

# **The Role of Future Self-Guides in Motivated Language Learning Behaviors: The Case of English and Chinese Language Learners in Thailand**

บทบาทของทิศทางของตัวตนในแบบฉบับที่ต้องการจะเป็น  
ในอนาคตต่อพฤติกรรมการเรียนภาษาที่เกิดจากแรงจูงใจ :  
กรณีศึกษาผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาจีน  
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## **Abstract**

Based on the 2x2 model of future self-guides, a revision of future self-guides which is used to explain students' motivated behaviors in language learning, this mixed-method study investigated: (1) the extent to which students' motivations to learn

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English and Chinese are regulated by each component of future self-guides; (2) the relationship between future self-guides and motivated language learning behaviors; and (3) students' perceived motivation in learning English and Chinese. Motivational questionnaires were distributed to 136 Thai university students (64 English majors and 72 Chinese majors), and follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 English majors and 15 Chinese majors. The results showed that the students' motivations to learn English and Chinese were highly regulated by future self-guides. It was also found that Ideal L2 Self from own standpoint was the component that was most highly correlated with motivated language learning behaviors for both English and Chinese majors, followed by Ideal L2 Self from other standpoint, and Ought-to L2 Self from own standpoint respectively. Ought-to L2 Self from other standpoint showed the weakest correlation to motivated language learning behaviors. The interview data indicated that the instrumental values of the target languages, significant others' expectations, and perceived self-obligations were perceived as contributing factors to their motivation to learn both languages. This paper offers pedagogical implications as well as recommendations for further research.

**Keywords:** The 2x2 model of future self-guides, motivated language learning behaviors, English and Chinese, Thai university students

### บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้เป็นการวิจัยแบบผสมผสานโดยใช้แนวคิด 2x2 model ของทิศทางของตัวตนในแบบฉบับที่ต้องการจะเป็นในอนาคตเพื่อศึกษา (1) แรงจูงใจในการเรียนภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาจีนว่าเกิดจากองค์ประกอบแต่ละตัวของการสร้างตัวตน

ในแบบฉบับที่ต้องการจะเป็นในอนาคตอย่างน้อยเพียงใด (2) ความสัมพันธ์ระหว่าง ทิศทางของตัวตนในแบบฉบับที่ต้องการจะเป็นในอนาคตกับพฤติกรรมการเรียนภาษา ที่เป็นผลมาจากแรงจูงใจ และ (3) ความคิดเห็นของผู้เรียนเกี่ยวกับแรงจูงใจในการ เรียนภาษา เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการเก็บข้อมูลได้แก่แบบสอบถามเกี่ยวกับแรงจูงใจและ การสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่งมีโครงสร้าง ผู้ตอบแบบสอบถามเป็นนักศึกษาระดับมหาวิทยาลัย 136 คน (นักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ 64 คน และภาษาจีน 72 คน) และผู้ให้ข้อมูล ในการสัมภาษณ์วิชาเอกละ 15 คน ผลการวิจัยพบว่า แรงจูงใจขั้นสูงในการเรียน ภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาจีนเกิดจากตัวตนในแบบฉบับที่ต้องการจะเป็นในอนาคต และ ความสัมพันธ์ระดับสูงระหว่างตัวตนของผู้เรียนภาษาในแบบฉบับที่อยากเป็นมาจาก ความต้องการของตนเองกับพฤติกรรมการเรียนภาษาที่เป็นผลมาจากแรงจูงใจของ ผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาจีนเป็นวิชาเอก ตามด้วยตัวตนของผู้เรียนภาษาตาม แบบฉบับที่ผู้อื่นอยากให้เป็นในมุมมองของผู้อื่น และตัวตนของผู้เรียนภาษาในแบบ ฉบับที่เกิดจากมุมมองของตนเองตามลำดับ ทั้งนี้พบความสัมพันธ์ระดับต่ำระหว่าง ตัวตนของผู้เรียนภาษาในแบบฉบับที่ผู้อื่นอยากให้เป็นตามมุมมองของผู้อื่น กับพฤติกรรมการเรียนภาษาที่เป็นผลมาจากแรงจูงใจ ผลการสัมภาษณ์ชี้ให้เห็นว่า การเห็นคุณค่าเชิงการใช้ประโยชน์ของภาษาเป้าหมาย ความคาดหวังจากบุคคลใกล้ชิด และหน้าที่ของตนถือเป็นปัจจัยที่ส่งเสริมให้เกิดแรงจูงใจในการเรียนทั้งสองภาษา บทความนี้ให้ข้อเสนอแนะด้านการเรียนการสอนและการนำผลการวิจัยไปต่อยอด

**คำสำคัญ:** รูปแบบ 2x2 model ของทิศทางในแบบฉบับที่ต้องการจะ เป็นในอนาคต พฤติกรรมการเรียนภาษาที่เกิดจากแรงจูงใจ ภาษาอังกฤษและภาษาจีน นักศึกษาระดับมหาวิทยาลัย

## Introduction

It has long been acknowledged that motivation plays a prominent role in the success of learning a second (L2) or foreign language (Dörnyei, 1998). L2 motivational research has shifted from a social-psychological period to cognitive-situated, process-oriented, and socio-dynamic periods (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), in which future self-guides have gradually emerged as important components in language learning motivation. Currently, the predominant theory in L2 motivational research is L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS), proposed by Dörnyei (2005; 2009). L2MSS provides us with a model to understand L2 motivation concerning an individual's self-concept and future self-guides.

