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Motivations for Learning Korean in Vietnam:

L2 Selves and Regulatory Focus Perspectives

## **Abstract**

Although contextual influences on L2 motivation have been widely acknowledged, studies of underrepresented learners of less-commonly-taught languages have been extremely rare. To fill this gap, this study aimed to promote the local understanding of motivation among Vietnamese learners of Korean within the theoretical framework of L2 selves and regulatory focus. In particular, this study qualitatively explored L2 selves through an open-ended questionnaire and developed a measure of L2 regulatory focus, outlining the distinct motivational strategies associated with the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. The participants completed a survey consisting of the open-ended ideal and ought-to L2 selves and closed-ended regulatory focus scales. The promotion- and prevention-instrumentality scales were tested for their applicability to the learner population. Additionally, the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour scales were created and validated through statistical analysis with the thematically coded L2 selves. The results showed the strong emphasis on intrapersonal and career domains of the L2 selves. Theoretical, practical, and policy implications are discussed.

**Key words:** L2 Korean, Motivation, Mixed Method, LOTEs (languages other than English), the ideal L2 self, the ought-to L2 self

In the past half century, major second language (L2) motivational theories have been developed mainly based on Global English (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009) or L2 English or French in bilingual context (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & Lambert, 1972), possibly due to easy access to the learner population. Accordingly, contemporary L2 motivation research thus far has been highly skewed towards learners of Global English (Boo et al., 2015). In recent years, however, there has been growing interest in the contextual and cultural specificity unique to languages other than English (LOTES; Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017). For example, *The Modern Language Journal* published a special issue for LOTE motivation in diverse settings (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017). Although LOTE motivation research may not necessarily produce generalisable results, it has not only expanded the research population but also provided important theoretical insights from the perspectives of socio-contextual specificity of LOTES. In many countries, studying LOTES can be a marked choice in the sense that proficiency in the language presumably has only moderate instrumental value compared to Global English, and is thus considered less useful. As Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) pointed out, however, LOTE learners often have personalised reasons for the chosen language, whilst learning Global English has become a default school subject for non-English speakers (e.g., Dörnyei et al., 2006; Kim, 2017).

Another notable difference between LOTES and Global English is the presence of the L2 community. Due to globalization, English has lost its tie to a specific group of people who used to have ownership of the language. Instead, the advent of English as a *lingua franca* has led to notions of international posture or global citizenship (Yashima, 2009) as the imagined community of Global English. Compared to Global English, LOTE learners have been found to attach themselves to a broad spectrum of the L2 community, ranging from a community of L2

speakers geologically confined to the country of the language (e.g., MacIntyre et al., 2017) to plurilingual citizenship not restricted to the target language (e.g., Busse, 2017; Ushioda, 2017).

In the European context, motivation for LOTEs is not necessarily tied to being a competent user of the target language. Rather, European learners were found to envision themselves as intelligent and educated plurilingual citizens (Busse, 2017; Henry & Thorsen, 2018). Aligned with this trend, Lanvers (2016, 2017) proposed the concept of the ideal multilingual self, rooted in rebellious reaction against the monoglot culture in the UK, to account for motivation beyond the target language and community. However, the notion of the ideal multilingual self may not necessarily be applicable in other LOTE learning contexts. For example, LOTE learners in Asia have shown strong interests in the target language culture, fondness towards the target language itself, cultural affinity between the target and native languages (e.g., Huang & Feng, 2019; Nikitina & Furuoka, 2019; Zheng et al., 2019), or the effects of geographical proximity (Humphreys & Miyazoe-Wong, 2007). In addition, perceived attributes of the target language speakers were found to be an important component of LOTE motivation; for Chinese learners of Japanese language, people's appearance (e.g., well-groomed) and personality (e.g., attention to details) were often mentioned as a motivation for learning Japanese (Huang & Feng, 2019). The findings of previous research call attention to the specificity of target languages, learner populations, and local contexts where research is conducted. Motivation for L2 Korean, which is the focus of this study, has unique components specific to the language, mainly related to the pop culture.

### **Motivation for L2 Korean**

Over the last few decades, the demand for Korean language learning has been growing faster than ever due in part to the advent of the *Korean wave*, which refers to “the phenomenal

success of Korean cultures in overseas markets” (Choi, 2015, p. 33). The popularity of Korean pop culture (K-pop) has been found to be a major component of motivation for Korean language learning. Chan and Chi (2010) factor-analysed questionnaire items regarding motivation for Korean learning among university students in Singapore. K-pop emerged as the first factor, followed by career, achievement, academic exchange, and foreign languages and cultures, suggesting that K-pop is the most significant component of motivation. It is worth noting that the participants were students who chose to enrol in the Korean language module as an elective, and were thus presumably less committed to learning the L2 than those who major in Korean language and culture.

