

## **Book review**

**Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self.** Zoltán Dörnyei and Ema Ushioda (Eds.) (2009). Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 364 pp., ISBN: 978-1-8476-8127-9.

This volume edited by Dörnyei and Ushioda attempts to bring together research and researchers from the field of second language learning motivation, identity and the self. The chapters in this volume cover a wide range of topics, all connected in one way or another to the notion of Ideal and Ought-to L2 Self, as proposed by Dörnyei. The volume opens and ends with the editors' perspective on the topics (to be) discussed, and the importance of the research presented here for the fields of L2 Identity and Self. Initially, Dörnyei and Ushioda advocate for the re-examination of L2 motivation to include the self and identity, as well as for a union between the theory of motivation for language learning and the work to date in the field of second language acquisition and sociolinguistics, proposing this as the optimal model for future research in the field of language learning motivation, identity and self.

The volume seems to be centred primarily around Dörnyei's work on possible selves and their impact on motivation for L2 learning. In his chapter, he critiques previous literature, primarily the integrative orientation proposed by Gardner and Lambert, which Dörnyei argues, does not take into account new developments in the field of motivation. From the psychological research on the self comes the intertwining of self theory with motivational theory, which Dörnyei supports as the desirable path to understanding motivation, identity and the self as related to L2 learning. He proposes a model called the L2 Motivational Self System to replace and expand previous notions of motivation in the literature; a model which incorporates the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experience. Other studies in this volume validate the L2 Motivational Self System across various geographical and educational contexts. The chapter by Taguchi, Magid and Papi investigates this model across three contexts, Japan, China and Iran, looking at learners of English. Csisér and Kormos report a study of Hungarian learners of English at secondary and university level, while Ryan reports his findings of Japanese learners of English through the L2 Motivational Self System. These three chapters all provide support for Dörnyei's model, pointing to the validity of the model cross-culturally and with regard to cross-educational levels. These studies also make another important point about the learning of English as an L2 – nowadays, due to the status of lingua franca that English has attained, the notion of integrativeness tends to be just a part of the whole self-concept of the learner as a future speaker of English. As Ryan suggests, integrativeness is only part of the Ideal

L2 Self; thus, the model proposed by Dörnyei offers a more complete understanding of the underlying processes that take place with respect to L2 motivation.

Al-Shehri proposes the idea that the Ideal L2 Self could be related to a higher visual imagery and imagination, and goes on to investigate this assumption through a small-scale correlational study of Arab learners of English. Although the results show support for the hypothesis, it is more of a tentative study, requiring additional empirical and theoretical data to sustain its claims, and, as the author suggests, more research is needed to better understand the relations.

The chapter by Segalowitz, Gatbonton and Trofimovich proposes another theoretical development based on the L2 Motivational Self System. They suggest that this model is part of a larger model where ethnolinguistic affiliation (language identity) influences the L2 Motivational Self System, which in turn has an effect on variations in L2 proficiency levels, mediated by various psycholinguistic variables. They present three studies conducted in the Canadian context in support of this larger model, and suggest that more research should be dedicated to better understanding the mediating psycholinguistic variables.

Another theoretical development of Dörnyei's model is presented in one of the chapters by MacIntyre, Mackinnon and Clément (Chapter 10), which reports research conducted for the development of a scale to assess the possible selves in the Canadian context. Apart from the good reliability of the scale, the research suggests once again that the concept of possible selves is connected to the notion of integrativeness, but also with perceived L2 competence, and these variables – together with the motivation for learning the L2 – are the ones which can explain the differences between the perceived self in the present and the possible future self.

In Chapter 3, these same three authors argue for upholding previous research on integrativeness, and a possible merger of the L2 Motivational Self System with previous research on integrativeness, especially since there is sufficient evidence to support the connection between the two. The authors of this chapter present the benefits of a model of possible selves as proposed by Dörnyei, but also indicate that researchers adopting this model should pay particular attention to a few aspects that might lead to poor research outcomes. They draw caution to measurement issues, the terminology used in "self" research, cross-cultural variation of the concept of self, the fact that possible selves could actually be goals of the learners, that they might change in time, and that they are an integrative part of learner identity, which is not yet fully understood under a theoretical model. These critiques brought forth by MacIntyre, Mackinnon and Clément suggest that although much empirical support for this model can be found in the literature, it is just one motivational model for learning L2 and should be analysed constantly, so as to ensure both its theoretical and empirical validity.

Another critique of the L2 Motivational Self System comes from Ushioda. In her chapter, she presents arguments for understanding the people we study as persons rather than collections of characteristics in a theoretical space. She argues for an understanding of processes in context, that is, in the language learning context, and for the treatment of the people studied as representative of those processes within a particular context. Ushioda proposes a relational perspective to understanding motivation, rather than a linear one, and a multi-perspective, multi-angle approach to the study of L2 possible selves. This notion of the “person-in-context” removes context as an external, independent variable, and brings it into the self, as part of it.

