

The Motorcycle Motivation

ESP1a L2 Motivational Self System

Final Draft



### **Introduction**

There are many individuals in Japan who lament, “Why cannot I use English?” I am one of those Japanese people and took an advance English class in Saitama University to be able to use the language. However, about eight years have passed since I started studying, and I feel that I cannot use English at all. This struggle might be caused by an inappropriate motivation to study. What is the appropriate motivation for language learning? How can I form and maintain that motivation? Then, I would like to introduce the appropriate L2 motivational self system related to my English learning, which is the L2 learning experience, the ought-to L2 self, and the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2009). Dörnyei (2009, p. 32) asserted, “One benefit of the L2 motivational self system is that it offers new avenues for motivating language learners.” Therefore, I chose to express my L2 self system through art (Vye, 2016) that represented a motorcycle running along the avenues as a metaphor of my motives to learn English. This motorcycle heads in the direction of my future possible self, and of course, the driver is me. In this essay, I would like to explain my motorcycle motivation with Dörnyei’s self system and discuss the other important parts of the motorcycle through the art.

### **Literature Review**

The L2 motivational self system describes how learners function in a second language that made up of three parts (Dörnyei, 2009; Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013). Dörnyei (2009) borrow the self system model from psychology, but added the language learning experience to the model of the ought-to self and ideal self. I will explain the three parts in detail below:

1. The L2 learning experience is external motivation that is associated with the present learning environment such as the teacher’s personality, teaching method, the content of classes, the classmates, and the level success of the experience.

2. The ought-to L2 self is the qualities and skills that the learners think it is necessary to have in order to meet the expectations of society and other people. The learners tend to learn by avoidance for the reasons they do not want to be like due to others and external factors, rather than their own hope.
3. Ideal L2 self is the figure of an ideal person that the learners want to be like. If they have a clear image of the ideal self, it is a strong inspiration to learn the second language.

However, in Japan, many Japanese learners of English have little opportunity to use the foreign language in their daily lives, yet their L2 learning experiences seem to have a great influence on the way they study. Edsall and Saito (2013) suggested that university students in Japan may avoid situations that give rise to anxiety due to lack of support. Additionally, Ueki and Takeuchi (2013) found that the English majors have a stronger motivation than the non-English majors. Next I will explain about my motivational L2 self system.

### **My Language Learning Experience**

Part of my language learning experience was that I participated in an English skit contest when I was a junior high school student. I thought about a story with my friend, made a script, remembered it, and showed our skit in front of all the students. Although I was nervous, I was able to win the competition successfully. Thanks to this victorious experience, I became fond of studying English. In the Figure 1, I drew a motorcycle engine as the image of my L2 learning experience. The engine is the most important part of the vehicle among several other parts because the motorcycle does not work with the engine alone. Gasoline is necessary. I defined gasoline as the successful experiences working while I am studying English. This also includes aspects of my ought-to self.

### **My Ought-to Self**

Due to the structure of the motorcycle, a rear tire is closely connected with the engine.

The rear tire expresses my ought-to L2. The qualities of my ought-to self are the rear tire that includes not melting even if the motorcycle is running at a high speed. For example, if I have better pronunciation and listening quality, I can continue conversations at a face speed without problems. Also, the skills of learning mean the tire rotation speed. The rotation of the rear tire and a front tire are always the same. If the rear tire rotates quickly, inevitably the front tire also rotates faster. If I practice effective English learning methods, I will be able to maintain the momentum to speak faster.

### My Ideal Self

The front tire is a representation of my ideal L2 self, which is the figure of what the learner thinks they “would like to become” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29). Naturally, most students learning English think that they can speak the language. If this motivation is truly their own idea, they will actively study to fill in the gaps existing between the ideal self and the present self (Dörnyei, 2009). In my case, the front tire mainly determines the direction of the motorcycle. See Figure 1 below:

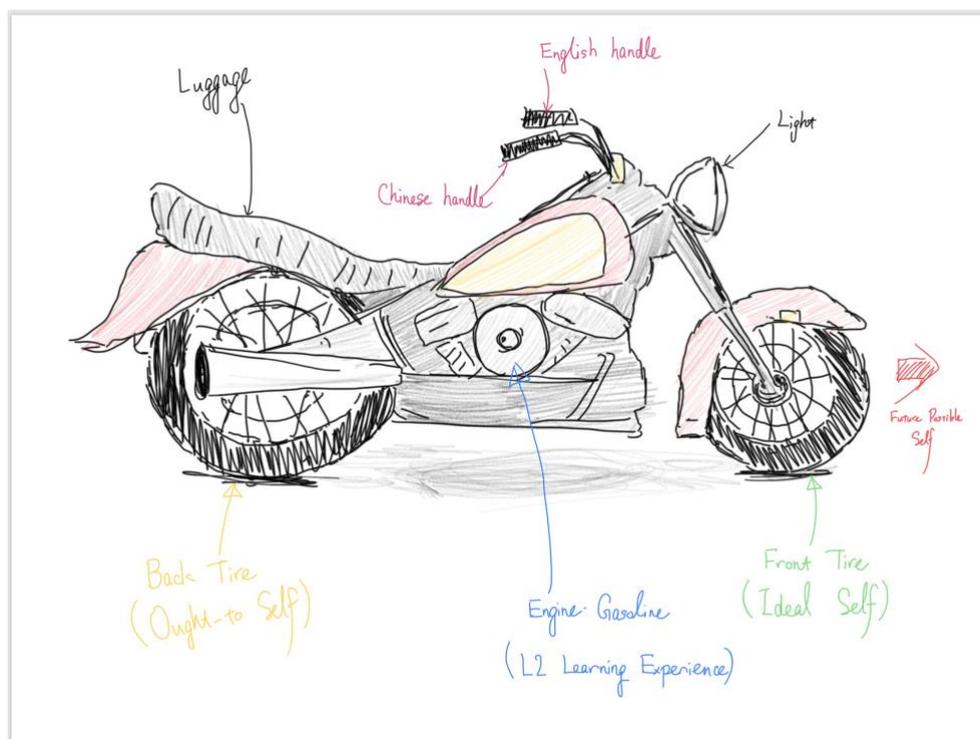


Figure 1. The art expressing my motivation to L2 learning

### Discussion

In the art of Figure 1, I also drew handles, a light, and luggage to represent my external environment. In my case, the handles have both English and Chinese languages because I am also studying Chinese. If the English handle is strong, naturally I will go towards the English goal. Then, if the Chinese handle is strong, I will reach the Chinese goal. The strength of these handles is up to the driver, that is me. Now, I am planning to study more Chinese after graduating from university. The light has a role to illuminate the destination of the motorcycle. In other words, the clear image of the ideal L2 self is helpful to form my future possible self. I will carry my luggage as well when riding the motorcycle. If my luggage is heavy, the motorcycle slows down. It takes long time to get to the goals. The luggage means the learning environment that weighs down on the extrinsic factor of my ought-to self (see Ueki & Takeuchi, 2013; Dörnyei, 2009). If the influence of these factors is large, the learning achievement is greatly affected. Thus, I think these parts are also important for keeping the motivation of my L2 learning in addition to the previous three main parts. Figure 2 represents my two goals of learning English and Chinese that shows the destination of successful language proficiencies.

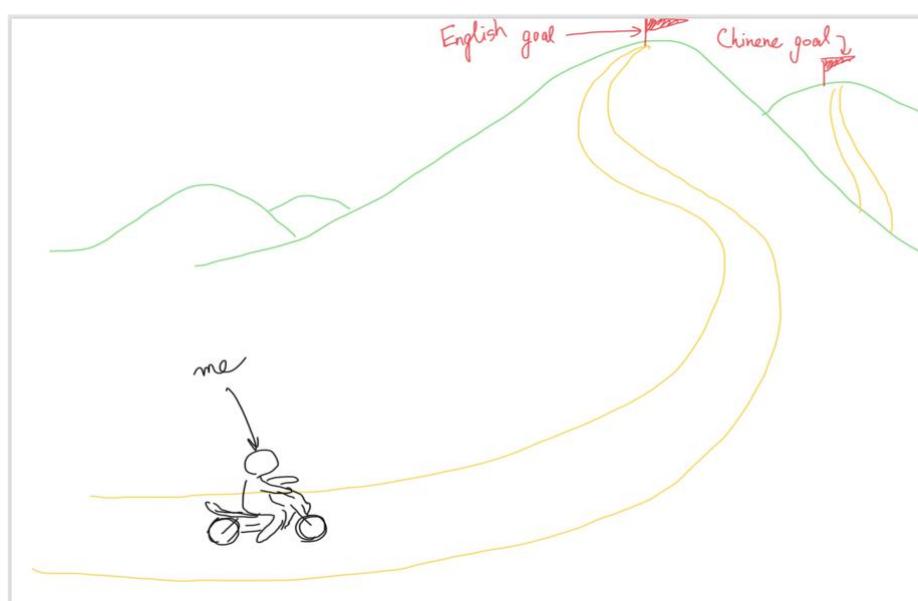


Figure 2. My Goals

### **Conclusion**

In short, I explained my motorcycle motivation with Dörnyei's (2009) self system and discussed the other essential parts of the motorcycle to fuel my language learning through art. As a result of analyzing this motivation, this model that was proposed is applicable to almost all L2 learners. The motorcycle consists of three important elements as well as the L2 motivational self system. This motorcycle model could be a bicycle, but adding the more powerful tools (the engine and the gasoline) would make it possible to reach the goal more quickly. Dörnyei (2009) also felt that a third major element needed was to add for language learning, which is related to the impact of the learning environment. Through this essay, I could clearly image my future self as a system engineer working in Silicon Valley. There is so much gasoline to climb the high mountain road. There are so many successful experiences for me to be able to reach the two goals of being proficient in English and Chinese.

Word Count: 1,377

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