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Tracking Changes in EFL Learners' Motivation: A Study on The Components of L2 Self-System

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents a concurrent study adopting a mixed method research design and was conducted to investigate components of broadly defined L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS); particularly learning experience and changes of the future L2 self-image through several background factors such as gender and proficiency. For this purpose, data were gathered from 125 EFL learners studying at the School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey. Also, 13 semi-structured interviews were held in order to get a deeper understanding into the emerging results. To this end, the results indicated that the participants' main source of L2 motivation was ideal L2 self, which means they are intrinsically motivated to learn and have a positive future image in terms of learning English. Also, female students were found to have a higher *ideal L2 self* than male students. Finally, the findings showed that the participants, particularly the ones with a low level of language proficiency experienced positive changes in their future L2 self-image at the preparatory program of the school compared to their previous language learning experiences, thus, possibly suggesting that there might be discrepancies among levels of educational system in Turkey, which needs to be handled as an implication in the future research as well.

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Learning motivation has always attracted great interest in second language (L2) research (eg., Dörnyei, 2005; 2009; 2019; Gardner, 1985; Moskovsky, Assulaimani, Racheva & Harkins, 2016; Papi, Bondarenko, Mansouri, Feng & Jiang, 2018; Thorsen, Henry & Cliffordson, 2017; You, Dörnyei & Csizer, 2016) and understanding of it as a prominent factor in language learning has increased by the implications of these studies. What these studies have in common is that they explain L2 motivation from various aspects. For instance, in one of the initial attempts to explain language learning motivation, Gardner (1985) proposed that L2 motivation consists of *motivational effort*, *desire to learn the language* and *attitudes towards learning the language*. In time, new and comprehensive studies that explain L2 motivation in a multi-dimensional manner have emerged and contributed the understanding of the factors leading to motivation.

One of the prominent theories of L2 motivation has been proposed by Dörnyei (2005; 2009), who emphasizes individualistic aspect of it. According to Dörnyei's (2005; 2009; 2019) L2 self-system, language learning motivation involves *ideal L2 self*, *ought-to self* and *learning experiences*. In other words, L2 motivation could be the result of a learner's visualizing themselves as a proficient language user in the future; factors that make a language learner study and learn that language or positive language learning experiences. In a recent study, You et al., (2016) also included *intended effort*, *vividness of imagery*, *learning styles (visual and auditory)*, *ease of using imagery* and *positive or negative changes of the L2 self-image*, which set the base of the current study due to its broader sense.

As for this study, the purpose is to find out the source of L2 motivation of Turkish EFL learners, whether it is ideal L2 self or ought-to self. This study has also investigated if there are any changes in the learners' L2 self-images by looking into their previous and current learning experiences. Another concern is to find out whether proficiency and gender have any significant effects on the learners' L2 motivation.

2. Literature Review

In the literature, there have been a great number of studies on either the components of L2 self-system or the relationship between variables such as proficiency and gender and the components of the system (eg., Kim & Kim, 2018; Papi, 2010; Peng, 2015; Segalowitz, Gatbonton & Trofimovich, 2009; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013). With regard to the components of L2 self-system, in their study carried out with 432 language learners, Csizér and Kormos (2009) suggested that *ideal L2 self* and *learning experience* were related issues and had a positive influence on language learning motivation. Conversely, in this study, it emerged that the component of '*ought-to self*' affected L2 motivation negatively. The study of Taguchi et al., (2009) supported the findings of Csizér and Kormos's (2009) study. Similarly, Dörnyei and Chan (2013) found that *ideal L2 self* and *learners' intended efforts* had a positive effect on L2 motivation in their study carried out in a Chinese context.

