       | 0.35                      | 0.89 | .38  | .09              |

The  $R_2$  value was found to be 0.57, revealing that the variable of the *Ideal L2 self* could reveal 57% of the variance in the *Ought-to L2 self*. As to the amount of relationship of each variable to L2 experience, according to Table 5, the largest Beta value is related to the *Ideal L2 self* (+ = 0.43,  $t = 0.57$ ,  $*p < .01$ ), meaning that the *Ideal L2 self* had a stronger relationship. Furthermore, the Beta value for the *ought-to L2 self* is slightly low (+ = 0.11,  $t = 0.87$ ,  $*p < .01$ ), in that it has less relationship. Furthermore, when the part correlation coefficients are calculated, the *Ideal L2 self* with a part correlation coefficient of 0.43, and the squared value of about 0.18, uniquely show an 18% correlation with Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 experience. Ideal L2-self embodies more than just integrative motivations, but even certain elements of instrumentality, such as learning the language for internal purposes which include possible profits and greater social standing. Maybe that's why the Ideal L2 Self is more challenging and offers a broader view of the L2 Self of learners.

This is an interesting finding because the Motivational Self System of Dörnyei calls for a broader, more in-depth, and psychological study of the learners' L2 motivation. All potential effects on L2 motivation are taken into account, from intrinsic wishes, desires, and goals, to social perceptions, responsibilities, wants, stresses, etc. What is noteworthy is that

the overall motivational orientation of learners relies more on their Ought-to-L2 Self along with the inclination of the L2 experience, while they have high levels of Ideal L2 Self. In present era, learning English, due to its global status, is very critical for almost every sphere of human life. Consequently, students are mindful that they want to know English along with educated young adults who are continually overwhelmed by this. The results revealed that the respondents had higher levels of the Ideal L2 Self, which implies that they expressed a clear, ideal picture of themselves as EFL students who had English hopes, wishes and great aspirations, and wanted to incorporate into the L2 culture in order to accomplish some financial and cultural benefit. The third question explored whether there was any correlation between gender and the L2 motivation of Iranian EFL students for learning English. To answer this question, Pearson Correlation was run.

As the data in Table 4 shows, there is a relatively high Pearson correlation coefficient of .692. Since the p-value, is less than .01 ( $\text{sig}=.000$ ), it is concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English across gender. Additionally, to know if there is any relationship between gender and ideal L2 self of EFL high-school students in learning English another Pearson Correlation was conducted.

**Table 4**  
*Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' L2 Motivation*

|        |                     | Female | Male   |
|--------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| Female | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .692** |
|        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|        | N                   | 384    | 384    |
| Male   | Pearson Correlation | .692** | 1      |
|        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|        | N                   | 384    | 384    |

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

**Table 5**  
*Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' Ideal L2 Self*

|        |                     | Female | Male   |
|--------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| Female | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .421** |
|        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|        | N                   | 384    | 384    |
| Male   | Pearson Correlation | .421** | 1      |
|        | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|        | N                   | 384    | 384    |

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

The Pearson correlation coefficient of .421 is nearly high, as per Table 5. The p-value is less than .01 (sig=.000), it is indicated that there must be a positive and significant relationship between the ideal L2 self across gender among

Iranian EFL high schoolers. In addition, a Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between gender and ought-to-self of Iranian EFL high school students in learning English.

**Table 6**  
*Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' Ought-to Self*

|               |                     | Female | Male   |
|---------------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| <b>Female</b> | Pearson Correlation | 1      | -.054* |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|               | N                   | 384    | 384    |
| <b>Male</b>   | Pearson Correlation | -.054  | 1      |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|               | N                   | 384    | 384    |

\*\* Correlation is not significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Pearson correlation coefficient is -.054, which is relatively low, as per Table 6. because the p-value, is less than .01 (sig=.000), it is concluded that there is no meaningful relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' ought-to self, thereby answering the research question. Finally, to investigate the relationship between gender and L2 experience

of Iranian EFL high-school students in learning English, another Pearson correlation was run.

