

## Factors Affecting Attitudes of EFL Learners toward English Classes and the Moderating Effect of the Ideal L2 self

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저자 (Authors)	Park, Shinjae
출처 (Source)	<a href="#">영어영문학 24(4)</a> , 2019.11, 207-225(19 pages) <a href="#">The Journal of Mirae English Language and Literature 24(4)</a> , 2019.11, 207-225(19 pages)
발행처 (Publisher)	<a href="#">미래영어영문학회</a> THE MIRAE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE ASSOCIATION
URL	<a href="http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE09275273">http://www.dbpia.co.kr/journal/articleDetail?nodeId=NODE09275273</a>
APA Style	Park, Shinjae (2019). Factors Affecting Attitudes of EFL Learners toward English Classes and the Moderating Effect of the Ideal L2 self. <a href="#">영어영문학</a> , 24(4), 207-225
이용정보 (Accessed)	이화여자대학교 203.255.***.68 2020/05/18 03:55 (KST)

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# Factors Affecting Attitudes of EFL Learners toward English Classes and the Moderating Effect of the Ideal L2 self

Park, Shinjae\*

## I . Introduction

Recent decades have witnessed an extensive growth of research on attitudes and motivations (Lin & Warden 1998; Dörnyei 1998; Warden & Lin 2000; Yamashiro & McLaughlin 2001). For instance, Dörnyei (1998) argued that motivation is the key to success in learning and the concept of inner momentum, reason, and activator, which leads one to reach a particular purpose.

Second language acquisition is a difficult process where learners experience difficulties in attaining a high level of achievement, even when they are provided with a well-planned curriculum and teaching methods, but when there is insufficient motivation and interest. Motivational strategies used by teachers of English are likely to be influenced by their previous learning experiences—for example, by the motivations and attitudes they had when they were students in the past. If students want to teach English in the future, an ethic like professionalism may work, which will have a positive effect on their attitudes in English classes by motivating them. For that

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\* Lecturer and Researcher of English at Incheon National University, majored in Phonetics and Phonology, currently interested in Corpus studies and Education, E-mail: tlswo@naver.com

reason, it can be predicted that the attitudes toward English classes of those learners who aspire to become English teachers will be more favorable to classes than that of the students without such goals.

However, previous research focusing on learning by pre-service English teachers mostly focuses on teaching methodologies (Jung 2013). Therefore, there is a scarcity of research on motivation and attitudes to learning English among pre-service English teachers (Kim & Kim 2015) and a detailed analysis of motivation and attitude including the Ideal L2 self.

In order to discover internal (personal-related) and external (instrumental or organizational-related) factors affecting English and English learning and to better understand their roles in second language acquisition, I conducted a survey among the students majoring in English at a university in Incheon city. They were classified into groups with and without professional goals to become teachers. The purpose of this paper is to investigate motivation factors influencing on attitudes of the two groups toward English classes. In order to carry out the goal, the following research questions will be addressed.

The first question is on which motivation factors significantly affect the students' attitudes to English classes. The second one is whether there is a difference in attitudes toward English classes among the learners who aspire to become English teachers and those who do not have the goals. Finally, the third one is whether there is a difference in the motivations between these two student groups to influence such attitude.

## II. Literature Review

Second language (L2) learning motivation has been considered to be one of the most important variables that brings personal differences in the foreign language learning process and performance (Dörnyei 2006; Dörnyei & Skehan

2003; Ma & Cho 2014). In this respect, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) suggested L2 Motivational Self System. Based on his theoretical framework, which appears to be suitable for understanding learners' motivation for learning English in various contexts (Munezane 2013), numerous studies have been carried out (Tahaineh & Daana 2013).

Motivation is defined as the power to work hard to learn a language that stems from the desire to learn and the satisfaction gained through the process of learning (Gardner 1985). Motivation, as Gardner (2007) argued, plays an important role in determining effective language learning. Motivation in various aspects will inspire learners to learn a second language. According to Yashima (2002), the willingness to communicate in a second language comes from self-confidence influenced by a student's motivation.