L2MSS subsumes three main components: Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experience. Ideal L2 Self represents the L2 attributes learners would ideally like to have. Ought-to L2 Self refers to the L2 attributes learners believe they have to gain to meet the expectations of significant others; L2 Learning Experience concerns learners' past and current learning environment and experience. The fundamental assumption of the L2MSS is that the discrepancy perceived by language learners between their current state and their future self-guides (i.e., Ideal or Ought-to L2 Self) may work as motivations to reduce the perceived gaps and reach the desired end-state. This model has been employed in a number of empirical research in different contexts (Al-Hoorie, 2018; By & Laohawiriyanon, 2019; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Dörnyei & Chan, 2013; Papi & Teimouri, 2012).

However, the power of the three components of L2MSS in explaining learners' motivation is inconclusive. While Ideal L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience were found to be significant

predictors of intended effort, motivated language learning behaviors, and achievement or language proficiency, Ought-to L2 Self was not shown as a significant construct or with little motivational significance in many studies (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Lamb, 2012). According to Higgins (1987), Ideal Self and Ought-to Self are considered two major self-guides regulating human behaviors. It does not make sense theoretically that Ought-to L2 Self did not emerge as a valid construct and was even excluded in some previous studies (Al-Hoorie, 2018). Therefore, criticisms have been put on this model because of the lack of motivational potency of Ought-to L2 Self.

According to Higgins (1987), Self-discrepancy Theory includes two domains (Ideal Self and Ought-to Self) and two standpoints (own and other). The two domains, Ideal Self and Ought-to Self, could be perceived from own and other standpoints. Higgins (1987) has maintained that Ideal Self has a promotion focus whereas Ought-to Self has a prevention focus. Promotion and prevention are two motivational orientations which regulate individuals' behaviors in Higgins's Regulatory Focus Theory. Promotion-focused individuals are concerned with advancement, growth, and accomplishment. They are sensitive to the presence or absence of positive outcomes. On the other hand, prevention-focused individuals focus on security, safety, and calmness. Individuals are sensitive to the presence or absence of negative outcomes. Dörnyei (2005; 2009) has borrowed Ideal Self and Ought-to Self from Higgins's (1987) Self-discrepancy Theory and combined them with the conceptual content of Markus & Nurius's (1986) Possible Selves Theory. However, two standpoints and regulatory distinctions (promotion or prevention focus) are not included in L2MSS.

In an attempt to solve the problem of the Ought-to L2 Self, Teimouri (2017) offered a trichotomous model of L2 selves, including Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self from own standpoint and Ought-to Self from other standpoint, which was tested with 524 high school students in Iran. Multiple regression results indicated that all three types of learners' L2 selves could predict their intended effort in language learning. Ideal L2 Self was the strongest predictor of intended effort ( $B=.46, p<.001$ ). Compared to Ideal L2 Self, both Ought-to L2 Self from own standpoint ( $B=.15, p<.001$ ) and Ought-to L2 Self from other standpoint ( $B=.10, p<.05$ ) explained a much smaller amount of variance. In Teimouri's (2017) work, the model with three future self-guides did not show stronger evidence of the validity of the Ought-to L2 Self than in previous studies. The reasons speculated by Papi et al. (2018) were that the questionnaire used in the study did not pay enough attention to the regulation distinction (promotion or prevention focus) of Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self, and the items measured students' motivated language learning behaviors had a regulatory bias (with a promotion focus only).

Furthermore, based on Higgins's Self-discrepancy Theory and Regulatory Focus Theory, Papi et al. (2018) proposed the 2x2 model of future self-guides (Figure 1), which includes Ideal L2 self from own standpoint (Ideal L2 Self/Own), Ideal L2 self from other standpoint (Ideal L2 Self/Other), Ought-to L2 self from own standpoint (Ought-to L2 Self/Own) and Ought-to L2 self from other standpoint (Ought-to L2 Self/Other). Ideal L2 Self/Own represents the attributes that learners from their own standpoint would ideally hope to have in the future, with a promotion focus; Ideal L2 Self/Other represents the attributes that learners' significant others (e.g. parents, teachers, and friends) would ideally

hope they will achieve in the future with a promotion focus. Ought-to L2 Self/Own represents the attributes that learners, from their own standpoint, believe they ought to obtain (e.g., obligations, duties, and requirements) to avoid negative outcomes, with a prevention focus. Ought-to L2 Self/Other represents the attributes that learners believe other people require them to possess (e.g., obligations, duties, and requirements) in order to avoid negative outcomes, with a prevention focus.