The Pearson correlation coefficient is .292, which is relatively high, based on the data in Table 7 above as the p-value is less than .01 (sig=.000), it is concluded that there is a meaningful relationship between Iranian EFL female and male high-school students' L2

experience. The last research question probed into exploring the relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English and residential background

(i.e. city or rural residence). Thus, first, the descriptive statistics of the participants in the cities and rural areas were calculated and reported.

**Table 7**  
*Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' L2 Experience*

|               |                     | Female | Male   |
|---------------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| <b>Female</b> | Pearson Correlation | 1      | .292** |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     |        | .000   |
|               | N                   | 384    | 60     |
| <b>Male</b>   | Pearson Correlation | .292** | 1      |
|               | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .000   |        |
|               | N                   | 384    | 384    |

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

**Table 8**  
*Descriptive Analysis of L2 Motivational Orientations of City Residential Participants*

| No |                         | M           | SD          |
|----|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
|    | <b>Ideal L2 Self</b>    |             |             |
| 1  |                         | 2.24        | 1.11        |
| 2  |                         | 2.15        | 1.25        |
| 3  |                         | 2.18        | 1.41        |
| 4  |                         | 2.54        | 1.64        |
| 5  |                         | 2.56        | 1.32        |
| 6  |                         | 2.51        | 1.25        |
| 7  |                         | 2.64        | 1.24        |
| 8  |                         | 2.34        | 1.65        |
| 9  |                         | 2.25        | 1.14        |
| 10 |                         | 2.34        | 1.54        |
| 11 |                         | 2.25        | 1.54        |
| 12 |                         | 2.36        | 1.64        |
| 13 |                         | 2.21        | 1.24        |
|    | <b>Total</b>            | <b>2.94</b> | <b>1.64</b> |
|    | <b>Ought-to-L2 Self</b> |             |             |
| 1  |                         | 2.22        | 1.23        |
| 2  |                         | 2.36        | 1.38        |
| 3  |                         | 2.52        | 1.42        |
| 4  |                         | 2.41        | 1.52        |
| 5  |                         | 2.24        | 1.51        |
| 6  |                         | 2.49        | 1.26        |
| 7  |                         | 2.88        | 1.82        |
| 8  |                         | 2.99        | 1.12        |
| 9  |                         | 2.41        | 1.45        |
| 8  |                         | 2.42        | 1.84        |
| 9  |                         | 2.75        | 1.12        |
| 10 |                         | 2.96        | 1.23        |
| 11 |                         | 2.15        | 1.25        |
| 12 |                         | 2.49        | 1.25        |



|                      | <b>Total</b> | <b>2.63</b> | <b>1.34</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>L2 Experience</b> |              |             |             |
| <b>1</b>             |              | 2.25        | 1.25        |
| <b>2</b>             |              | 2.54        | 1.41        |
| <b>3</b>             |              | 2.12        | 1.22        |
| <b>4</b>             |              | 2.14        | 1.35        |
| <b>5</b>             |              | 2.45        | 1.45        |
| <b>6</b>             |              | 2.22        | 1.12        |
| <b>7</b>             |              | 2.66        | 1.44        |
| <b>8</b>             |              | 2.45        | 1.33        |
| <b>9</b>             |              | 2.31        | 1.26        |
|                      | <b>Total</b> | <b>2.54</b> | <b>1.69</b> |

According to Table 8 above, the mean scores for subscales of the questionnaire for the participants in the cities include Ideal L2 Self (M=2.94, SD=1.64), Ought-to-L2 Self (M=2.63, SD=1.34), L2 Experience (M=2.54,

SD=1.69), and, respectively. In addition, the Friedman Test reveals whether there was a statistically significant difference among the mean ranks of the city residential participants at three L2 Motivational Orientations.

**Table 9**  
*Friedman Test for City Residential Participants*

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>N</b>                | <b>220</b> |
| <b>Chi-Square</b>       | 62.054     |
| <b>Df</b>               | 219        |
| <b>Sig.</b>             | 0.000      |
| <b>a. Friedman Test</b> |            |

The test statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) is provided in Table 9 above. We see that at three L2 Motivational Orientations, there is a statistically important gap between the mean ranks of city respondents. In other words, there is a statistically significant difference in L2

Motivational Orientations among city participants,  $\chi^2(219) = 62.054$ ,  $p = .00$ . In addition, the descriptive statistics of the participants in the rural areas were calculated and reported in Table 10 below.