In the Malaysian context, Nikitina and Furouka (2019) explored the images of Korea and Korean people among undergraduates who study Korean. The results showed that cultural products, such as K-pop and drama, were most frequently mentioned, along with food and cosmetics. Appearance (i.e., good-looking people, plastic surgery) and attributes (e.g., politeness) were also often mentioned. Only a few responses were related to politics and economy (e.g., North Korea, Samsung). Although the stereotypical images of Korea and Korean people may not be directly linked to L2 motivation, they may reflect reasons for choosing to study L2 Korean.

Despite K-pop products serving as motivators and learning tools for L2 Korean, it is questionable whether interest in modern Korean culture is sustained throughout the language learning process in the long run. Phuong and Bac (2015) found that many Vietnamese students who are enrolled in private or community-based language institutions do not continue studying Korean and that those who major in Korean language and culture have long-term commitment, presumably career-related goals in mind. This study aims to examine how Vietnamese learners

envision themselves in the future as L2 Korean users and what types of motivated behaviour they exert towards future-oriented L2 selves.

### **Research context: Vietnamese learners of L2 Korean**

The number of L2 Korean learners in Vietnam has been growing rapidly since K-pop products were first introduced in the late 1990s (Chang, 2016). Although the Korean wave played a significant role in the rapid increase of the learner population, the motivation for learning it is more closely related to the economic growth and industrialisation of Vietnam (Kim, 2016). The economic structure in Vietnam has dramatically shifted from centralised control to market economy since reform measures known as *doi moi* were implemented in the mid-1980s. The economic revolution opened channels that attracted global investors, leading to the influx of foreign workers and companies. South Korea has become the leading investor in Vietnam, contributing to economic growth, employment generation, and technology transfers with steady and active support from the governments of both South Korea and Vietnam (Oh & Mah, 2017).

In response to the internationalisation of industry in Vietnam, the importance of foreign language skills has been acknowledged by its government. The Ministry of Education and Training implemented the National Foreign Languages Project scheme for the 2008–2020 period to produce a labour force suited to the international industrialisation of the country (Nguyen, 2017). According to this policy, university graduates are required to pass the B1 threshold for graduation; however, most of them fail to reach the threshold (Vietnamnet, 2018). Despite large-scale effort for foreign language proficiency, the policy was doomed to fail due to the lack of proper English teacher training and the old-fashioned pedagogy, as admitted by the Ministry (VBN, 2016). The national policy was heavily focused on Global English rather than LOTEs;

however, the standardised requirement of language proficiency is reflected in LOTE learning and teaching in higher education context.

Korean degree programmes were launched in interdisciplinary departments such as East Asian studies or modern languages at prestigious universities in Vietnam in the 1990s. Since then, due to the growing number of students and continued support from South Korea, they have been developed as independent programmes. In this study, three universities in Hanoi were selected as research sites: Hanoi University, the University of Languages and International Studies, and the University of Social Sciences and Humanities. The Korean degree programmes are competitive, attracting many students who have strong academic profiles, due in part to the high reputation of the universities and the popularity of Korean language and culture. The pressure for academic success and language proficiency is significantly high as students are required to pass the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK) Level 5. The linguistic competence required at that level includes language skills needed for academic and professional discourse on unfamiliar topics such as politics, economics, society, and culture (TOPIK, n. d.).

The intensive learning environment and high expectation for L2 proficiency influence learner motivation in the particular context. The linguistic capital gain expected from L2 Korean proficiency includes a wide range of life domains such as Korean cultural products, well-paid occupations, or opportunities for studying abroad in Korea. To reach the desired proficiency associated with various life tasks, L2 learners are likely to exert a broad spectrum of motivated behaviour, for example, studying for exams and participating in the L2 community by practicing its culture or working with Koreans. To explore the context-specific yet diverse motivation for L2 Korean in Vietnam, this study adopts L2 motivational self system (L2MSS) and regulatory focus theories, which account for the motivational process towards the future L2 selves.



## **Theoretical framework: L2MSS and regulatory focus**

The L2MSS and regulatory focus theories are interrelated (Figure 1). Whilst the L2MSS focuses on the future images of the L2 self that function as a goal, the regulatory focus theory explains the motivational processes towards the future-oriented self. The original model of L2MSS has three components: the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009). First, the ideal L2 self emphasises the sense of one's own self following the desired L2 proficiency, embracing existing concepts such as integrativeness (Gardner, 1985) and imagined community (Norton, 2000). Second, the ought-to L2 self in the original version of the L2MSS has been treated as attributes imposed by significant others or external factors that entail responsibilities or duties. Third, L2 learning experience concerns temporarily situated motives related to immediate learning environment, such as the effects of peer interaction, curriculum, or learning materials. In sum, the ideal and ought-to L2 selves are the mental representations of future self-guides which influence or reflect temporary L2 learning experience as they evoke specific motivational inclinations or strategies.

