

ABSTRACT

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Key Words: SECOND LANGUAGE MOTIVATIONAL SELF-SYSTEM, ENGLISH PROFICIENCY, GENDER DIFFERENCE, CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Thesis Title: A STUDY OF SECOND LANGUAGE MOTIVATIONAL SELF-SYSTEM, ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND GENDER DIFFERENCE OF CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN TIANJIN UNIVERSITY, CHINA

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This study has three objectives: 1) To explore the levels of ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience of L2MSS of Chinese graduate students in China. 2) To examine the relationship between the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience of L2MSS and English proficiency of Chinese graduate students in China. 3) To explore whether there will be any differences among ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience of L2MSS between male and female Chinese graduate students in China.

This study took the form of an explanatory mixed-methods research design. The purposive sampling technique was selected for data collection from the 354 postgraduate students using questionnaires. The convenience sampling technique was employed for semi-structured interviews of 10 postgraduate students. The questionnaire consists of two parts: participants' necessary background information and 21 different items of the three components of L2MSS.

The research findings of the first research objective showed that the level of ideal L2 self among graduate students was high ($M=3.71$, $SD=0.08$), the level of ought-to L2 self was moderate ($M=3.20$, $SD=0.98$), and the level of the L2 learning experience was high ($M=3.50$,

SD=0.88). The qualitative findings of the first research question were classified into six themes which are 1) Learning English driven by future career; 2) Learning English for communication needs; 3) Entertainment as a motivator for self-study; 4) Learning English to pass examinations or get better grades; 5) Learning English to meet other's expectation; 6)The positive impact of learning context. The research findings of the second research objective revealed a positive relationship ($p < 0.01$) between the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, L2 learning experience, and English proficiency of Chinese graduate students. The results of the third research objective indicated significant differences between the ideal L2 self, ought-to L2 self, and L2 learning experience perceived by male and female postgraduate students at Tianjin Normal University, China ($p=0.00$). The three L2MSS components of the female students were higher than those of the male students. Moreover, the qualitative data of research questions 2 and 3 were classified into five themes there are 1) The positive influence of self desires on English Learning motivation; 2) Learning English has positive impacts on future career and communication; 3) Motivation can be improved by entertainment self-study; 4)The influences of the surroundings on English learning; 5) English learning can be motivated by positive learning context.

The findings provided empirical data that could give graduate students appropriate support to inspire their motivation toward English language learning. Furthermore, the findings are helpful to attract more educators and researchers to pay attention to second language acquisition in the Chinese educational context.