The other components; *learning styles* and *vision* have been the focus of a number of studies (eg., Al-Shehri, 2009; Ghasemi, 2018; Kim, 2009; Kim & Kim, 2018; Yang & Kim; 2011). As a leading study on this connection, Al-Shehri (2009) examined the relationship between *vision*, *visual learning style* and *ideal L2 self* and found out that visual learning style was significantly related to ideal L2 self. Following this study, Kim (2009) included auditory and kinesthetic styles in the scope of research and suggested that all perceptual learning styles were connected to *ideal L2 self*. In the same vein, Yang and Kim (2011) conducted a study that supported previous research on the connection between learning style and *ideal L2 self* and suggested that perceptual learning style was related to L2 motivation of language learners from different countries. As for *vision* component of the system, Magid and Chan (2012) proposed that vision and ideal L2 self were highly related concepts. Seemingly, while components of *ideal L2 self*, *ought-to L2 self*, *imagery vision* and *learning styles* have been addressed in numerous studies, the component of *positive or negative changes of future L2 self-image* and its connection with other components of the system has been neglected. Thus, one of the purposes of this study is to provide an insight into the issue.

Learning experience also labelled as “attitudes toward language learning” or “L2 learning experience” is another important factor that could affect learners’ L2 motivation. Positive experience of language learning could be a predictor of high level of ideal L2 self or positive future self-image. Background factors such as learning environment, teacher, relationship between the teacher and students, parents’ attitudes etc. might be linked to the status of future L2 self-image. Negative experiences could demotivate the learners and prevent them from having a clear future self-image. Additionally, language learners’ previous language learning experiences (positive or negative) could be a source of learning motivation. If they have had negative past learning experiences, they could be demotivated to engage in learning in a new atmosphere or new positive experiences can change their beliefs and motivation stemming from their negative past learning experiences and vice versa. For this reason, past and present learning experiences can both narrow and widen the discrepancy between the current and future motivation of the learner. To this end, Dörnyei (2009) suggested that “...For some language learners the initial motivation to learn a language does not come from internally or externally generated self-images but rather from successful engagement with the actual language learning process (eg., because they discover that they are good at it) (p. 29). In a similar vein, You and Chan (2015) proposed that the concept of L2 self was dynamic and changed in time with experience, and (despite limited) studies have revealed findings that consider learning experience as the prominent source of L2 motivation (eg., Lamb, 2012; Teimouri, 2017). Yet, as Dörnyei (2019) stated “...theoretical emphasis within the L2 Motivational Self System has typically been on the two future self-guides representing possible (ideal and ought-to) selves, leaving the third main dimension of the construct, the L2 learning experience, somewhat undertheorized (p. 19). Therefore, besides the aforementioned variables, the current study suggests that learning experience could also be a factor related to *L2 self*-based on primary purpose of the study: investigating changes of L2 self-image. Changes in question might also be related to past learning experience. Thus, it is necessary to investigate whether there is a connection between language learning experiences and *positive or negative changes of the L2 self-image*, which is a gap in the related research.

Not only have the components of the L2 self-system as a source of language learning motivation been investigated, but also the connection between different background factors and the L2 self has been explored in the motivational research: The relationship between L2 self and L2 anxiety (eg., Papi, 2010), L2 fluency (eg., Segalowitz et al., 2009), learner autonomy (eg., Ueki, & Takeuchi, 2013) and willingness to communicate (eg., Lee & Lee, 2020; Peng 2015) have been among commonly researched topics, and the findings of these studies have generally indicated a positive relationship between these factors and the components of L2 self-system. Yet, it seems that the studies on the relationship between L2 self and proficiency or gender have outnumbered other factors (eg., Henry, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2014; Moskovsky et al., 2016). With respect to the relationship between L2 self and gender, Henry (2009) suggested that there was a difference between female and male learners in favor of female learners concerning L2 self-system. The large-scale study of You et al., (2016) revealed that women were more motivated than men concerning L2 self-constructs. Furthermore, in a Polish context, Iwaniec (2019) suggested that there was a difference between female and male participants’ L2 motivation as the women outscored the men in the study. However, through a more detailed examination, it emerged that intrinsic aspects of L2 self-system were not affected by the gender variable.