In theory, the ideal and ought-to L2 selves could be the same goal, for example, being a fluent speaker in L2, but the motivated predilections triggered by the ideal and ought-to L2 selves could be quite different, involving promotion and prevention focus (Higgins, 1998). Promotion focus involves sensitivity to the presence or absence of positive outcomes. For example, getting a good grade induces approach inclination towards the goal. In contrast, prevention focus involves sensitivity to negative outcomes, for example, failing an exam, and it induces avoidance inclination from the negative outcome. The concept of promotion and prevention focus was initially adopted in L2 motivation research to elucidate positive and negative aspects of instrumentality (Taguchi et al., 2009). A learner may be motivated for higher

education opportunities in the L2 community (i.e., promotion-instrumentality), or s/he may seek to avoid poor marks in L2 classes (i.e., prevention-instrumentality).

Promotion and prevention focus can also be applied to L2 use (Papi et al., 2019). Eager L2 use (i.e., promotion focus) represents “L2 learning/use strategies that the learner employs to maximise the presence and minimize the absence of positive outcomes,” whereas vigilant L2 use (i.e., prevention focus) represents “L2 learning/use strategies that the learner uses to minimize the presence and maximize the absence of negative outcomes” (p. 346). L2 performance is combination of approaching positive and avoiding negative outcomes. L2 speakers try to convey meaning, but at the same time they may try not to make errors and look incompetent (Han & McDonough, 2018). These seemingly ambivalent desires may take place concurrently on a momentary basis in L2 performance, or they may be fixed motivational tendencies, as shown by Papi et al. (2019).

Considering the regulatory focus theory, learners with the ought-to L2 self orientation may be more prone to avoid possible negative results, for example, trying not to skip classes to avoid a bad grade. The ideal L2 self gives rise to eager approaching strategies such as active participation in class. However, the existing measures of motivated behaviour are promotion-focused and structured around approach strategies, rather than focusing on what learners try not to do to avoid failure (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009). As rightfully criticised by many L2 motivation researchers (e.g., Papi & Teimouri, 2014; Papi et al., 2019; Teimouri, 2017), the lack of prevention-focused items on L2 motivated behaviour scales might be the reason for the inconclusive findings of previous studies that examined the relationships between the ought-to L2 self and motivated behaviour (e.g., Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Islam et al., 2013; Kormos et al., 2011). To fill the gap in existing studies, regulatory focus should be applied to help identify a

broad range of goal-pursuit behaviour in L2 learning and ensure face validity of the motivated behaviour construct.

### **L2 Selves and Motivation Measures in the LOTE Context**

The previous studies that adopted regulatory focus to motivational constructs showed construct validity by correlation with the L2 selves (Taguchi et al., 2009), factor analysis (Papi et al., 2019) or group-based comparison with the L2 selves (Papi & Teimouri, 2014). Since regulatory focus was theoretically grounded in ideal and ought selves, the construct validity of L2 regulatory focus can be ensured through statistical association with the L2 selves. However, due to the socio-cultural context of research population, adapting widely used questionnaire scales for specific learner populations may create conflicting issues. Tailoring questionnaire items requires intuitive judgement of the local contexts, but at the same time the tailored items need to remain compatible with the original scales. In a research synthesis paper, Mendoza and Phung (2019) criticised the lack of static transparency and construct validity reports from past L2MSS studies in the context of LOTEs. Cronbach's alpha has often been reported as a measure of reliability, but the construct validity of questionnaires has rarely been reported or mentioned. Whilst statistical rigour needs to be maintained in quantitative research, a particular challenge of developing the L2 selves and motivational measures in LOTEs is to make them relevant to the target context. Questionnaire items of L2 motivational constructs often require modification according to the context, in which case the decision-making often depends on researchers' intuition.

To resolve the conflicting issues of ensuring construct validity and applicability of a scale-based measure, factor analysis may be a useful technique. Through factor analysis, the observed number of questionnaire items is reduced to latent factors based on statistical

commonalities, and a latent factor represents a single construct. Additionally, factor analysis can also be used to test the applicability of questionnaire items for the chosen learner population since it provides a statistical basis for modification of a scale-based measure. Selection or addition of questionnaire items is, to some extent, dependent on a researcher's intuition or understanding of the local context, but statistical methods can be used in complementary ways for decision-making.

An alternative approach to address context-specificity of the L2 selves and motivation is to adopt qualitative open-ended measures, such as *who do you like to be* or *who do you think you ought to be*, to elicit the thematic content of selves (e.g., Cesario et al., 2004). A well-established coding system for thematic content of selves includes the following categories: intrapersonal, interpersonal, career, school-related activities/education, extracurricular activities, attainment of material goods, and health-related selves (e.g., Oyserman & Markus, 1990, Unemori et al., 2004). The thematic content categories are more generic than the L2 selves. However, where L2 is used as a means of social participation, the L2 selves should be linked to various domains of life tasks. Although not all the coding schemes from psychology literature are applicable to the L2 selves (e.g., health), most of the thematic content is relevant to intensive L2 learning where the target language is considered as linguistic and cultural capital. Depending on research locations and participants, the coding categories may be modified. For example, Nakamura (2019) modified the thematic categories into four—interpersonal, education, career, and leisure—to account for L2 Japanese self in the Australian context.