**Figure 1**

The 2x2 Model of Future Self-Guides

|            |                      |                        |
|------------|----------------------|------------------------|
|            | Standpoint           |                        |
| Promotion  | Ideal L2 Self/Own    | Ideal L2 Self/Other    |
| Prevention | Ought-to L2 Self/Own | Ought-to L2 Self/Other |

As an empirical study, Papi et al. (2018) revised the existing questionnaire by showing clear promotion and prevention focus concerning Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self and without regulatory bias concerning motivated language learning behaviors. The questionnaires were administered to 259 English learners in a university in the United States. Multiple regression results revealed that all four future selves were strong predictors of motivated language learning behaviors. Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $B=.37$ ) was the strongest predictor in this study, which supports Higgins's hypothesis (1987) that Ought-to Self-guides can be the main

motivator. This finding was explained by Papi et al. (2018) that the participants in the study made an effort to learn English in order to avoid negative academic, professional, and social outcomes. However, this result did not suggest that Ought-to L2 Self/Own was the strongest predictor in other contexts. It was suggested that the revised model would be a more refined representation of L2 selves than the previous ones, and it needs further examinations in future motivational research.

Attracted by Papi et al.'s (2018) revised model, Blair & Azaz (2019) and Feng & Papi (2020) examined the trichotomous model of L2 selves and the 2x2 model of future self-guides, respectively. Blair & Azaz (2019) examined the trichotomous model with L2 Arabic learners at a university in the United States. The results indicated that Ideal L2 Self had the strongest indirect effect on intended effort. While Ought-to L2 Self/Own showed a positive effect on intended effort, Ought-to L2 Self/Other yielded a negative effect. In 2020, Feng & Papi (2020) explored the future self-guides in motivational intensity and persistence with 94 students who learned Chinese as a foreign language in the United States. The results revealed that Ideal L2 Self/Own and Ought L2 Self/Own significantly predicted motivational intensity. Ideal L2 Self/Own and Ideal L2 Self/Other were positive predictors of persistence whereas Ought L2 Self/Other was a negative predictor. Further, the results indicated that different selves predicted qualitatively different motivated language learning behavior.

Concerning the revised model of future self-guides, different research results have been found in related studies. Papi et al.'s (2018) work revealed Ought-to L2 Self /Own was the

strongest predictor of motivated language learning behaviors, while Blair & Azaz (2019) and Teimouri (2017) showed that Ideal L2 Self/Own had the strongest effect on intended effort. Even though Ought-to L2 Self/Own was not shown as the strongest predictor, Ought-to L2 Self/Own showed a positive effect on intended effort in Blair & Azaz's (2019) work, and significantly predicted motivational intensity in Feng & Papi's (2020) work. Similarly, Ought-to L2 Self/Other was found to be a negative predictor in these two studies (Blair & Azaz, 2019; Feng & Papi, 2020). Furthermore, most of the related studies were conducted in the context of the United States (Papi et al., 2018; Blair & Azaz, 2019; Feng & Papi, 2020). This calls for examining the revised model in more diverse language learning settings for its validity. With this purpose in mind, the present study was conducted in the Thai context.

In addition, research on L2 motivation shows a strong language bias on global English, which calls for more research on other target languages. According to a review of Boo et al. (2015), 72.67% of the studies on L2 motivation during the past decade have taken English as the target language. Especially in Asian context, L2 motivation research is almost exclusively concerned with English (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017). It raises the question of how far current theoretical perspectives are adequate to account for motivation to learn languages other than English (Boo et al., 2015; Ushioda, 2017). Therefore, the present study includes English and Chinese as the target languages, to examine the validity of the 2x2 model of future self-guides.

Thailand has its special characteristics in foreign language education. Firstly, English has been taken as the

primary foreign language for more than a century and its importance has been highlighted in the Thai educational system (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). However, Thai students' English language proficiency is still low (Siridetkoon, 2015). This inspires people to think about the complexity when students need to learn more than one foreign language simultaneously, which is a common phenomenon in the globalized world. Secondly, along with the economic development of China and the historical connection between China and Thailand, the interaction between the two countries increased, resulting in the popularity of learning Chinese in Thailand (Tungkeunkunt, 2016). Chinese comes in second as the foreign language most studied in schools, apart from English. In Thailand, university students who choose to study in language programs need to learn at least two foreign languages (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). Based on their interests and academic achievement, students can take one language as their major and another foreign language as their minor course. Currently, the most popular combination is English and Chinese. It is, thus, interesting to explore Thai students' motivation to learn English and Chinese simultaneously.