As for proficiency, the tendency in the research results is that proficiency level is not significantly related to L2 self-motivation, which was supported by Papi and Abdollahzadeh, (2012) as follows:

... the learners’ ideal image of their future self does not have much impact on their motivated behavior in English language classrooms or vice versa; that is, regardless of how well-developed the students’ ideal L2 self is, their actual motivated behavior in classroom activities will remain unaffected, and regardless of how motivated the students are in class, their ideal L2 selves will remain unchanged. (p. 588)

In this respect, Moskovsky et al., (2016) investigated any possible relationship between proficiency level and constructs of L2 self-system with 360 Saudi learners and revealed that there was no significant relationship between these two variables. In a previous study, Kim and Kim (2014) also suggested that there was no difference among proficiency level groups related to L2 self-system, which means that there might be other factors effective in L2 motivation.

However, recent studies set forth findings that suggest a positive connection between language proficiency and components of L2 self-system (eg., Lee & Lee, 2020; Wong, 2020). For instance, Lee and Lee (2020) found out that L2 motivation and language proficiency are positively related concepts. Considering what is suggested in the literature on the components of L2 self-system and the possible background factors effective in L2 motivation, the current study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the source of EFL learners' language learning motivation concerning components of L2 self-system? (ideal L2 self and ought-to self)
2. Is there any change in L2 self-image of these learners?
 - a) If yes, what are the reasons for the change?
3. How effective are background factors (gender and proficiency) in their motivation?

3. Methodology

This concurrent study adopted a mixed method research design by drawing on qualitative and quantitative data. The participants were delivered a motivation survey to collect the quantitative data, and 13 semi-structured interviews were held with the participants for the qualitative data.

3.1. Participants

In order to collect quantitative data, 125 EFL learners ($M=47$, $F=78$) studying at the Preparatory School of Foreign Languages of a state university in Turkey were recruited as participants after they agreed to participate in the study. Convenience sampling was applied in selecting the participants. The participants had different language levels which were classified as A ($N=64$), B ($N=42$) and C ($N=19$) corresponding to A1, A2, B1 respectively according to Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2001). Following the questionnaire, 13 students were chosen randomly in total from each group to collect the qualitative data. The students' age ranged from 18 to 25. 123 of the participants were Turkish citizens and only 2 were from other nations. A and B Groups included students from various departments of the faculties while C Group only had students from the Language Departments which were English Language Teaching and Translation. At the Preparatory School, students have 24 hours of Basic English lesson which covers all language skills in one week. A native teacher also teaches them for 2 to 3 hours in a week (See Table 1 below for demographic information about the participants).

Table 1.

Demographic Information of the Participants

Category	Sub-category	Number	Percent
Gender	Male	47	37.6
	Female	78	62.4
Nationality	Turkish	123	98.4
	Other	2	1.6
Age	18-20	115	92.0
	21-25	10	8.0
Level of Proficiency	A Group	64	51.2
	B Group	42	33.6
	C Group	19	5.2

In addition to this information, two items were included in the questionnaire to find out about the background information of whether the participants had any experiences in a foreign country, and if they had any native English teachers in their previous schools considering these experiences might affect their L2 motivation. All participants responded negatively to both questions, thus, suggesting that the participants had similar background qualities in respect to previous language learning experiences.

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaire

The instrument applied in this research was a valid and reliable questionnaire designed by You et al., (2016) by drawing upon various scales on the same topic. The questionnaire included 73 items in a five-point Likert scale. In order to collect quantitative data, Turkish translation of the questionnaire which was done by a researcher (Doğan, 2017) who studied on topic of L2 motivation of learners was used after having the permission of the researcher. The reason for selecting this instrument was that it was appropriate for the purpose of the research and the items in the native language of the participants would enable them to comprehend the items more easily. Thus, the translated version of the questionnaire that was also checked by another researcher for further changes as Doğan (2017) stated was determined as one of the two data collection instruments of the study. The questionnaire has 10 variables with sub-scales of *ideal L2 self* (5 items), *ought-to L2 self* (6 items), *vividness of imagery* (5 items), *attitudes to learning English* (5 items), *intended effort* (5 items), *visual style* (5 items), *auditory style* (5 items), *ease of using imagery* (5 items), *positive changes of the future L2 self-image* (3 items), *negative changes of the future L2 self-image* (2 items). Not all of the items in the questionnaire were used for the analysis in this research, yet only the ones for the main dependent variables were benefited. Furthermore, a Yes/No question was involved in the background information section about whether the participants have had positive or negative past learning experiences to support quantitative data addressing their learning experience (attitudes to learning English on the questionnaire). Factor analyses conducted by the developers of the original questionnaire stated that it was a valid construct consisting of ten factors (You et al., 2016). Yet, confirmatory factor analyses conducted for the Turkish version of the instrument adapted by Doğan (2017) revealed that the construct had more than ten factors (16 factors). Even though the construct has not confirmed the number of the factors in the original version, it is still a reliable instrument (Cronbach Alpha=.91) and addresses the research questions of this study well. Therefore, the adapted version of the scale (Doğan, 2017) was used in the current study (See Table 2 for the sample items for the variables below).