Many theoretical frameworks emerged from the notion of integrativeness formulated by Gardner. Apart from Dörnyei’s model of L2 Motivation Self System, Yashima, for example, formulated the notion of International Posture, which she explores in a chapter of this book. International posture is explained as a continuation of the notion of integrativeness into more current contexts, such as the context of learning English as a L2. The target group which one would desire to reach by learning English is rather vague – the international community – and this has various effects on learners’ motivation. Yashima proposes a model in which the international posture and the L2 Ideal Self are related. She suggests that the concepts of Willingness to Communicate, international posture and proficiency in English are related and mediated by variables such as confidence and motivation. She presents empirical support for her theoretical framework and concludes the chapter by emphasizing the importance of learning English for being part of the international community in this fast-paced and increasingly globalised world.

Lamb dedicates a chapter in this book to the study of identity as it relates to Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self in Indonesian students learning English. His qualitative approach brings forth interesting nuances of the theoretical concepts in context. He analyses two case studies and draws from both Dörnyei’s model and Bourdieu’s notion of linguistic habitus in trying to understand their Ideal and Ought-to L2 Selves and the possible trajectory their language learning might have. Lyons’ chapter in this volume investigates the notion of possible selves in yet another context, that of the French Foreign Legion and their motivation to study French. He describes both qualitative and quantitative data in order to address these issues in more detail and concludes that the specific context of the Foreign Legion has a great impact on the understanding of the possible selves.

The next two chapters attempt to link the L2 Motivational Self System with other established motivational models. Kim investigates the relation between Dörnyei’s model and Sociocultural Theory and Activity Theory with the help of two case studies of Korean ESL international students in Canada. Kim employed various methodologies, such as interviews, classroom observations, picture-cued recall tasks and language learning autobiographies. She concludes that instrumentality can be either

incorporated in the Ought-to self or in the Ideal self, “depending on the degree of internalisation” (p. 291), and that the Ideal L2 self can only be achieved on the basis of the previous life experiences of the language learner.

Another chapter of this book links the L2 Motivational Self System with another significant motivational model for learning an L2, that is, Self-Determination Theory. Noels presents qualitative and quantitative data to support the relevance of Self-Determination Theory in the field of motivational theories for language learning. A supportive environment, where the learner feels she is competent, where she relates to the language community and where she feels autonomous, predicts a more internalised motivation for learning a new language, which will most likely lead her to continue her engagement in the learning process. Noels underlines that motivational theories need to be investigated and reformulated constantly in order to provide a better reflection of findings in various contexts.

One of the factors involved in a supportive language learning environment is the teacher. The relationship that develops between the language learner and the teacher can have a significant impact on the learning process. The next two chapters look at teachers’ possible selves in two contexts. Kubanyiova investigates the possible selves of teachers of English as a Foreign Language in Slovakia and “the dissonance between the teachers’ ideals and the reality they are confronted with” (p. 314) and concludes that an ideal L2 teacher self, which is primed rather than assumed, can influence teachers’ involvement in the teaching process. The other chapter by Ding and White looks at teachers’ identities and selves in e-language teaching and suggest that the teacher ideal self is socially constructed and dynamic, and that the possible selves could serve as mediators in teachers learning and adapting to the new demands of their environment.

The concluding chapter by Dörnyei and Ushioda attempts to bring together their two very different approaches with respect to motivation, language identity and L2 self. While Dörnyei’s research has mainly focused on quantitative approaches to the L2 learning process, Ushioda has adopted a more qualitative method, but as stated by the authors, their research interests intersected when it came to identity and the self. As most of this volume, the last chapter is divided into Dörnyei’s and Ushioda’s perspectives, as subchapters, both presenting support for and critiques of the approaches used. Although this volume is quite a comprehensive collection of the research related to the L2 Motivational Self System, the concluding chapter is an attempt to illustrate the fact that the authors endorse not only this motivational model, but also the one proposed by Ushioda, the “person-in-context” relational concept of a dynamic, constantly changing self. Except for Ushioda’s chapter in this volume and the qualitative attempts in some of the other chapters, this volume appears to be mainly one in support of Dörnyei’s model and at points offers a disjointed picture. Nonetheless, the research presented here is of the utmost importance for the development of

motivational theories of language learning and the authors' efforts to link together two very distinct perspectives could be seen as an indication of their attempt to collaborate and of the trend in the field to unite and integrate quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to gain a better understanding of the motivational process in language learning.

**Ruxandra Comănaru** is a PhD student in the Department of Applied Linguistics and Communication, Birkbeck, University of London. Her research interests include attitudes and motivation for language learning and how they may influence identity, particularly European identity. She is also interested in the link between heritage language maintenance and the development of a balanced bicultural self.

**Ruxandra Comănaru\***  
*Birkbeck, University of London*  
\*rcoman01@students.bbk.ac.uk