**Table 10**  
*Descriptive Analysis of L2 Motivational Orientations of Rural Residential Participants*

| <b>No</b>            | <b>M</b> | <b>SD</b> |
|----------------------|----------|-----------|
| <b>Ideal L2 Self</b> |          |           |
| <b>1</b>             | 2.33     | 1.41      |
| <b>2</b>             | 2.25     | 1.55      |
| <b>3</b>             | 2.48     | 1.61      |
| <b>4</b>             | 2.12     | 1.74      |
| <b>5</b>             | 2.10     | 1.82      |
| <b>6</b>             | 2.54     | 1.15      |
| <b>7</b>             | 2.23     | 1.84      |
| <b>8</b>             | 2.74     | 1.35      |
| <b>9</b>             | 2.66     | 1.24      |
| <b>10</b>            | 2.54     | 1.14      |
| <b>11</b>            | 2.21     | 1.24      |
| <b>12</b>            | 2.32     | 1.34      |
| <b>13</b>            | 2.25     | 1.64      |



|                         | <b>Total</b> | <b>2.15</b> | <b>1.62</b> |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Ought-to-L2 Self</b> |              |             |             |
| <b>1</b>                |              | 2.43        | 1.36        |
| <b>2</b>                |              | 2.67        | 1.39        |
| <b>3</b>                |              | 2.32        | 1.72        |
| <b>4</b>                |              | 2.78        | 1.12        |
| <b>5</b>                |              | 2.87        | 1.21        |
| <b>6</b>                |              | 2.23        | 1.16        |
| <b>7</b>                |              | 2.11        | 1.32        |
| <b>8</b>                |              | 2.02        | 1.22        |
| <b>9</b>                |              | 2.43        | 1.45        |
| <b>8</b>                |              | 2.67        | 1.64        |
| <b>9</b>                |              | 2.21        | 1.22        |
| <b>10</b>               |              | 2.56        | 1.33        |
| <b>11</b>               |              | 2.12        | 1.15        |
| <b>12</b>               |              | 2.34        | 1.55        |
|                         | <b>Total</b> | <b>2.64</b> | <b>1.23</b> |
| <b>L2 Experience</b>    |              |             |             |
| <b>1</b>                |              | 2.13        | 1.35        |
| <b>2</b>                |              | 2.34        | 1.33        |
| <b>3</b>                |              | 2.84        | 1.35        |
| <b>4</b>                |              | 2.14        | 1.47        |
| <b>5</b>                |              | 2.35        | 1.11        |
| <b>6</b>                |              | 2.52        | 1.12        |
| <b>7</b>                |              | 2.36        | 1.77        |
| <b>8</b>                |              | 2.65        | 1.78        |
| <b>9</b>                |              | 2.51        | 1.27        |
|                         | <b>Total</b> | <b>2.05</b> | <b>1.35</b> |

As illustrated in Table 10 above, the mean scores for subscales of the questionnaire for the participants in the rural areas are Ought-to-L2 Self (M=2.64, SD=1.23), Ideal L2 Self (M=2.15, SD=1.62), L2 Experience (M=2.05, SD=1.35), and, respectively. Furthermore, the

Friedman test was conducted to see whether there was an overall statistically significant difference among the mean ranks of the rural residential participants at three L2 Motivational Orientations.

**Table 11**  
*Friedman Test for Rural Residential Participants*

|                         |            |
|-------------------------|------------|
| <b>N</b>                | <b>164</b> |
| <b>Chi-Square</b>       | 33.84      |
| <b>Df</b>               | 163        |
| <b>Sig.</b>             | 0.823      |
| <b>a. Friedman Test</b> |            |

Table 11 above verifies that Friedman rank statistics is not significant ( $p = 0.823$ ,  $\chi^2 = 33.84$ ,  $df = 163$ ). In fact, the results of the Friedman test revealed that there was no statistically meaningful discrepancy between the average ranks of the three L2 Motivational

Orientations of rural participants. Pearson correlation was then performed to figure out the relationship between the L2 motivation of Iranian EFL high school students and contexts (i.e. city or rural residence).