Table 2.

Sample Items for the Dependent Variables

Variable	Sample Item
Ideal L2 self	<i>"I can imagine myself speaking English in the future with foreign friends at parties."</i>
Ought-to self	<i>"Studying English is important to me in order to gain the approval of the society."</i>
Vividness of imagery	<i>"When imagining how I could use English fluently in the future, I usually have a vivid mental picture of the scene."</i>
Attitudes to learning English	<i>"I really enjoy learning English"</i>
intended effort	<i>"Even if I failed in my English learning, I would still learn English very hard."</i>
Visual style	<i>"I use color coding (e.g., highlighter pen) to help me as I learn."</i>
Auditory style	<i>"I learn better in class when the teacher gives a lecture."</i>
Ease of using imagery	<i>"I have always found it easy to visualize imagined situations."</i>
Positive changes of the future	<i>"My image or dream of myself using English used to be simple, but it has now become more specific."</i>
L2 self-image	
Negative changes of the future	<i>"I used to have rich imaginations of myself using English in the future, but now I don't."</i>
L2 self-image	

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In order to collect qualitative data, face-to-face interviews were held individually with 13 of the participants who were chosen randomly from each level. Each interview lasted for 15 to 30 minutes, and a voice recorder was used to record and analyze the participants' responses. All the participants agreed that their answers would be recorded during the interview. They were informed that the data would only be used for academic purposes.

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

The study was conducted at the School of Foreign Languages at a state university in the northeast of Turkey after getting the permission of the head of the school to conduct it. In order to collect quantitative data to address the research questions, first, 31 participants were randomly selected for the pilot study which was conducted to analyze the validity and reliability of the data collection instrument. The results of the pilot study were analyzed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, and it emerged that the questionnaire is highly reliable with Cronbach Alpha score of .91. The data for the questionnaire items were seen to have distributed normally. Ten days later, before conducting the actual study, the instructors of each class was contacted, informed about data collection procedures, and hard copies of the questionnaire were delivered to them. 125 EFL learners participated in the actual study voluntarily. The selected participants for the actual research differed from the ones in the pilot study. The quantitative data of the actual study were also analyzed in SPSS version 20. Finally, 13 randomly chosen participants from each language level agreed to participate in the interviews that were conducted to support quantitative data. Participants' responses were recorded to be able to analyze them thematically. For inter-reliability of the emerging themes, the two researchers of the study conducted the same procedures and agreed on the themes.

4. Results and Discussion

As part of mixed-method study design, initially, in order to analyze quantitative data, a number of statistical analyses were conducted through SPSS 20. Descriptive statistics (descriptives and frequencies) and normality tests were conducted as principal statistical analyses. According to distribution of the data, parametric independent sample tests were carried out in order to examine the relationships between variables and address the research questions.

For the first research question that aims to investigate the source of motivation (ideal L2 self or ought-to self) for EFL learners, descriptive statistics were carried out. To this end, it emerged that these learners' motivation basically stemmed from their ideal L2 self, in other words, their future goals concerning L2 use.