Additionally, the thematic configuration of L2 selves can be used to quantitatively test construct validity of a scale-based L2 motivation-related measure. A typical way of validating a new construct is to test statistical association with other scale variables. In the case of nominal

variables, such as the thematic domains of the L2 selves, group-based analysis of the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour scales may substitute for linear statistics. Since the validity of group differences can be tested by comparing them against other variables (Alexander & Murphy, 1999), the construct validity of motivational constructs (e.g., promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour) can potentially be supported by statistical differences between the groups of different motivational profiles in terms of the configurations of thematic L2 selves.

### **Research Questions**

This study explores motivational profiles among Vietnamese learners of L2 Korean who major in Korean language and culture at three prestigious universities in Hanoi, within the theoretical framework of the L2 motivational self system and regulatory focus. Based on the sociocultural context in Vietnam—the foreign language policy, industrialisation, and cultural products of K-pop—learning L2 Korean is likely to entail a sense of hope and aspiration, and at the same time high pressure and responsibilities. The ideal and ought-to L2 selves can shed light on the different dimensions of the L2 self and tap into the various life domains that are relevant to the learner population. The different types of L2 selves are likely to be associated with different motivational predilections, and regulatory focus theory is adopted to identify the relationships. Based on the theoretical framework and research context, the study proposes the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the thematic categories of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves prevalent among L2 Korean learners in Vietnam?

RQ2: Are the promotion- and prevention-instrumentality scales applicable to the learner population?

RQ3: Is the construct validity of promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour supported through factor analysis and group-based analysis with the thematic L2 selves?

## **Method**

### **Participants**

To resolve the research questions, a self-administered, paper-based survey was conducted. A total of 533 undergraduates majoring in Korean studies participated in the study on a voluntary basis (age  $Mean = 20.05$ ,  $SD = 1.46$ ; Female  $N = 495$ , Male  $N = 20$ , unknown  $N = 18$ ). All of them were native speakers of Vietnamese, and the undergraduate programmes required all students to pass the advanced level of the standardised L2 Korean test (i.e., TOPIK) before graduating the programmes.

### **Materials and Procedure**

The materials included open-ended questionnaire for the ideal and ought-to L2 selves and the close-ended one for L2 regulatory focus. The open-ended measure was purposely used to elicit thematic content of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. The ideal L2 self was measured by listing four things they would like to do in the future (*Imagine yourself reaching your goals as a Korean speaker in 10 years. What would you like to do with Korean language proficiency?*), and the ought-to L2 self was measured by listing four expectations from others on their L2 learning (*Regarding your Korean learning, what expectation do people around you have on you?*).

The close-ended items consisted of statements anchored with a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly agree*; 5 = *strongly disagree*), designed to measure promotion- and prevention-instrumentality, and promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour. The promotion- and prevention-instrumentality scales were adopted from Taguchi et al. (2009), and the motivated behaviour scales were developed in this study (see Table 2 and Table 3 for the final items).

The original questionnaire items were created in English by the author and scrutinised by a team of experts in applied linguistics or psychology to ensure face validity. The English version of the questionnaire and instruction was translated to Vietnamese and back-translated to English for cross-validation. The different versions of the translation were compared by two native Vietnamese speakers. For readability and clarity, the final version of Vietnamese translation was piloted with four Vietnamese undergraduates in Hanoi. During this process, some items were modified or deleted.

The survey data was collected for approximately 20 minutes in intact Korean classes after getting permission from the three universities. The author distributed the consent form and questionnaire and gave oral instructions in Korean and the module instructors translated them to Vietnamese, when necessary. On a voluntary basis, the participants turned in the signed consent form and the questionnaire to the author. The questionnaire did not require a participant's name to ensure anonymity. The instructors left the classrooms whilst the participants completed the questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis**

To answer the first research question as to the thematic content of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, the answers to the open-ended L2 selves questions were thematically coded, following the coding categories used by Unemori et al. (2004). Under each theme, its presence or absence was dummy-coded as 1 for presence and 0 for absence for each participant. For example, if a participant mentioned high salary, the response was coded as monetary reward (See Table 1 for example responses). For interrater reliability, 10% of the data was coded by an independent rater. The author and the rater independently coded the same data set, and the mutual agreement rate was 95.0%.