As discussed above, concerning the problematic issue of the Ought-to L2 Self in the L2MSS, the 2x2 model of future self-guides was proposed as a revision, but this model has been under-examined in various contexts. By adopting the 2x2 model of future self-guides, the current study aims to investigate Thai university students' motivation to learn English and Chinese from the perspective of future self-guides and to enrich the literature by adding a new socio-cultural and educational context and two target languages in simultaneous learning.

## **Objectives and Research Questions**

The objectives of the present study were to examine the extent that Thai university students' (multilingual learners) motivations to learn English and Chinese are regulated by each component of future self-guides, the correlation between future self-guides and related motivated language learning behaviors and students' perceptions of their future self-guides. The following research questions were proposed.

1. To what extent is students' motivation to learn English and Chinese as major or minor subjects regulated by each component of future self-guides?
2. What are the correlations between future self-guides and motivated language learning behaviors of simultaneous English and Chinese language learners?
3. How do they perceive their future self-guides?

## **Research Methodology**

A mix-method approach was employed in the present study. Ethical approval to conduct this study was granted by the Health Science Human Research Ethics Committee, Prince of Songkla University. A questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data to measure the magnitudes of students' motivations to learn English and Chinese that were regulated by future self-guides and examine the correlation between four future selves and related motivated language learning behaviors. A semi-structured interview was employed to collect qualitative data on students' perceptions of their future self-guides. The participants were 136 students, including 64 English majors and 72 Chinese majors from sophomore to senior at a university in southern

Thailand. They studied both English and Chinese (as major or minor subjects) in the language program at the university. They had been learning English for at least 13 years. English majors had an average of 4.6 years of learning Chinese, while Chinese majors had at least 6 years experience learning Chinese. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 ( $M=20.26$ ). The participants' information is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
Participants' Information

|                                   | English Majors  | Chinese Majors |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| N of participants                 | 64              | 72             |
| Gender                            |                 |                |
| Male                              | 12              | 7              |
| Female                            | 52              | 65             |
| Age                               | 18-25 years old |                |
| Average years of learning English | 13.11           | 13.55          |
| Average years of learning Chinese | 4.61            | 6.07           |

The questionnaire was adapted from Dörnyei and Chan (2013), Huang et al., (2015), Teimouri, (2017), and Papi et al. (2018). Questionnaire items were checked by a panel of three experts in English language teaching to ensure content validity and clarity. The questionnaire was modified after conducting the pilot study. Only items with high internal consistency were kept. There were 38 items in the questionnaire, including 7 items for Ideal L2 Self/Own, 7 items for Ideal L2 Self/Other, 4 items for Ought-to L2 Self/Own, 6 items for Ought-to L2 Self/Other, and 14 items measuring students' motivated language learning behaviors. Sample items of the questionnaire are shown in Table 2. All the items were parallel concerning English and Chinese respectively. The questionnaire was designed using a six-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" with the

future self-guides items; ranging from “never true of me” to “always true of me” with the items of motivated language learning behaviors. The questionnaire was translated into Thai before it was administered online via Google Forms. The link to the questionnaire was shared with English and Chinese learners through Facebook, Line groups, or emails from July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 to August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The value of Cronbach’s Alpha of this questionnaire is 0.958.

**Table 2**

Sample Questionnaire Items

| <b>Components</b>                     | <b>Samples</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Ideal L2 Self/Own                     | As far as I am concerned, being proficient in this language will help me get a job that I like. |
| Ideal L2 Self/Other                   | My parents will be proud of me if one day I master this language.                               |
| Ought-to L2 Self/Own                  | I must learn this language well. If not, I will fail in my future career.                       |
| Ought-to L2 Self/Other                | My parents put a lot of pressure on me to learn this language.                                  |
| Motivated language Learning behaviors | I concentrate and participate actively in the classes of this language.                         |

To obtain participants’ perceptions of their future self-guides, semi-structured interviews were conducted. An invitation to take part in an interview was placed at the end of

the questionnaire. The first 15 English majors and 15 Chinese majors who agreed to participate in the interviews were recruited. The interview questions were about students' Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self from their own and other standpoints, as well as their motivated language learning behaviors. Sample questions included: Why do you learn English and Chinese? What do you want to be in the future? Is there anyone who influenced you to learn English and Chinese? The interviews were conducted from November 20th, 2020 to December 30th, 2020. Students were interviewed one by one and each interview took around 40 minutes. With the permission of the participants, all the interviews were voice-recorded. The quantitative data were analyzed for descriptive statistics (mean score and standard deviations) and Pearson correlations. To ensure reliability and validity in analyzing the interview data, the first author and an experienced co-coder worked together in the process of analysis. The interview data were transcribed and read through for sub-themes identification, and subsequently, the sub-themes were categorized into major themes.