Table 3.
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Ideal L2 self	125	2.00	5.00	4.04	.71
Ought-to self	125	1.17	5.00	2.97	.89
Total	125				

As could be seen in Table 3, the main source of language learning motivation for the participants was their ideal L2 self ($M=4.04$). This finding is in line with previous research that is on the source of L2 motivation (eg., Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Magid & Chan, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009). These studies have put forward that language learners' future plans related to using a foreign language affect their motivation positively. As the tendency is towards learning a language for one's future goals, learners could internalize language learning process better. Qualitative data were in the same vein with the quantitative data that reveal ideal L2 self as the main source of language learning motivation.

Table 4.
Qualitative Data on Ideal L2 Self

Ideal L2 self (13)	I would like to learn English because...
	I like it (4)
	- I have always wanted to learn it (2)
	- I like listening to songs in English (1)
	- I like watching films in English (1)
	I need it for my future career (7)
	- Academic career (MA or PhD degrees in foreign countries) (5)
	I would like to communicate in English (2)

As illustrated in the table above, the participants of this study stated that they would like to learn English mainly to improve themselves. They also mentioned their positive attitudes to learning it (eg., enjoying watching films or listening to music in English). Other stated reasons for their intrinsic motivation in the interviews were as follows:

Table 5.

Attitudes to Learning English (Qualitative Data)

Attitudes to learning English	Positive attitudes (11)
	- I like learning English (10)
	- I am positive and eager to learn English (1)
	Negative attitudes (2)
	- I have speaking anxiety (1)
	- I sometimes feel nervous (1)

The analysis suggests that majority of the participants had positive attitudes to learning English, which supports the results of the quantitative data analysis presented below:

Table 6.

Attitudes to Learning English (Quantitative Data)

	N	Min.	Max.	M	SD.
I really like the actual process of learning English.	125	1.00	5.00	3.36	.98
I find learning English really interesting.	125	1.00	5.00	3.58	1.15
I really enjoy learning English.	125	1.00	5.00	3.73	1.07
I always look forward to English classes.	125	1.00	5.00	3.18	1.18
I think time passes faster while studying English.	125	1.00	5.00	3.89	.98

Both quantitative and qualitative data indicated that the participants had positive attitudes to learning English and they would like to learn it for their future plans. Considering that there is more evidence of *ideal L2 self* as the primary source of motivation (eg., Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013), learners' future plans related to L2 could be part of teaching practices at English language programs. Therefore, it could be easier for learners to internalize the process and gain an awareness of the importance of foreign language knowledge in the global world. Magid (2014) suggested a number of practical implications for the activities appropriate for the learners who have different sources of their motivation. Based on the findings related to the participants' positive attitudes to learning English, it could be suggested that engaging activities such as films and songs that have also been mentioned in the interviews be part of lesson plans not only at this school, but also at all language programs.

In relation to the results of "attitudes to learning English" component of the self-system presented above; the second research question aimed to find out whether there were any changes in learners' L2 future self-images. Descriptive statistics were applied to analyze any difference in the mean values to seek for the positive changes by drawing upon participants' attitudes towards their past language learning experiences in their former schools, which was involved in the background information section of the questionnaire. They were directed questions quantitatively and supported qualitatively to understand their past learning experiences and whether they were content with it. They were asked to compare between their previous and current attitudes to learning English (See Table 7 for the relation of positive changes of the future L2 self-image and attitudes to the past learning experiences).

Table 7.
Positive Changes of the Future L2 Self-image (Quantitative Data)

<i>(M=1.76, SD=.42)</i>	Yes	No
Were you content with the language education you had had before?	30 (24%)	95 (76%)

As the table shows, 30 of the participants were content with the education they had had so far, and 95 of them were not content with it. The participants who described their past language learning experience as negative have gone through positive changes, which has a higher rate than the participants who had a good learning experience (Mean ranks; Yes; $M=58.20$; No; $M= 64.52$). Qualitative data justify that there has been a positive change in the learners' L2 self-image. The results of the qualitative data show resemblance in terms of positive attitudes about the future self. Qualitative data results about the learners' responses to the related item are shown below in Table 8.