Regarding the second research question of the applicability of promotion- and prevention-instrumentality, the questionnaire items for promotion- and prevention-instrumentality from Taguchi et al. (2009) were tested by principal component analysis (PCA). Prior to this, the data was tested for multicollinearity and factorability, estimated by the inter-correlations of the items and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy. Eigenvalue = 1.0 was determined as the cut-off threshold for components, and scree plots were used as supplementary sources to determine meaningful components. Items with communality value or factor loading under .3 were excluded following the guideline of Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). To identify components, Promax oblique rotation method was selected because the promotion and prevention constructs are supposed to be correlated to some extent (Papi & Teimouri, 2014), consistent with the claim that psychological constructs are unlikely to be orthogonal (Kline, 2014). The final scales from the results of PCA were tested for internal consistency.

The third research question regarding the construct validity of promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour was tested through PCA and chi-square analysis with the thematic content of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. The PCA on the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour scales followed the same method and procedure as the promotion- and prevention-instrumentality scales. For the chi-square analysis, the participants were classified into the promotion- and prevention-motivated groups: they were median-split by the subtraction scores of the sum of promotion-motivated behaviour from the sum of prevention-motivated behaviour. The two groups of promotion- and prevention-motivated behavioural tendencies were compared on the frequency of the thematic content of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves.



## Results

### **RQ1: What are the thematic categories of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves prevalent among the L2 Korean learners in Vietnam?**

First, the ideal and ought-to L2 selves showed similar content but different frequencies of each theme, as displayed in Table 1. The most frequent content of the ideal L2 self was intrapersonal domain (38.3%), followed by career (25.4%) and interpersonal (9.7%), whereas the distribution of the ought-to L2 self showed more variety in the frequency of the thematic content. Career was the most frequent (22.9%), followed by language (15.1%), intrapersonal self (13.8%), monetary reward (11.4%), and education (11.1%). Thematic categories that showed frequency of less than 5% of the total were classified as *other*. As presented in Table 1, the common responses for the ideal L2 self were: *I would like to be a confident person* (intrapersonal), *I would like to marry a Korean man* (interpersonal), *I would like to work at Samsung* (career), *I would like to be a fluent Korean speaker* (language), *I would like to have a high salary* (monetary reward), and *I would like to go study abroad in Korea* (education). With regards to the ought-to L2 self, the common responses were: *I ought to take care of my family* (interpersonal), *I ought to be an intelligent person* (intrapersonal), *I ought to be financially independent* (monetary reward), *I ought to have high proficiency in Korean* (language), *I ought to get a good job at a Korean company* (career), and *I ought to study hard to get good marks in Korean* (study).

### **RQ2: Are the promotion- and prevention-instrumentality scales applicable to learners in the L2 Korean context in Vietnam?**

The applicability of promotion and prevention-instrumentality to L2 Korean context in Vietnam was tested by PCA. As shown in Table 2, prevention-instrumentality was found to be

the first component (initial  $\lambda = 4.69$ , explained variance = 39.1 %), followed by promotion-instrumentality (initial  $\lambda = 2.38$ , explained variance = 19.9 %). The internal consistency of the promotion-instrumentality scale was  $\alpha = .80$  and the prevention-instrumentality scale was  $\alpha = .89$ . Therefore, the promotion- and prevention-instrumentality constructs were applicable for Vietnamese learners of L2 Korean. In this context, the prevention-instrumentality component had double explanatory power than the promotion-instrumentality component. The component correlation was .31, showing the independency of the two constructs. As noted above, psychological constructs are hardly completely orthogonal and small but significant correlation coefficients are often found among L2 motivational constructs such as the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self (e.g., Taguchi et al., 2009). The PCA results and small to medium component correlation coefficients suggest that the promotion- and prevention-instrumentality are fairly independent (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

**RQ3: Is the construct validity of promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour supported by factor analysis and group-based analysis of the thematic L2 selves?**

The construct validity of L2 promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour was supported by the results of PCA on the questionnaire items. Table 3 shows the final items of the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour scales. Similar to the promotion- and prevention-instrumentality scales, prevention-motivated behaviour was found to be the first component (initial  $\lambda = 3.20$ , explained variance = 45.7 %) followed by the promotion-motivated behaviour component (initial  $\lambda = 1.14$ , explained variance = 16.3 %). The internal consistency showed adequate reliability, following Dörnyei and Csizér (2012): for prevention-motivated behaviour,  $\alpha = .78$ , and for promotion-motivated behaviour,  $\alpha = .77$ . The component correlation was .49.

To validate the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour constructs, the two groups of participants with promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour were compared in terms of the frequency of the thematic content of their ideal and ought-to L2 selves. Promotion and prevention focus are supposed to be associated with the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, respectively, based on the theoretical assumption that they are distinct motivational predilections of the L2 selves. Therefore, the construct validity of promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour could be supported if the two groups of learners showed different patterns of the thematic prevalence of the L2 selves. The group differences were tested through chi-square analysis with the thematic domains of intrapersonal, career, monetary reward, and language, which were frequent in the ideal and ought-to L2 selves.