## **Findings**

In order to examine the extent to which students' motivations to learn English and Chinese were regulated by each component of future self-guides, the mean scores of their responses to the questionnaire were calculated and the results are shown in Tables 3 and 4 for English majors and Chinese majors respectively. English majors and Chinese majors strongly agreed or agreed with the items concerning Ideal L2 Self/Own, Ideal L2 Self/Other, and Ought-to L2 Self/Own for both English and

Chinese, while they slightly agreed with the items related to Ought-to L2 Self/Other.

**Table 3**

English Majors' Responses to Each Component of Future Self-Guides

|                        | English (major) |       |                | Chinese (minor) |       |                |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|
|                        | Mean            | SD    | Scale          | Mean            | SD    | Scale          |
| Ideal L2 Self/Own      | 5.48            | 0.518 | Strongly Agree | 5.14            | 0.560 | Agree          |
| Ideal L2 Self/Other    | 5.13            | 0.796 | Agree          | 4.91            | 0.810 | Agree          |
| Ought-to L2 Self/Own   | 5.29            | 0.646 | Strongly Agree | 5.02            | 0.695 | Agree          |
| Ought-to L2 Self/Other | 4.11            | 1.259 | Slightly Agree | 3.89            | 1.204 | Slightly Agree |

Note: 1-1.83=strongly disagree; 1.84-2.67=disagree; 2.68-3.51=slightly disagree; 3.52-4.35=slightly agree; 4.36-5.19=agree; 5.20-6.00=strongly agree.

As seen in Table 3, concerning English, English majors strongly agreed with the items on Ideal L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.48) and Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.29); they agreed with the items on Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =5.13) and slightly agreed with the items on Ought-to L2 Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =4.11). As for Chinese, they agreed with the items on Ideal L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.14), Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.02), and Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =4.91); while they slightly agreed with the items on Ought-to L2 Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =3.89). In addition, for the English majors, the mean score of each component of future self-guides concerning English was higher than that of Chinese.

**Table 4**

## Chinese Majors' Responses to Each Component of Future Self-Guides

|                        | English (major) |       |                | Chinese (minor) |       |                |
|------------------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|-----------------|-------|----------------|
|                        | Mean            | SD    | Scale          | Mean            | SD    | Scale          |
| Ideal L2 Self/Own      | 5.35            | 0.536 | Strongly Agree | 5.55            | 0.419 | Strongly Agree |
| Ideal L2 Self/Other    | 5.11            | 0.539 | Agree          | 5.27            | 0.548 | Strongly Agree |
| Ought-to L2 Self/Own   | 5.23            | 0.635 | Strongly Agree | 5.38            | 0.584 | Strongly Agree |
| Ought-to L2 Self/Other | 3.97            | 0.949 | Slightly Agree | 3.99            | 1.002 | Slightly Agree |

Note: 1-1.83=strongly disagree; 1.84-2.67=disagree; 2.68-3.51=slightly disagree; 3.52-4.35=slightly agree; 4.36-5.19=agree; 5.20-6.00=strongly agree.

As shown in Table 4, concerning English, Chinese majors strongly agreed with the items on Ideal L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.35) and Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.23); they agreed with the items on Ideal Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =5.11) and slightly agreed with the items on Ought-to Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =3.97). For Chinese, they strongly agreed with the items on Ideal L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.55), Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $\bar{x}$ =5.38), and Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =5.27); They slightly agreed with the items regarding Ought-to Self/Other ( $\bar{x}$ =3.99). It can also be seen that for Chinese majors, the mean score of each component of future self-guides concerning Chinese was higher than that of English.

In sum, based on the mean scores, Ideal Self/Own was the highest for both English and Chinese languages, followed by Ought-to Self/Own, Ideal Self/Other, and Ought-to Self/Other, which means that the participants' motivations to learn English and Chinese were highly regulated by Ideal Self/Own, Ought-to Self/Own, Ideal Self/Other, and Ought-to Self/Other in rank order. Furthermore, the participants had higher motivation to learn their major than their minor language.

Tables 5 and 6 display the results of the correlations between four future self-guides and related motivated language learning behaviors of English majors and Chinese majors respectively. The results showed all four future selves positively and significantly correlated to related motivated language learning behaviors.

**Table 5**

Correlation between Future Self-Guides and Related Motivated Language Learning Behaviors of English Majors

| English Motivated Learning Behaviors |        | Chinese Motivated Learning Behaviors |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| English Ideal L2 Self/Own            | .623** | Chinese Ideal L2 Self/Own            | .576** |
| English Ideal L2 Self/Other          | .584** | Chinese Ideal L2 Self/Other          | .495** |
| English Ought-to L2 Self/Own         | .507** | Chinese Ought-to L2 Self/Own         | .452** |
| English Ought-to L2 Self/Other       | .424** | Chinese Ought-to L2 Self/Other       | .362** |

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

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

In Table 5, for English majors, Ideal L2 Self/Own was the component that was most highly correlated with motivated language learning behaviors ( $r=.623^{**}$  for English and  $r=.576^{**}$  for Chinese,  $p\leq.01$ , 2-tailed). The second component was Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $r=.584^{**}$ ,  $r=.495^{**}$  for English and Chinese respectively,  $p\leq.01$ , 2-tailed), followed by Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $r=.507^{**}$ ,  $r=.452^{**}$  for English and Chinese, respectively,  $p\leq.01$ , 2-tailed). The last component was Ought-to L2 Self/Other which significantly correlated to motivated language learning behaviors ( $r=.424^{**}$ ,  $r=.362^{**}$  for English and Chinese, respectively,  $p\leq.01$ , 2-tailed), but at a low level.