Table 8.
Future L2 Self and Attitudes of the Learners to their Past Learning Experiences

Future L2 self-image	Positive change (12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the past I couldn't imagine of myself using English in the future, but now I do imagine it. (2) - My image or dream of myself using English has now become more vivid than it used to be. (10) No change (1)
Past learning experience	Bad experiences (11) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teacher-centered language teaching (6) - Heavy focus on grammar and vocabulary teaching (6) - repeating the same curriculum every year (6) - focusing much on university entrance exam and allocating class hours only for the tests of it (5) Good experiences (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - having motivating teachers (2)

Out of 13 interviewees, 11 stated that they had had bad experiences in language learning for various reasons ranging from content of the lesson to methodology. Only 2 participants were seen to deem their experiences as good since they had had motivating teachers throughout the learning process. Moreover, the number of students who stated a positive change for future self-image is 12 while it is only 1 for no change. Broadly speaking, in respect to changes of the future L2 self-image, which is the focus of the current study, it emerged that there was a positive change of it since the participants stated that they could imagine themselves as using English in various situations better than the past. The majority of participants stated that they had bad past language learning experiences. Positive changes of their future L2 self-image could have been caused by positive changes in their language learning experiences (See Tables 9 and 10 below that provide evidence for this finding)

Table 9.

L2 Motivation of a Female Participant

S1 (a female participant)

T: How long have you been learning English?

S1: Since the 4th grade at primary school, thus, for 11 years in total

T: What has made you learn English?

S1: The only reason is that I like it. I started to watch films in English when I was at the 8th grade, since then, I have been interested in learning English. I really like it.

T: What are your future goals related to English?

S1: I want to teach it.

T: Did you have good or bad past language learning experiences?

S1: Good, I guess. I had motivating teachers.

T: How do you consider your language learning experiences at this school?

S1: I feel relaxed now because I was so nervous studying hard for the university exam, and I am happy that I have opportunities to speak English. I have realized that English that I learned in the past is not enough and I want to be good at using it.

T: So, your motivation is high?

S1: It has always been high, but it is higher here.

T: Can you imagine of yourself using English in the future?

S1: Yes, it's getting more vivid as I am learning.

T: Can you describe that image?

S1: Sure, I imagine of myself teaching English and making presentations.

Table 10.

L2 Motivation of Another Female Participant

T: How long have you been learning English?

S2: For 13 years. I started to learn it when I was five because of my cousins.

T: T: What has made you learn English?

S2: I would like to get MA degree and I am planning to live abroad, so I like to learn it. It is an international language and I really like it.

T: T: Did you have good or bad past language learning experiences?

S2: Bad. We just focused on grammar and writing. We did not practice speaking, especially functional language. We just studied for the university exam.

T: How do you consider your language learning experiences at this school?

S2: I am content with it. The content of courses is developmental, so we are learning and practicing a lot in all language skills. We have opportunities to work in pairs and communicate in English.

T: How was your language learning motivation before?

S2: I was always good at Maths, but also, I made a decision that I was going to study at prep school in any cases to learn English. Now, my priority is to learn English.

T: So, you feel motivated?

S2: Yes, I do. I have felt it since the beginning of the academic year.

T: How do you consider your language learning experiences at this school?

S2: I am a bit introvert, so I sometimes feel nervous while speaking English. I do not give up, though. I do want to learn it.

T: Can you imagine of yourself using English in the future?

S2: My department is physical therapy and rehabilitation and I want to live in the U.K. For example, I can imagine of myself living there and speaking with my patients and colleagues at the hospital and this image makes me more motivated.