The chi-square analysis showed a significant difference between the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour groups in the monetary reward theme of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves, such that more people in the promotion-motivated behaviour group mentioned the theme as their ideal L2 self than in the prevention-motivated behaviour group [ $\chi^2(1, N = 453) = 4.30, p < .05, \phi = -.10$ ]. In the case of the ought-to L2 self, more people in the prevention-motivated behaviour group mentioned the theme as their ought-to L2 self than did people in the promotion-motivated behaviour group [ $\chi^2(1, N = 454) = 7.79, p < .01, \phi = -.13$ ]. Learners' ideal and ought orientations towards monetary reward were found to be related to promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour. In other words, learners who perceive being wealthy or financially independent as a personal dream are prone to show promotion-motivated behaviour to achieve this goal by actively participating in class activities and looking for extra learning opportunities. On the other hand, if monetary reward is perceived as a responsibility and an expectation of others, learners are prone to adopt prevention-motivated behaviour, for example,

staying focused on lectures and trying not to miss classes. The effect sizes of the group differences were small, and the other thematic categories of the L2 selves did not show significant group differences between the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour. Thus, the chi-square analyses partially supported the construct validity of promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour.

## Discussion

To examine thematic content of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves (RQ1), this study adopted an exploratory approach, and the findings showed the prevalence of a variety of content such as intrapersonal and career themes. It has been assumed that being a proficient L2 speaker is the main source of motivation, and previous measures of the ideal L2 self emphasised the language proficiency aspect (e.g., “I often imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English”; Ryan, 2009, p. 143). However, the L2 learners in this study were more concerned with careers or high income than language-focused activities such as discussing in Korean or fluently conversing with native Korean speakers. The open-ended responses in this study show that language-focused activities made up only a marginal portion of the L2 selves (ideal L2 self: 7.0%; ought-to L2 self: 15.1%). Instead, the career domain was the second most frequent in the ideal L2 self (25.4%), and the most frequent domain in the ought-to L2 self (22.9%). In addition to the frequent thematic categories, many interesting features were found related to cultural practice, especially K-pop, media, and fashion. The example responses included: 1) *I would like to have cosmetic surgery in Korea*, 2) *I would like to meet K-pop idol stars*, 3) *I would like to be a celebrity in Korea*, and 4) *I ought to dress up to look good*. The findings align with those of previous studies showing that K-pop culture is an important aspect of motivation for learning L2 Korean (e.g., Nikitina & Fukuoka, 2019; Phuong & Bac, 2015).

Another interesting theme found was social influence, which appeared from the responses: 1) *I would like to reach high status in society*, 2) *I would like to have social power*, and 3) *I would like to help my country to develop*. An individual's contribution to society was seen as respectable based on collectivistic social values that prevailed in North Vietnam (Phuong-Mai et al., 2005). Social power is a culture-specific motivator found among Vietnamese learners, which has not been widely explored in L2 motivation research. It is worth noting that the career domain also involves socioeconomic power; for example, having a professional job was coded for career, but may be interwoven with reaching a high social status. Combined with monetary reward and career themes, socioeconomic power might be a significant aspect of the L2 selves in the L2 Korean learning context in Vietnam.

Aligned with previous studies of LOTEs (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017), Vietnamese learners of L2 Korean showed strong attachment to the L2 community, that is, the community of speakers from South Korea, and a strong desire for cultural assimilation (e.g., *thinking like Korean, working like Korean*). Unlike Global English, where the concept of L2 community is mostly absent, the attributes of L1 Korean speakers seem to be a significant component of motivation for L2 Korean. The strong sense of connection to the community of L1 Korean speakers may have been attributed to frequent contact and exposure to L1 Korean speakers and their community in Vietnam. It is worth noting that students from the Korean degree programmes typically have internship experience at Korean companies as a part of the curriculum. This unique learning environment may have contributed to forming a strong and vivid image of the L1 Korean speakers' community.

Related to the strong sense of the L2 community, the findings reflect that the ideal L2 self embraces the notion of integrativeness (Gardner, 1985), which has been criticised because it fails

to account for L2 contexts in which the community of the target language speakers is absent (i.e., EFL in Japan). However, given the diversity of L2 learning context, the traditional notion of integrativeness is still relevant and applicable to contemporary L2 motivation research. It should also be noted that the strong integrativeness found in this study is contradictory to previous L2 motivation research in Europe, which revealed plurilingual citizenship or anti-monolingualism as a part of motivation for LOTE learning (e.g., Busse, 2017; Lanvers, 2016, 2017). The different results call attention to cross-cultural and contextual differences. Another notable difference from previous LOTE research was the instrumental value expected from L2 Korean proficiency. It is widely accepted that the instrumental value from LOTE learning is marginal compared to Global English. Consequently, LOTE learning has relatively little social support (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). However, the general trend is not applicable to L2 Korean learning in Vietnam. In the open-ended responses, career and monetary rewards were frequently mentioned, reflecting the accessibility of the instrumental value expected from L2 Korean proficiency. The strong expectation of instrumentality may be the reason for the positive societal view of L2 Korean learning found in a large-scale survey conducted in Vietnam (Huong & Bac, 2014 as cited in Phuong & Bac, 2015). The positive social support for L2 Korean is unique to the context, given that non-English languages are usually marginalised due to little perceived value.