Regarding English, English Ideal Self/Own ( $r=.623^{**}$ ), Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $r=.584^{**}$ ), and Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $r=.507^{**}$ ) were correlated to English motivated learning behaviors at a moderate level ( $r>.5$ ). It indicates that English learning of the English majors was motivated by their own and significant others' hopes, as well as their own obligations, while significant others' pressure seems not to function as a powerful component compared to the other three components. Concerning Chinese, which is a minor subject for this group of participants, only Chinese Ideal L2 Self/Own ( $r=.576^{**}$ ) correlated to Chinese motivated learning behaviors at a moderated level, whereas Chinese Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $r=.495^{**}$ ), Ought-to L2 Self/own ( $r=.452^{**}$ ) and Ought-to L2 Self/Other ( $r=.362^{**}$ ) correlated to Chinese motivated learning behaviors at a low level ( $0.3<|r| \leq 0.5$ ). It indicates that participants' Chinese learning was mainly motivated by their own hopes and aspirations with a promotion focus.

**Table 6**

Correlation between Future Self-Guides and Related Motivated Language Learning Behaviors of Chinese Majors

| English Motivated Learning Behaviors |        | Chinese Motivated Learning Behaviors |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------|--------|
| English Ideal L2 Self/Own            | .604** | Chinese Ideal L2 Self/Own            | .500** |
| English Ideal L2 Self/Other          | .377** | Chinese Ideal L2 Self/Other          | .411** |
| English Ought-to L2 Self/Own         | .495** | Chinese Ought-to L2 Self/Own         | .428** |
| English Ought-to L2 Self/Other       | .326** | Chinese Ought-to L2 Self/Other       | .290** |

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

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

In Table 6, for Chinese majors, Ideal L2 Self/Own was the only component that correlated to motivated language learning behaviors ( $r=.604^{**}$  for English and  $r=.500^{**}$  for Chinese) at moderate levels. It suggests that Chinese majors were more likely to make effort to learn English and Chinese based on their own hopes and aspirations. Although, Ought-to L2 Self/Own ( $r=.495^{**}$ ,  $r=.428^{**}$  for English and Chinese, respectively), Ideal L2 Self/Other ( $r=.377^{**}$ ,  $r=.411^{**}$  for English and Chinese, respectively), and Ought-to L2 Self/Other ( $r=.326^{**}$ ,  $r=.290^{**}$  for English and Chinese, respectively) were the next components in order of strength that significantly correlated to motivated language learning behaviors, the correlations were at low levels ( $0.3 < |r| \leq 0.5$ ) or a negligible level ( $|r| \leq 0.3$ ), which means that students are less influenced by others' hopes, own obligations and others' pressure on learning English and Chinese, when compared with their own hopes and desires.

The interview data address the question of students' perceptions of their future self-guides to learn English and Chinese. The instrumental value of target languages, significant others' expectations, and perceived self-obligations were the three major themes obtained from the qualitative data analysis.

The instrumental values of English and Chinese were highlighted by Thai university students. Most of the participants mentioned that they learned English and Chinese for their bright future careers, further studies, and entertainment.

Their future career was the key reason that motivated the participants to learn English and Chinese. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned that they are guided by the bright future careers. They would like to put efforts to learn English and

Chinese to pursue their desired careers in the future. For example, English major No. 7 said:

“In the future, I want to be a cabin crew. I think English and Chinese will help me, because I know English and Chinese. If I can speak both languages frequently, I think it will make me an interesting candidate for the job...”

(English major No.7, personal communication, Dec 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Working in tourism was popular and welcomed by both English majors and Chinese majors. Many participants mentioned that they would like to work as a tour guide in a travel agency, a receptionist in a hotel, or a member of the cabin crew for an airline. In addition, working for a company was another ideal career that the participants would like to choose. They would like to get English-related or Chinese-related jobs. Some participants were interested in international online business and would like to benefit from being a language student, which can provide them an opportunity to start their own international business in Thailand or other countries. Working as a teacher of English or Chinese was also a popular choice of career for the participants. Many of them reported that they would like to be a language teacher in an international school because of high salaries and in a public school because of good welfare. Some participants said that they would like to have their own language schools.

Expecting to have a bright future in their career, some participants mentioned that they put great effort into learning English or Chinese at present because they wanted to get a

scholarship to further their study abroad in the future. A Chinese major No. 8 said having a chance to study in China motivated him to study harder.