In order to address the reasons for the positive change of the future self-image, which is the follow-up question for the third research question, the participants were asked why they thought they had a clearer *ideal L2 self-image* and what might be the reasons for alteration to positivity in their future images. All the students who were not content with their past language learning experiences attributed this to the content and extent of the English curriculum. They stated that the English lessons had mostly been mechanical, not practical and had not covered all language skills, yet instead only grammar and tests had been valued to prepare them for the exams at different stages of the education system. For this reason, they commented as that this fact had affected their intrinsic motivation negatively, thus preventing them from having a clear *ideal L2 self-image* and getting close to their expected future selves. However, all of the interviewees indicated that they were content with their current language learning process at School of Foreign Languages at a state university in that they had more chance to practice the English language with all aspects. They also pointed out that the teachers were more concerned with the students' learning process tracking their development scales. The participants, thus, stated that they felt more intrinsically motivated, and this situation allowed them to have a clearer L2 self and future images which they had not been able to envision as clearly as now. Therefore, participants' positive changes in their future L2 selves could be supported by evidence in the literature (eg., Dörnyei, 209; Lamb, 2012; Teimouri, 2017; You & Chan, 2015). For instance, You and Chan (2015) suggested that L2 self-system is dynamic and changes in the process of learning with new experiences. Thus, the change in the future L2 self-image of learners in Group A could be attributed to positive language learning experiences that they have had in the program.

The third research question was about gender and proficiency as possible effective factors. In order to examine the data for any relationship among the variables, first, normality tests were conducted. As a result of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which was considered based on the sample size ($N=125$), it was found out that most of the variables had statistically significant values suggesting a non-normal distribution (eg., *ideal L2 self*; $M= 4. 04$, ($SE= .06$) with skewness of $-.51$ ($SE= .21$) and kurtosis of $-.29$ ($SE=.43$); *ought to self*; $M=2.9$ $SE= .08$ with skewness of $.05$ ($SE=.21$) and kurtosis of $-.85$ ($SE=.43$) (See Table 11 below for the output of the normality test).

Table 11.
Normality of the Variables

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Ideal L2 self	.122	125	.000
Ought-to self	.077	125	.067
Intended effort	.121	125	.000
Attitudes to learning English	.083	125	.033
Positive changes of the future L2 self-image	.149	125	.000
Ease of using imagery	.96	125	.007

However, in accordance with Q-Q plots that showed a linear shape, parametric tests were preferred in order to obtain more reliable results. Therefore, parametric tests of Independent Samples T Test and One-way ANOVA were performed in order to explore the relationship between and within the variable groups. To start with, any possible effect of gender on the components of the L2 self-system was investigated. For this purpose, parametric Independent Samples T-tests were conducted between the variable of gender and the components of L2 self; *ideal L2 self*, *ought to self*, *positive changes of the future L2 self-image* and *ease of using imagery*. The output of the tests indicated that the scores were significantly higher for female participants ($M=4.15$, $SD=.64$) than for male participants ($M=3.87$, $SD=.79$), $t(123)=2.14$, $p<.05$, $d=.39$ for the component of *ideal L2 self* which was found to be the main source of their motivation. Also, it was found out that the scores

related to the component of ease of using imagery were higher for female learners ($M=3.83$, $SD=.75$) than male learners ($M=3.49$, $SD=.84$), $t(123)=2.27$, $p<.5$, $d=.42$ suggesting the effect of gender. Yet, it emerged that there was no significant difference between the two groups in the other components of L2 self, which could also be seen through the mean and significance values in Table 12.

Table 12.
Gender as an Effective Factor on L2 Motivation (N=125)

	Female (N=78)		Male (N=47)		F	Sig.
	M	SD	M	SD		
Ought to self	2.94	.91	3.03	.87	.32	.56
Intended effort	3.72	.74	3.56	.64	1.11	.21
Attitudes to learning English	3.61	.79	3.44	.69	.78	.23
Positive changes...	3.84	.93	3.7	.79	2.16	.39

As demonstrated in the table, gender could not be regarded as a significant factor on L2 motivation in consideration of the components of *ought to self*, *intended effort*, *attitudes to learning English* and *positive changes of the future L2 self-image*. However, with regard to mean values, the main source of L2 motivation was found to be *ideal L2 self*, and it had significantly higher scores than the other components, thus, it could be considered to analyze the variable of gender as a possibly effective factor for motivation, which was suggested to be significantly effective.