Another important finding from the open-ended responses was elaboration of the L2 selves. The open-ended responses often included concrete images or goals, for example, buying property located in a wealthy neighbourhood (*buy Royal City apartment*) or gaining a certain level certificate from a standardized Korean test (e.g., *C1 level from TOPIK*). The responses were specific and vivid, implying the easy access to the L2 self at present. Not every self-concept is accessible at any given moment; only a portion is active as working self-concept (Henry,

2015). Based on the concept of working self and accessibility of self-concept, the visionary aspect of the ideal L2 self has been emphasised and claimed as one of the conditions that triggers motivated behaviour (Dörnyei, 2009). It was beyond the scope of this study to test the relationship between the degree of elaboration of the L2 selves and motivated behaviour; however, this would be interesting for research in the future.

With respect to the applicability of promotion- and prevention-instrumentality in the L2 Korean contexts in Vietnam (RQ2), the results from the PCA supported the applicability of the concept and measures of promotion- and prevention-instrumentality. An interesting finding is the strong emphasis on prevention-instrumentality. In previous L2 motivation studies in Asian countries, learners showed strong concerns for the ought-to L2 self and external factors such as exam or parents' expectation (Apple et al., 2016). Aligned with this, the emphasis given to the prevention dimension of instrumentality may have been attributed to the intensive Korean learning context in Vietnam. Most of students enter Korean programmes with little or no prior knowledge, but they are required to reach an advanced proficiency level by passing the standardized Korean language test, TOPIK (TOPIK, n.d.). In addition to the test burdens, undergraduates in Vietnam do not choose modules (i.e., courses) or instructors; instead, all students should take compulsory modules following the curriculum set by their departments. Consequently, modules may be demanding requirements, rather than learning opportunities for improving L2 Korean. The high pressure and little autonomy in the learning environment may have influenced the prevention tendency shown in the PCA. The education and language themes are more frequent in the ought-to L2 self than the ideal L2 self, implying that the learners perceive curricular activities and language proficiency as responsibilities and duties.

The promotion and prevention dimensions were also found in L2 motivated behaviour (RQ3). In the results of the PCA on promotion- and prevention-instrumentality, the prevention-motivated behaviour component was shown to have twice the explanatory power as promotion-motivated behaviour, suggesting its prevalence and adoption by L2 Korean learners in Vietnam. L2 learning might have led them to adopt prevention-motivated behaviour, which required learning activities with vigilant local attention such as trying not to miss important points in class and reviewing lectures. Therefore, it can be speculated that demanding course work and high exam pressure might be the reason for the strong prevention-motivated behaviour. The extracted prevention-motivated behaviour component reiterates the need for including the prevention dimension, supporting the claim of the potential bias of including only promotion-oriented items for motivated behaviour (e.g., Papi & Teimouri, 2014; Teimouri, 2017). These behaviour constructs were validated through group-based analysis with the frequent thematic domains of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. Learners with promotion-motivated behaviour tend to perceive monetary reward as a personal goal related to L2 Korean, whereas those who adopt prevention-motivated behaviour are more prone to perceive material values as family- or self-initiated responsibilities.

Despite the important findings, this study is not without its limitations. First, it attempted to localise motivational constructs in the L2 Korean learning context in Vietnam; therefore, generalizability cannot be assumed when applied to other learner populations. Another limitation lies in potential intra-contextual variance. In this study, the questionnaire responses from the learner population were treated as the sum of independent data points. However, it should be noted that the learners were from different universities, classes, and years; thus, the different local contexts might have had varying influences on the shaping of their L2 selves and



motivational tendencies. For the quantitative analysis, the chi-square method was used to illustrate the different types of motivational behaviour (promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviours), but the differences in motivational intensity were not considered. Learners with high promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviours were treated equally to learners with low promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviours. Therefore, the difference in motivational intensity needs to be investigated in future research using a more exploratory statistical technique such as cluster analysis.