**Table 12*****Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' L2 motivation and Residential Background***

|       |                     | City  | Rural |
|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| City  | Pearson Correlation | 1     | -.093 |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     |       | .631  |
|       | N                   | 384   | 384   |
| Rural | Pearson Correlation | -.093 | 1     |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     | .631  |       |
|       | N                   | 384   | 1     |

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

The data in Table 12 above reveals that there is no substantial association between the L2 motivation of EFL high-school students to study English and residential backgrounds, as significance equals 0.631 ( $p$ -value > 0.05).

Additionally, the study was set to explore whether there was any relationship between residential background and ideal L2 self of Iranian EFL high-school students in learning English. Table 15 illustrates the results of the Pearson correlation.

**Table 13*****Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' Ideal L2 Self and Residential Background***

|       |                     | City  | Rural |
|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| City  | Pearson Correlation | 1     | -.093 |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     |       | 0.033 |
|       | N                   | 384   | 384   |
| Rural | Pearson Correlation | -.093 | 1     |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.033 |       |
|       | N                   | 384   | 1     |

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

Table 13 above shows that there is a moderate relationship between the ideal L2 self of EFL high-school learners and residential background because the significant level equals 0.033 which is less than 0.05 ( $p$  < 0.05).

Moreover, there was an attempt to explore whether there was any relationship between residential background and ought-to self of Iranian EFL high-school students in learning English.

**Table 14*****Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' Ought-to Self and Residential Background***

|       |                     | City  | Rural |
|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| City  | Pearson Correlation | 1     | -.470 |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     |       | 0.012 |
|       | N                   | 384   | 384   |
| Rural | Pearson Correlation | -.470 | 1     |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.012 |       |
|       | N                   | 384   | 1     |

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

Regarding Table 14, It can be inferred that there is a relationship between EFL high-school students' ought-to self in learning English and residential background since the significance is 0.012 which is less than 0.05 ( $p$  < 0.05). Finally,

the study investigated whether there was any relationship between residential background and the L2 experience of Iranian EFL high-school students in learning English. The results were analyzed via Pearson correlation.

**Table 15**

***Pearson Correlation Coefficient for the Participants' L2 Experience and Residential Background***

|       |                     | City  | Rural |
|-------|---------------------|-------|-------|
| City  | Pearson Correlation | 1     | .052  |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     |       | .789  |
|       | N                   | 384   | 384   |
| Rural | Pearson Correlation | .052  | 1     |
|       | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.789 |       |
|       | N                   | 384   | 1     |

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

As shown by the analysis, the significance is (0.789) which is more than (0.05) ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, there is no significant relationship between EFL high-school students' L2 experience and residential background. Concerning residual background, city participants had higher motivation in L2 motivation than rural participants. This can be due to the fact that as L2 learners, the city participants have a better perspective of themselves, they have great English aspirations, and they are conscious it can be really beneficial for their future and see it as important and effective.

## **DISCUSSION**

The first research question explored the overall L2 experience, overall L2 motivational orientations, and overall ideal L2 self-orientations. The findings revealed that the differences among the three parts of the overall L2 motivational orientation of Iranian EFL high-school students in learning English were not significant. It was concluded that the participants utilized the three parts of the overall L2 motivational orientation equally. The first research question stated that Iranian EFL high-school learners were relatively highly motivated in learning English in terms of ideal L2 self, in terms ought-to self, and in terms of L2 experience. The results of this study verified this hypothesis and indicated that the differences among the three parts of the overall L2 motivational orientation were not significant. Therefore, it was concluded that the participants utilized the three parts of the overall L2 motivational orientation to nearly the same amount. The results lend support to the findings of the study by Rajab, Roohbakhsh far, and Etemadzadeh (2012).