These findings indicating gender as an effective factor in L2 motivation especially in relation to *ideal L2 self* are in line with previous studies that have indicated an effect of gender in favor of female learners on L2 self-system (eg., Henry, 2010; Iwaniec, 2019; Kim & Kim, 2014; Moskovsky et al, 2016; You et al., 2016). It may be attributed to the reason that females are more planned when compared to male as suggested by Dayioğlu and Türüt-Aşık (2007). Furthermore, while the tendency has been towards focusing on specific components of L2 self-system (*ideal L2 self* and *ought to self*), this study puts forward findings that suggest gender as an effective factor on other components (*ease of using imagery*). Thus, it supports existing research in the related research and provides more specific empirical data on the issue.

As for any possible relationship among different proficiency levels in the components of L2 self-system, parametric One-way ANOVA test was conducted between and within language levels of A, B, C in the study and the components of L2 self-system. Analysis of variance showed a significant effect of language proficiency on the components of *ought to self* ($F(2,122)= 7.66$, $p=.00$, $\eta^2=.11$) and *positive changes in the future self* ($F(2,122)= 4.31$, $p=.01$, $\eta^2=.06$). Posthoc analyses using Bonferonni indicated that there was a significant difference in the scores of *ought-to self* component between A and B levels ($p=.01$); also B and C levels ($p=.00$). As for the component of *positive changes in the future self*, Posthoc Bonferonni analyses suggested that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores between A and C levels ($p=.01$); also B and C levels ($p=.04$).

Seemingly, excluding the two components aforementioned, these results suggest that level of proficiency does not have significant effects on components of L2 motivation, which either is in accordance with previous research or does not support it (suggesting no effect of proficiency; eg., Kim & Kim, 2014; Moskovsky et al., 2016 and suggesting an effect of it; eg.; Lee & Lee, 2020; Wong, 2020). For instance, in their study, Moskovsky et al., (2016) explored if there was any relationship between sub-scales of L2 self-system and language proficiency in a Saudi context and suggested that there was no statistically significant connection between the two variables. Similarly, also considering the values of the analyses of the current study, it could be suggested that language proficiency is not sufficient to explain that relationship, thus, supporting existing research aforementioned. Overall, the suggestion could be that besides language

proficiency, there could be other factors causing any change in learners' L2 motivation, which is the focus of the next research question, particularly considering the results of the comparison of the groups for the component of positive changes in the future self.

5. Conclusion

A mixed-method study was conducted to track the changes primarily in L2 learners' motivational dispositions. The study focused on three research questions about the learners' motivational disposition, the effect of gender and proficiency in motivation, and positive/negative changes of the future self-images of the learners. It was concluded that the main source of motivation for learners was *ideal L2 self* which enables them to envision themselves equipped with English successfully in the future. That is, learners were mostly motivated intrinsically about learning and using English in the future. It was also found out that gender had a significant effect on learners' motivational disposition. Although there was no significant effect on other motivational components, female participants were seen to have a higher motivation in terms of *ideal L2 self*-compared to male participants. However, level of proficiency did not show significant differences between the groups. Finally, participants mostly described their language learning experiences as bad, and that led them to have a negative future self-image in terms of English. It was seen that these images of students changed from negative to positive by means of discarding language from being mechanical and making it practical. Most of the participants were content with the comprehensive language education they had at the time of study. They stated that it was easier now to have a clearer vision in terms of future self, and they were closer to their plans and dreams about English. Therefore, it could be recommended that it is necessary to reconsider language teaching at different levels of education in a way that sustains previous learning. Furthermore, the participants stated that they had mechanical language learning experiences that heavily focused on teaching of form at primary or high school. Based on this result, it could be suggested that even though there has been a shift to communicative language teaching and the programs have been organized accordingly, language education programs could be reconsidered in Turkey.

One of the limitations to this study could be that only the students in preparatory school of a university were included in it. The variance of the participants could be extended to the other departments, or primary/secondary level and tertiary level could be compared in terms of motivational disposition so as to have a broader extent. Another limitation is that the number of participants from each level did not distribute evenly. Also, there was not a sharp distinction at their level of proficiency. Another study could be conducted with evenly distributed participants in terms of gender and level of proficiency.

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