### **Conclusion**

This study has many implications for foreign language education in Vietnam. The National Foreign Languages Project Scheme imposed standardised English proficiency upon high school and university graduates. Aligned with this national policy, Korean departments at universities in Vietnam require a standardised proficiency test; thus, students in the study were found to be prevention-oriented and mentioned exam pressure. Due to the effects of the national policy on foreign language education at all levels, more balanced elements of the scheme will motivate foreign language learners with diverse motivational profiles. As shown in this study, learners have different types of motivation tapping into a wide range of life domain; therefore, test-oriented prevention policy would benefit a certain type of learners who are keen to have good marks.

At the institutional level, the responses from the learners provide valuable insights on Korean language teaching approaches and curricula in the context of higher education in Vietnam. As noted above, different types of learners would benefit if motivational strategies were diversified covering K-pop, contemporary culture, living abroad, and working with Koreans as well as academic matters. Moreover, the findings of this study suggest the

importance of integrating Korean business communication and community in the curricula. One of the common responses of the L2 selves was related to careers with Korean companies or institutions in Vietnam; in other words, students envision themselves as career persons in the Korean industry. Business Korean or intercultural communication materials would closely reflect the context and strengthen the future L2 selves.

For future studies, it would be important to further clarify the interrelationships among the L2 selves, promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviours, and other motivational variables. In this study, chi-square analysis was conducted to investigate the relationships between the L2 selves and promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour, but the directional relationships remained unanswered. The scales may be validated through statistical associations with the standard measures of the ideal and ought-to L2 selves. In addition to the chi-square analysis, linear statistical analyses with the previous scale-based L2 selves (e.g., Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009) would be supplementary validation of the promotion- and prevention-motivated behaviour scales. Another interesting area of research would be the promotion and prevention dimensions of the L2 learning process. Since regulatory focus accounts for different types of motivational tendencies, learners with the promotion and prevention orientations may show different learning paths, for example, in their patterns of peer interaction or task engagement in classroom, and such differences may lead to different learning outcomes. The findings of this study imply that the motivation for learning LOTEs and Global English can be noticeably different. More studies with underrepresented learner populations would deepen the understanding of the L2 selves, motivation, and the social influences shaping them, as well as broadening the geographical scope of research.

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Table 1

*Example Responses and Prevalence of Thematic Content of the L2 Selves*

Coding categories	Example responses	Ideal L2 self (%)	Ought-to L2 self (%)
Intrapersonal	<i>To be an intelligent/professional person</i>	38.3	13.8
Interpersonal	<i>Be well-connected to Korean community</i> <i>To marry a Korean man</i>	9.7	Collapsed as other
Career	<i>To work at a Korean company</i>	25.4	22.9
Monetary reward	<i>To get a well-paid job/have a high salary</i> <i>To live in expensive house/apartment in wealthy area</i>	9.2	11.4
Language	<i>To speak/communicate Korean fluently</i>	7.0	15.1
Education	<i>To go to graduate school in Korea</i>	Collapsed in other	11.1
Other	<i>To meet a K-pop celebrity</i> <i>To have social power/influence</i> <i>To help my country to develop</i>	10.4	25.7

Note: Percentages were calculated based on the total frequency of each theme divided by the total frequency of all themes for the ideal L2 self and ought-to L2 self, respectively.

Table 2

*L2 Promotion- and Prevention-Instrumentality*

	Component 1 Prevention	Component 2 Promotion
Components correlation	.31	
Internal consistency	$\alpha = .89$	$\alpha = .80$
I have to study Korean because I don't want to get a poor grade in my Korean course.	.89	
I have to study Korean because I don't want people around me (friends, teachers, parents) to think of me as a weak student.	.85	
I have to study Korean because I don't want to get a poor score on a Korean proficiency test.	.85	
I have to study Korean because I would feel ashamed if I got bad grades in Korean tests.	.82	
I have to study Korean because I cannot graduate without passing the Korean test.	.78	
I have to study Korean; otherwise my parents will be disappointed.	.62	
Learning Korean is very important to be successful in my career.		.77
Studying Korean is important because the things I want to do in future require me to use Korean.		.76
Studying Korean is important because with Korean I can work internationally.		.74
Studying Korean is important because I can travel around.		.72
Studying Korean is important because I am planning to study abroad.		.66
Studying Korean is important because I will need it for future career.		.62

Table 3

*L2 Promotion- and Prevention-Motivated Behaviour*

	Component 1	Component 2
	Prevention	Promotion
Components correlation	.49	
Internal consistency	$\alpha = .78$	$\alpha = .77$
I try not to miss important points in Korean class.	.92	
I try to listen very carefully to lectures in Korean class.	.83	
I try not to disappoint my teacher and parents.	.68	
At home I try to review lectures to thoroughly understand it.	.63	
I try to practice Korean outside of school.		.90
I try to participate in group discussions or role plays in Korean class		.75
I try to find extra opportunities to learn Korean.		.69
I try to volunteer in Korean class.		.67

Figure 1

*Interrelationships Between the L2 Selves and Regulatory Focus*