Relying on a previous study by Gardner and Lambert (1972), Brown (2000) argued that there are two basic motivations: instrumental motivations and integrative motivations. According to Brown (2000), instrumental motivation refers to a person's desire to learn a language to achieve an important goal in life, such as translating or widening one's career. In contrast, integrated motivation is defined as the power to learn a particular language for integration, such as entering the culture of a second language or becoming a member of a group of social interchanges. Furthermore, according to Dörnyei (1994), one can differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. An intrinsically motivated learner learns a second language because of pure enjoyment of the process, while an extrinsically motivated learner is motivated by rewards, such as good grades or awards, and avoids punishment. Also, instrumentality can be related to one's idealised image of being professionally successful, while positive attitudes toward the L2 community can be related to one's idealised L2 speaking self (Dörnyei, 2005). This type of motivation is related to a sense of duty, numerous obligations, or responsibilities. L2 learning experience is related to motives concerned with the influence of

classroom experiences, such as the teacher, curriculum, learner group, or experience of success in the classroom (Higgins, 1998). Therefore, intrinsic motivation leads to a better and more successful second-language learning.

Dörnyei (2005, 2009) proposed a L2 Motivational Self System. According to this system, learners' motivations can be formed and sustained based on two types of self-image: the ideal L2 self and the ought-to L2 self. The ideal L2 self represents the learner's own use of a second language in the imaginable future. More specifically, it is indicative of how clearly a learner is imagining his or her proficient use of a second language in the future self-image s/he wants to be. The ideal L2 self can act as a powerful motivator if a student wants to reduce the gap between his/her present level or the ability to use a second language and his/her future self-image (Dörnyei 2005). By contrast, the ought-to L2 self represents what a student thinks s/he should be in learning or using a second language. This concept reflects a sense of consciousness or a sense of obligation to the people around him/her (e.g., parents, friends, teachers, etc.) or a sense of duty that means that the learner recognizes that other people value English, and that this perception can serve as the learner's motivation for learning English.

Along with studying the motivation for learning a second language, the present study focuses on the attitudes as well, which, according to previous research, can elicit a more reliable results on the participation of learners in the second language acquisition process. (Gardner & Lambert 1959, 1972; Tahaineh & Daana 2013). While there may be several types of attitudes, Taguchi, Magid, and Papi (2009) demonstrated that the motivations of the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, instrumentality, and family influence interact with the learner's attitudes toward the L2 culture and community and learning English. Attitudes toward the second language culture and community were found to be interrelated with instrumentality and positively affected the ideal L2 self, which led to motivated behavior. The attitude

toward learning English was positively influenced by the ideal L2 self, which led to a more motivated behavior. Therefore, motivations and attitude factors that emerge in the process of learning English are likely to be correlated and affect motivated behavior.

In this respect, in their study on motivation and attitudes to English and English learning at Iranian military schools, Zafarghandi and Jodai (2012) developed the Attitude of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (English version). In this survey, 40 items were classified into six categories, such as 'interest in extracurricular English', 'interest in the international community', 'perceived utility of English', 'attitude to studying English', 'personality', and 'organizational influence'. A brief description of each category is as follows: 1) Interest in extracurricular English: This category includes personnel's interests beyond classroom activities. 2) Interest in international community: Gardner and Lambert (1959) defined that it is a willingness to be like valued members of the language community. 3) Perceived utility of English: Gardner and Lambert (1959) labeled this kind of motivation as instrumental motivation; In Yoneyam's (1979) definition, instrumental motivation exists when a learner places a utilitarian value on the achievement of proficiency in the foreign language, without seeking active contact with speakers of that language. 4) Attitudes toward studying English: In Chalak and Kassaian (2010), this item came by the name of "Desire toward learning English". 5) Personality: This category incorporates concepts of 'Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). It has been defined as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986: 128). 6) Organizational influence: This category appeared in AMTB (Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, 2004) as 'parental influence.' I named this category organizational influence because of specific setting of the study, including factors like the interest of supervisors toward English learning and

the availability of different English resources, such as books, magazines, and recordings. 7) Attitudes toward English classes: It represents attitudes toward English course and English teacher in Gardner's (2004) construct.

In the present study, it was investigated the relationship between motivations and attitudes toward English and English learning, such as the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self (Dörnyei 2005), intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Dörnyei 1994), instrumental and integrative motivation (Brown 2000), and attitude to English classes. It is predicted that the Ideal L2 self would act as a moderating variable. Therefore, it is aimed to examine how it affects attitudes to English classes of the students of the English Education and English Language and Literature departments.

Figure 1 shows the basic research model used in the present study. This study will be focused on motivations and attitudes to English and learning English as independent variables.