“I want to be a Chinese teacher in a university, but I think my ability is not enough now, so I want to go to China to study further, majoring in teaching Chinese as a foreign language... Now, I want to apply for studying at Yunnan University or Peking University.”

(Chinese major No. 8, personal communication, Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

In addition, most of the participants said that they learned English and Chinese for entertainment purposes, such as, traveling abroad, enjoying English or Chinese novels, movies, and TV shows, and playing games. Here are examples which are given by English major No.3 and Chinese major No.8.

“I think the main purpose of learning English is to broaden my horizon. Deep inside, I want to travel abroad. I like traveling... My main goal, after finishing this degree, after 4 years, I will go abroad.

(English major No.3, personal communication, Dec 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020)

“I think I like Chinese very much and like listening to Chinese songs. I like writing Chinese characters. I like watching Chinese TV shows... I also play Chinese games, named Yuanshen, and the content is given in Chinese.”

(Chinese major No. 8, personal communication, Nov 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Besides the instrumental values that were perceived by the participants, students also mentioned that the purpose of learning English and Chinese was to meet significant others' expectations. The most influential others who motivated the participants to learn English and Chinese were their parents, which were mentioned many times by the participants. The following are excerpts from English majors No.2 and No.4:

“My mother works in the tourist business in Phuket. Phuket has many tourists; Chinese is important in that way... Because my mom used to tell me that she wants me to be a tour guide. She hopes that I can learn English and Chinese well.”

(English major No. 2, personal communication, Nov 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

“My father always told me that he hoped I can study English very well. He always told me he would support me to go to Britain or something like that. He wants his children to be highly educated... And he said English was important. I agree with my father.”

(English major No. 4, personal communication, Dec 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

Apart from the instrument values and significant others' expectations, students also perceived obligations to learn English and Chinese well by themselves. Influenced by their status as university students, they felt they had the responsibility to learn their subjects well. From the interview, some participants said that they pressurized themselves to learn English and Chinese. The pressure may have come from the

examinations they were going to take, the quizzes that they often had in class, and the graduation requirements, as in the English major No. 1 case:

“Now I have serious pressure in English, because the test is very hard. And some teachers are very strict. I have to pass the TOEIC or TOFEL test to prove that I am really good at English... Actually, I think, I push myself. There is no one pushing me. ”

(English major No.1, personal communication, Nov 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

In addition, some participants said they had to work hard to maintain their language ability, even though they were quite good in their self-reported grades, as mentioned in the following:

“Although I have studied in China, my Chinese is a little bit rusty after coming back to Thailand... I am also a little worried. I have to try harder to learn Chinese.”

(Chinese major No. 6, personal communication, Nov 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020)

## **Discussion**

The present study explored Thai university students' motivation to learn English and Chinese by using the 2x2 models of future self-guides. Both quantitative and qualitative data showed that the participants' motivations to learn English and Chinese were highly regulated by all four future selves and the

four future selves were significantly and positively correlated to English and Chinese motivated learning behaviors. The results also show that all four components of future self-guides were valid. More specifically, the Ought-to L2 Self/Own was shown to be a significant component which correlated to participants' motivated language learning behaviors at a moderate or near moderate level. This is opposite to some previous findings (Al-Hoorie, 2018; Csizer & Lukacs, 2010; Lamb, 2012; Teimouri, 2017) where Ought-to L2 Self was considered a questionable construct. Furthermore, in response to Papi et al.'s (2018) call for further examinations of the 2x2 model of future self-guides, the findings of the present study confirmed the validation of the model concerning English and Chinese languages in the Thai context.

For English majors, the results demonstrate that Ideal L2 Self/Own was the component that was most highly correlated with motivated language learning behaviors concerning English and Chinese, followed by Ideal L2 Self/Other, Ought-to L2 Self/Own, and Ought-to L2 Self/Other. As the importance and instrumental value of English and Chinese have been internalized by Thai university students, Ideal L2 Self/Own and Ideal L2 Self/Other were the top two components that significantly correlated to their motivated language learning behaviors at a (or near) moderate level. It means that this group of participants (English majors) was more motivated by aspirations and hopes from their own opinion and significant others'. They were more promotion-focused individuals who were more driven by advancement, growth, and accomplishment. This result was consistent with Feng & Papi's (2020) finding that Ideal L2 Self/Own and Ideal L2 Self/Other were positive

predictors of persistence. Also, Ought-to L2 Self/Own was shown as a significant component at a moderate level in the present study concerning English, which was the participants' major. This indicates that concerning their major subject, the participants' self-obligations exert an influence on their investment in learning, which is consistent with the findings of Papi et al.'s (2018), Blair & Azaz's (2019), and Feng & Papi's (2020) work.