Their findings revealed the positive and significant impact of L2 attitudes on the ideal L2 self and the negative association between L2 attitudes and L2 anxiety. However, this finding is not in line with the results of Haji Mohammadi's study (2017). He noticed that both ideal and ought-to-L2 selves were associated with perceptions of L2 family and lifestyle, and the extent of ideal-L2 self-association appeared to be much greater than that of ought-to L2 self. The second research question probed into if there was any relationship between three L2 motivational variables of Iranian EFL high-school students: ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 experience. The results of the findings showed that the Ideal L2 self had a significant positive relationship with the Ought-to L2 self. In addition, the Ideal L2 self had no meaningful relationship with Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 experience. So, the answer to the second question becomes evident. The findings revealed that there is no relationship between three L2 motivational variables of Iranian EFL high-school students, and learners' total motivational orientation mainly depends on their Ought-to L2 Self together with the L2 experience orientation, although they possess high levels of Ideal L2 Self. The finding is in line with the findings from Azarnoosh's (2014) study. She observed that both EFL students used an optimistic attitude and motivational tendency, but the key indicator of their inspired learning activity was the attitude towards learning English to a different degree, and Ideal L2 Self was especially stronger in the EFL students, although Ought-to L2 Self was rather the same for both classes. The third research question investigated if there was any relationship between gender and Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning

English. The results revealed that it was inferred that there was a positive significant relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English across gender. Moreover, it was concluded that there is a positive significant relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' ideal L2 self across gender. Furthermore, it was found that there was no meaningful relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' ought-to self between genders. Finally, there was a meaningful relationship between Iranian EFL female and male high-school students' L2 experience across gender.

Concerning the findings for gender differences, the research results do not confirm the results of Williams, Burden, and Lanvers (2002), who observed that there was a higher degree of L2 inspiration for female high school students than for males. Sung and Padilla's (1998) have stated that female learners are slightly more inspired than male students to study languages. Dörnyei et al. (2006) also revealed a strong trend for females to score considerably higher than males on multiple motivating variables. In addition, the research by Ghazvini and Khajepour (2011) found that Iranian female learners in high school were more optimistic than male learners in learning English. Furthermore, the results of the present study are against the findings of Ghazvini and Khajepour (2011). They concluded that the female learners in their study were more integratively motivated while the male learners were more instrumentally motivated. A similar result in terms of gender and motivation types was found in Mori and Gobel's (2006) study.

They reported that the female learners were more integratively motivated in learning English than the male learners. Finally, the seventh research question probed into exploring the relationship between Iranian EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English and residential background (i.e. city or rural residence).

To this end, the following findings were obtained: *a. There was a statistically significant difference among the mean ranks of the city residential participants at three L2 Motivational Orientations. b. There was no*

*statistically significant difference among the mean ranks of the rural residential participants at three L2 Motivational Orientations.c. There was no significant correlation between EFL high-school students' L2 motivation in learning English and residential background.d. There was a moderate relationship between EFL high-school students' ideal L2 self in learning English and residential background. There was a relationship between EFL high-school students' ought-to self in learning English and residential background. There was no significant relationship between EFL high-school students' L2 experience and residential background. The final null hypothesis was also rejected by the findings since in terms of residual background, city residential participants had higher motivation than rural residential participants.*

## CONCLUSION

The most frequent conclusion of the Second Language (L2) motivational orientations studies is that fostering learners' motivation is most salient and ideal in class; consequently, teachers should make efforts to improve the motivation of students. The L2 motivating orientations of students should be fulfilled in order to encourage inspiration. Administrators should also give teachers independence in terms of selecting teaching materials, designing curricula, and handling classrooms in order to fulfill the need for inspiration for learners. Also, additional professional development for teachers, such as developing specific instructional practices, may be needed in order to satisfy learners' L2 motivational orientations.

In order to meet the L2 motivational orientations of learners, extra career development for teachers, such as developing appropriate educational practices, may also be required. Furthermore, another important implication of the current study is for the parents and other family members whose behavior patterns can be directed in positive and constructive ways which can help these learners reach their full L2 motivational orientations. This can include but is not limited to, promoting positive attitudes by the parents

towards their children's L2 learning experience. It also includes encouraging the parents and other family members, i.e., role models, to communicate with the learners in L2. Not only that but family members can also be encouraged to share their L2 learning experiences with younger learners which can, in turn, inspire the development of similar L2 learning experiences in the minds of the learners themselves.