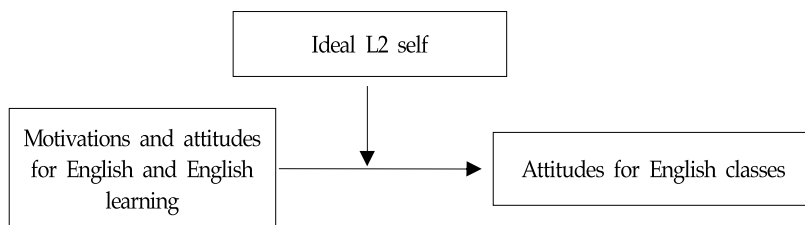


Figure 1. Basic model for the moderating effect of the Ideal L2 self

### III. Method

#### 3.1 Participants

A total of 39 (13 male and 26 female) students from the departments of EE and ELL at a university in Incheon participated in the present study (see

Table 1). The average age of the students from the EE department was 22.1 years, while that of the students from the ELL department was 23.9 years. Also, both groups took English major-related classes taught by the present author. Furthermore, out of 20 students from the EE department, all (100%) decided to become English teachers, on the other hand all students in the ELL department did not plan to become English teachers in the future according to the results of the survey.

Table 1. Sample population according to their major

Categories		EE	ELL
Sex	Male	6 (30.0%)	7 (36.8%)
	Female	14 (70.0%)	12 (63.2%)
Age		22.1	23.9
Intention for English teacher		20 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total (students)		20	19

### 3.2 Instrument

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (Gardner 2004: AMTB) and the questionnaire items from Zafarghandi and Jodai (2012) were used. Due to the fact that the setting and context of foreign language learning at a university in Korea were very different from other educational settings, some questions were revised and reorganized. The questionnaire used in this survey consisted of 38 items with responses ranging from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’ (see Appendix A).

### 3.3 Procedures

The 38 items questionnaires were distributed to 39 students who voluntarily applied through public advertisement which was limited only to two majors on campus. The students who applied received paper questionnaires, completed



them within 20 minutes, and submitted directly to a language lab. As the survey was completely confidential, no one except the author would see the completed questionnaires. After collecting completed questionnaire item responses from all participants, each response was converted to a numerical format by assigning weights of 1,2,3,4, or 5, while the reverse-weighted item was converted to a reverse scale.

### **3.4 Analyses**

The data collected from the survey were analyzed with SPSS 25.0 for the following statistical procedures: descriptive statistics, factor analysis, regression analysis, and t-test. First, the survey responses of the students who participated in the study were analyzed by factor analysis, which divided them into six independent factors and one dependent factor. Then a regression analysis was performed to find variables that affected the attitudes to English classes by the two groups. Next, I conducted a t-test to find out if there was a difference in the English class attitudes between the two groups, as well as to find out if there was a significant difference between the two groups in the independent variables that, as indicated by the regression analysis, affected the dependent variables.

## **IV. Results**

### **4.1 Factor analysis**

Since the results of factor analysis showed that the number of items on the questionnaire (38) was too high, there were some cases that variables with weak correlation formed a single category. That is, the correlation coefficient

between some variables within a category was found to be less than 0.7. Thus, the statistical analysis was repeated to exclude variables with the correlation coefficient of 0.7 or less. Then, 18 variables were extracted, as the correlation coefficient between each factor and the configuration variables was above 0.7, and the results were separated by six factors (five independent variables, one dependent variable) shown below (see Table 2).

Table 2. Results of factor analysis and reliability test

Items	Integrative motivation	Personality	Attitude toward English learning	Instrumental motivation	Organizational influence	Cronbach $\alpha$
10	.854					.878
3	.827					
7	.817					
9	.763					
8	.733					
28		.787				.770
26		.758				
29		.715				
11		.647				
19			.822			.714
16			.774			
21			.630			
2				.917		.775
1				.897		
15					.777	.771
32					.659	
dependent variable						.748
Attitude for English classes: items						
KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin)						.535
Bartlett' Test of Sphericity						344.729
						$p(df)$ .00(120)

#### 4.1.1 Integrative motivation

This category consisted of questions about positive attitudes toward the

English-speaking community, such as questions about feelings about English-speaking people (item 8), interest in English-speaking countries (item 7), as well as travel, study, and stay in English-speaking countries (item 9, 3, 10). Therefore, this category was named integrative motivation. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  score was .878 with high internal reliability.