For Chinese majors, Ideal L2 Self/Own was followed by Ought-to L2 Self/Own, Ideal L2 Self/Other, and Ought-to L2 Self/Other, in order of strength that correlated to motivated language learning behaviors concerning English and Chinese. Ideal L2 Self/Own was the only component that correlated to motivated language learning behaviors at a moderate level for this group of participants (Chinese majors). It suggests that this group of participants was more motivated by their aspirations and hopes to learn English and Chinese with a promotion focus. They were also more driven by the positive outcomes if they can learn English and Chinese well in the future. It can be seen that this finding of Chinese majors was similar to that of English majors. In addition, for English as a minor subject, Ought-to L2 Self/Own was the component that correlated to English motivated learning behaviors at a near moderate level. It indicates that this group of participants was also driven by their perceived self-obligations to learn English with a prevention focus. They would regulate their English learning behaviors in order to avoid negative outcomes. This finding was also confirmed by what Chinese majors provided in the interview. Eight out of 15 Chinese majors reported that they failed to learn English at school. Therefore, at university, they chose to major

in Chinese and minor in English and their English learning behaviors were partly regulated by their attempts to avoid failures to pass English quizzes and exams, or to graduate.

Ideal L2 Self/Own was demonstrated as the component that was most highly correlated with related motivated language learning behaviors for both English and Chinese majors, which is consistent with previous findings (Teimouri, 2017; Blair & Azaz, 2019; Feng & Papi, 2020). It indicated that the participants in the present study were more promotion-focused individuals. They were more driven by the ideal self-image and sensitive to positive outcomes. This finding was also supported by the qualitative data indicating that most of the participants learned these two languages for their future careers, further studies, or entertainment. They would like to master these two languages well for their bright future, in which the instrumental values of English and Chinese were highlighted.

Ought-to L2 Self/Own, although not shown as the strongest predictor of motivated language learning behaviors as shown in Papi et al.'s (2018) work, was still a significant component that correlated to motivated language learning behaviors at a moderate or near moderate level in the present study. This finding confirmed the validation of Ought-to L2 Self as well as the distinction of standpoints. In the interview, the participants perceived obligations and pressures in learning English and Chinese. This qualitative result supports that the Ought-to L2 Self was a valid component in the present study.

Ideal L2 Self/Other correlated to motivated language learning behaviors at a moderate level (for English majors concerning English learning only) or low levels. Ought-to L2

Self/Other correlated with motivated language learning behaviors at low or negligible levels. These findings supported the assumption in motivation research that the more-internalized motives (from own standpoint) result in higher levels of motivation than the less-internalized ones (from another standpoint). This finding is consistent with Papi et al.'s (2018) findings. Ought-to L2 Self/Other positively and significantly correlated with motivated language learning behaviors although at a low or negligible level. This finding was opposed to the findings in some previous studies (Blair & Azaz, 2019; Feng & Papi, 2020), where Ought-to L2 Self/Other was a negative predictor of intended effort. In the interview, few participants mentioned their parents or teachers put them under high pressure to learn English and Chinese in Thailand. They do not perceive strong obligations in language learning from significant others.

The findings of the present study offer some pedagogical implications for English and Chinese language teachers. As all four future selves were positively and significantly correlated to motivated language learning behaviors, which confirms the power of future self-guides, it is suggested that language teachers should encourage students to construct vivid future self-images to regulate their language learning behaviors. The instrumental values or benefits of learning the target languages should be introduced and highlighted to the students to help them set suitable personal goals. They should not hesitate to give positive feedback to students when they make any progress because students who are regulated by Ideal L2 Self/Own are more promotion-focused individuals. Last but not least, language teachers should take

individual differences into consideration as each individual may be regulated by each component of future self-guides differently. They can make a survey by using the 2x2 model of future self-guides questionnaires to find out their students' motivational orientations. In addition, based on students' personal characteristics and daily performance, teachers can also try to figure out by which component of future self-guides each individual is more driven.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the study revealed the important role of future self-guides in Thai university students' motivation to learn English and Chinese. Especially, their language learning motivations were highly regulated by their Ideal Self and Ought-to Self from their own standpoint. This also confirmed the validation of the 2x2 model of future self-guides. Moreover, the findings showed that Ideal Self/Own was the component that was most highly correlated with students' motivated English and Chinese learning behaviors. It suggests the students were more motivated by the attributes that they would ideally hope to possess in the future from their own opinion, which may provide implications for language teachers and educators to assist students more effectively.

The present study provided us with an understanding of the motivation of Thai university multilingual learners of English and Chinese from the perspective of an individual's self-concept and future self-guides. It focused on English and Chinese in the Thai context. The findings of this study could not be generalized to another context as they do not represent other

social and educational contexts and different target languages. In addition, the number of participants in the questionnaire survey and the semi-structured interviews were relatively small. A larger number of participants is suggested for further research. Furthermore, age and gender are not measured in the present study. Further studies could address these factors to see whether they are influential variables in understanding learners' motivation from the perspective of future self-guides.

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