More importantly, this finding highlights the crucial role played by L2 instructors in the success or lack thereof of their students. This finding was consistent with Sampson's (2012, p. 332) contention that "initially consulting with learners about their self-images might help to empower the course-planner to create motivating lessons through activities enhancing the self-images of learners." This underlines the importance of having highly qualified teachers who not only have an excellent command of the L2, teaching qualifications, and competencies but also have the personal characteristics and qualities required to make them good and approachable teachers. It is always important for teachers to recognize, pay attention to and respect their students' idiosyncrasies and views about their own learning and address them appropriately. It also emphasizes the important role of the teachers as facilitators and directors of their students' future imaginations. Teachers should be made aware of the crucial role of imagination in future success in the L2 learning process. They should help in playing the role of the initiators and the architects of their students' possible future selves at the future selves building stage. Then, play the role of the supporters, maintainers, and evaluators of these self-guides at later stages in order to help their students trigger these future imaginations regularly and to keep these future selves alive throughout their L2 learning process. One way for L2 teachers to achieve this would be by surveying their students' main hobbies and interests and identifying their role models and heroes, then, bringing them into the classroom and incorporating them into their students' L2 learning experience even if not in person, but through TV and the other media sources.

Moreover, the results of the current study might have implications for curriculum and syllabus designers to utilize L2 motivational orientations based on the various characteristics of the language learners. The results simply support, with scientific eyes, the introduction of L2 motivational factors in the Iranian sense. Therefore, the transition from conventional motivational models to the L2 motivational self-system and the replacement of the ideal L2 self with integrative encouragement. Also, it is important to note that the high enthusiasm of students facilitates their process of language learning. It is recognized that there is far more than one causal factor of L2 motivation, such as introversion, self-esteem, communicative competence, social anxiety, and so on. This study tried to address some of the key issues and limitations that befell the previous studies, but it had some limitations of its own. One of the limitations linked to this research was related to the proficiency level of the participants in English. It was anticipated that the inclusion of a placement language test in the current study would add more validity to the other criterion measure in this study, and thus yield better overall results. It is also worth noting that the objective of this analysis centered only on the assessment of learners' L2 motivation.

The teachers' overall L2 motivational orientations are another huge part of the L2 learning experience. It is essential to investigate this issue from the teachers' perspective, to shed more light on the direct role of the teachers' overall L2 motivational orientations in the formation process of their students' future selves in its different development stages. Future longitudinal studies investigating the topic from various perspectives will help to better understand the complex relationships between motivation and the L2 learning and teaching process. In addition, it is important to remember that overall L2 motivational orientation is only one of several factors that have been recognized in the SLA literature to have a bearing on L2 learning; thus it is appropriate for the role of motivation to be investigated among the other dynamics that



take place in the very complex process of L2 learning.

Moreover, it is important to note that it would be inappropriate to generalize the findings of this study to all Iranian high school learners at this stage, let alone to other English learners from other contexts since the participants in the current study only represent a small sample of Iranian learners at some cities. More investigations between the L2 Motivational Self System and measurable L2 outcomes need to be conducted in different contexts to provide a sufficient basis for generalizations. Nonetheless, the findings in this study gave a very good idea about the Iranian students' motivation and L2 learning from the point of view of the L2 Motivational Self System theory, and suggested areas that need further and deeper investigation. The Ideal and Ought-to-L2 Self of Dörnyei has been discussed as prominent in explaining the motivation of L2 learners, in EFL areas all over the world, in particular. Even so, in order to verify the effectiveness of this system, it

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- remains necessary to assess the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self of a larger variety of classes. A study into a more comprehensive picture of the Optimal L2 Self should be followed with respect to potential future research directions. The L2 motivational Self Scheme, however, has been discussed and seen as a stronger structure for L2 motivation as it stresses an emphasis on the owner's wants and needs of learners, along with the significance of paying attention to the essence of their ideal self-images. Consequently, it should not be dismissed that the impetus for language learning is a recent field of study in Iran and that it is a socially complex concept. It is therefore expected that certain steps will be taken to reduce the discomfort of Iranian EFL students in schools, universities, and language institutes. Last but not least, it is expected that the current research would stimulate more research on the subject of motivation and the related issues created by other potential researchers by lack of motivation and high anxiety for EFL learners.
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