#### 4.1.2 Personality

This category incorporated concepts of Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety (FLCA). Horwitz, et al. (1986) defined it as a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process. A study by Dewaele and Thirtle (2009) showed that young teenagers with high levels of FLCA were significantly more likely to drop languages when considering future module choices. The 4 items in this category explored how Korean students rated their own personality. Items 11, 26, 28 and 29 were questions about students' outgoing personality. This category also appeared as personality and extroversion categories in Yashima (2002). The internal reliability of this category was .770.

#### 4.1.3 Attitude toward English learning

This category was derived from Zafarghandi and Jodai (2012) study on the attitudes and motivation of Iranian university students toward English. According to Oxford and Shearin (1994), attitude is one of the six factors that was found to impact motivation in L2 learning. Oxford and Shearin (1994) defined attitude as sentiments toward the learning community and the target language. This category consisted of interest in learning English (items 19, 21) and had an internal reliability of .714.

#### 4.1.4 Instrumental motivation

This category focused on the reasons for learning English for instrumental

purposes. Items 1 and 2 asked about the desire to use English as an instrument to understand English popular music, TV programs, movies, and the other multimedia. The internal reliability of this category was .775.

4.1.5 Organizational influence

Following Zafarghandi and Jodai's (2012), it's named as organizational influence. This category included factors like the importance of working in an organization to be able to use English (item 15) or the availability of different English resources including books, magazines, and recordings (item 32). The internal reliability of this category was .771.

4.1.6 Attitude for English classes

This category captured attitudes toward English course and English teacher in Gardner's (2004) construct. Item 36 asked about the preference for English classes, while item 38 focused on English instructors. The internal reliability of this category was .748.

The more detailed model was derived through repeated factor analysis (See Figure 2).

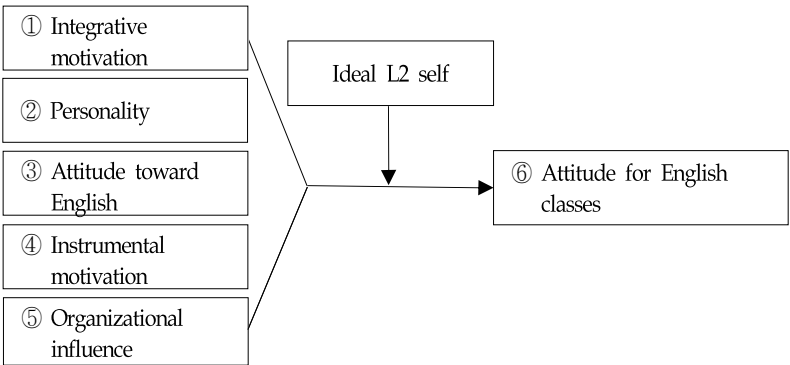


Figure 2. Model for the moderating effect of the Ideal L2 self

4.2 Variables affecting learner’s attitude toward English classes

The results of regression analysis showed that the factors that significantly affected the attitude for English classes were personality, attitude toward English learning, and organizational influence.

Table 3. Results of stepwise regression analysis

Independent Dependant		B	SE	β	t	p	R <sup>2</sup>
⑥ Attitude for English classes	(coefficient)	3.679	.110		.000	1.000	
	② Personality	.386	.111	.460	3.472	.001	.212
	③ English learning	.246	.111	.294	2.216	.033	.298
	⑤ Organization	.246	.111	.294	2.215	.033	.385

With the non-standardized coefficient, the following significant regression equation was derived (F: 7.291, *p*=.001)

Attitude for English classes = 3.679 + 0.386 (②) + 0.246 (③) + 0.246 (⑤)<sup>1)</sup>

The standardized coefficients showed that factor ② was the most influential to the dependent variable, followed by ③ and ⑤ (*p*=0.33). With R<sup>2</sup> of 38.5%, the regression equation accounted for the explanatory power of 38.5% for the dependent variable.

4.3 Comparison of Major Variables

4.3.1 Comparison of dependent variable

1) ②, ③, and ⑤ represent Personality, Attitudes toward English learning, and Organizational influence, respectively (See Figure 2).

Table 4. Difference test between the dependent variables of the two groups

Dependent factors	Mean		SD		t(df)	p
	EE	ELL	EE	ELL		
⑥	4.05	3.29	.74162	.76948	3.143(37)	.003

The average English class attitude of EE was 4.05, while that of ELL was 3.29. A significant difference was observed in the mean scores between these two groups. Since the probability ( $p$ ) turned out to be .003, it was able to be concluded that the English class attitudes of EE and ELL students were significantly different.

#### 4.3.2 Comparison of independent variables

Table 5. Difference test between the independent variables of the two groups

Independent factors	Mean		SD		t(df)	p
	EE	ELL	EE	ELL		
②	3.45	2.97	.75481	.70166	2.038(37)	.049
③	2.60	2.86	.55777	.44881	-1.596(37)	.119
⑤	3.98	3.58	.81878	.80386	1.523(37)	.136

EE's mean score of ② factor was 3.45, while ELL's mean score was 2.97. Since the probability value for each of these two groups was shown to be significant at .049, the factors in EE and ELL could be evaluated to differ significantly. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between the two groups, since factors ③ and ⑤ had higher probability values than 0.05 ( $p=.119$ ;  $p=.136$ , respectively). Thus, it was revealed that the personality scores differed significantly between the groups depending on the presence of the Ideal L2 self.

## V. Conclusion

This study investigated motivations and attitudes to English and English learning among pre-service English teachers. A 38-item survey on the attitudes and motivations was conducted to the students in the English education and English Language and Literature departments at a university in Incheon. The results of factor analysis discovered six factors: ought-to L2 self, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, personality, organizational influence, and attitude to English classes. Then the impact of the ideal L2 self on the attitudes to English classes was investigated depending on groups. The findings of the analyses can be summarized as follows.

First, stepwise regression was conducted to observe the effects of motivation and attitude factors related to English and English learning on the attitude to English classes. The results showed that personality, attitude toward English learning, and organizational influence are main motivators that affect students' attitudes to English classes. Second, I found a statistically significant difference between English education and English Language and Literature students' attitudes to English classes. The goal of becoming an English teacher in the future had a positive effect on the attitudes to English classes, as it worked as an ideal L2 self. Third, there was a significant difference between the two groups in personality among the dependent variables that influenced the attitude for English classes. Said differently, an extroverted personality factor (where more extrovert students were more to be willing to voluntarily make presentations in class and were less afraid of being wrong) had a positive effect on English class attitudes.

The results of the present study are meaningful in that they underscore the importance of encouraging the ideal L2 self to improve the attitudes to English classes. The statistical differences in the attitudes to English classes

between pre-service English teachers and the other group of students highlight the importance of the ideal L2 self. The pre-service English teachers' future self-image of fluently teaching in English creates a positive attitude to current English classes as well. Ideal L2 self can act as a powerful motivator if a student wants to reduce the gap between his/her present level or the ability to use a second language and his/her future self-image (Dörnyei 2005). This conclusion may be actively referred to in English education institutions. Specifically, students' attitudes to English classes can be improved by having learners set up learning goals that suit for their situations, and by devising ways to inspire them to learn. Also, among the factors that positively affect classroom attitudes, there was the factor of extrovert personality. It can be said to be on the same line as the study of Dewaele and Thirtle (2009). They asserted that it is crucial to give learners not just linguistic but also psychological support to help them overcome their anxiety which is related to the personality.

However, since it remains ambiguous whether more extrovert students chose to major in English education at college, or whether their personalities became more extroverted during studying (and in the hope of becoming English teachers), this factor requires further research in the future.

<Incheon National University>

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<Abstract>

## Factors Affecting Attitudes of EFL Learners toward English Classes and the Moderating Effect of the Ideal L2 self

Park, Shinjae  
(Incheon National University)

The present study aims to investigate the attitudes to English classes among the students majoring in English Education (EE) and English Language and Literature (ELL) in the EFL environment and the motivations that affect these attitudes. While both student groups are majoring in English, only the EE students were hoping to become English teachers in the future. Therefore,

it was analyzed the difference between the attitudes of the students of the two groups toward English classes. This study used a questionnaire based on motivation provided by Gardner (2004) and several new concepts proposed in previous SLA studies. The results of regression analysis demonstrated the differences in the motivation factors between the two groups. The most important finding of this study was that there were differences in the attitudes to English classes between the two student groups according to the Ideal L2 self, as well as differences in motivation factors affecting those attitudes. The present study concludes with a discussion of implications of our results for further research.

Key words : learning motivation, Motivational Self System, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, Ideal L2 self, attitude

Received: September 25, 2019

Reviewed: November 24, 2019

Accepted: November 27, 2019