

The L2 Motivational Self System and Religious Interest among Saudi Military Cadets: A Structural Equation Modelling Approach

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Abstract

This study surveyed the English language learning motivation of 384 Saudi military cadets. The researcher applied structural equation modelling to analyse how a set of motivational factors interact to shape motivation to learn English in this under-researched context. The study found that language learning effort was determined by the students' attitudes towards the language learning process as well as their Ought-to L2 Self. However, the Ideal L2 Self also contributed to the language learning effort indirectly being mediated by the students' attitudes towards language learning. In addition, the influence of students' parents was salient as parental encouragement contributed to their Ought-to L2 self as well as their language learning attitudes. Finally, the students' perception of the benefits of learning English for religious purposes (religious interest) contributed to the enjoyment they derived from the process of language learning, which in turn impacted on the effort they invested in their language learning.

Keywords: Motivation, L2 motivational Self System, Language Learning Attitudes, Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, Religious Interest

1. Introduction

Essentially, research into motivation attempts to explain why an individual makes specific choices, engages in action, expends effort and persists in action (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). For decades, these very simple questions have generated a great deal of research in the field of L2 motivation. For example, Gardner & Lambert (1959) were the pioneers in investigating the relationship between motivation and L2 learning in the bilingual (Anglophone and Francophone) Canadian context. Gardner (1985) believes that L2 and learner attitudes towards this language and its speakers (the L2 community) influence the learner's success in L2 acquisition. He developed a socio-educational model with integrative motivation as its main concept. This model suggests that integrative motivation, language aptitude and various other factors influence language achievement (Dörnyei, 2005).

Since the 1960s L2 motivation research has gone through a series of phases, such as the social psychological phase (1959-1990), the cognitive-situated phase (during the 1990s), and the process-oriented phase (turn of the century) (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Scholars like Dörnyei (1990), Norton (2000), Yashima (2002), and Lamb (2004) were sceptical about the application of the integrativeness notion in a contemporary globalised world where English as a lingua franca is widely accepted and the ownership of English is no longer attached to a specific target community. This led to a new development in L2 motivation research ushering in what is known as the "socio-dynamic phase" which is characterised by "a concern with the situated complexity of the L2 motivation process and its organic development in dynamic interaction with a multiplicity of internal, social and contextual factors" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 72). One of the main conceptual approaches of the socio-dynamic phase is the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005).

The L2 Motivational Self System has proved its validity in various EFL contexts including Hungary (Csizér & Kormos, 2009), Japan, China, and Iran (Papi, 2010; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009; You, Dörnyei, & Csizér, 2016), Chile (Kormos, Kiddle, & Csizér, 2011), Indonesia (Lamb, 2012), Pakistan (Islam, Lamb, & Chambers, 2013), and Saudi Arabia (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017). Using the L2 Motivational Self System as the main theoretical framework, this study aims to investigate how a set of motivational factors interact to shape motivation to learn English in an under-researched context: cadets from the Saudi King Abdulaziz Military Academy, hereafter

KAMA. This study attempts to determine the causal relationship among these factors themselves as well as with the reported intended learning effort (i.e., the criterion measure). In particular, this study examines the relationship between a newly developed motivational factor “Religious Interest” (Alqahtani, 2017) and the criterion measure. For this purpose, the researcher applied structural equation modelling (SEM) to evaluate a hypothesised motivational model representing the motivation to learn English of the Saudi military cadets (see Figure 1).

2. Literature Review

2.1 The L2 Motivational Self System

Drawing on two main theories from motivational psychology “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986) and “self-discrepancy” (Higgins, 1987), proposed a tripartite model, the “L2 Motivational Self System”, consisting of Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self represents the vision that L2 learners have of the future competent and/or successful L2 user that they want to be. Thus, the Ideal L2 Self includes the aspirations and hopes that motivate the L2 learners to put more effort into attempting to reduce the discrepancy between their actual and ideal selves. The second constituent of the L2 Motivational Self System is the Ought-to L2 Self. This refers to the attributes that L2 learners believe they ought to have in order to meet the expectations and wishes of significant others (for example, parents) and/or avoid unwanted outcomes (for example, failing an exam); therefore, the Ought-to L2 Self is more extrinsic (less internalised) in nature. Dörnyei (2009, p. 31) confirms that “figures prove that traditionally conceived “instrumental motivation” can be divided into two distinct types: promotional and preventional” that relate to the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self, respectively. The third component, the L2 Learning Experience, concerns “situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 106). Examples of L2 Learning Experiences are the curriculum, the impact of the L2 teacher, the experience of success, and the peer group.

A number of studies have found that the Ideal L2 Self is the most significant construct of the L2 Motivational Self System for predicting L2 learners’ intended learning effort (i.e., the criterion measure) (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; Taguchi et al., 2009). In some cases it explained more than 40% of the variance in the criterion measure, which is “an exceptionally high figure in motivation studies” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 87). In their comparative study conducted in Japan, China, and Iran, Taguchi et al. (2009) found that the promotion-focused aspects of instrumentality contribute directly to the Ideal L2 Self. In addition, studies like (Csizér & Kormos, 2009) and (Kormos et al., 2011) found that the other two constructs (i.e., the Ought-to L2 Self and the L2 Learning Experiences) have a direct effect on the Ideal L2 Self.

On the other hand, it has been found that the Ought-to L2 Self has less influence on learners’ L2 learning effort (Kormos et al., 2011; Lamb, 2012). Consequently, Kormos et al. (2011) and Taguchi et al. (2009) have suggested that the Ought-to L2 Self might be expected to play a more central role in Asian and Arab contexts “where family expectations are powerful motives” (Dörnyei, Csizér, & Németh, 2006, p. 93). Two main variables have been found to affect the Ought-to L2 Self: instrumentality-prevention (Taguchi et al., 2009) and parental encouragement (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; Taguchi et al., 2009). Therefore, Csizér and Kormos (2009) have come to the conclusion that the Ought-to L2 Self is entirely socially constructed.

Like the Ideal L2 Self, the L2 Learning Experience has been found to have a significant impact on learners’ L2 learning effort. In some studies, the L2 Learning Experience was found to contribute more than the Ideal L2 Self to learners’ L2 learning effort (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Islam et al., 2013; Lamb, 2012). Previous studies have used various terms interchangeably to refer to this construct of the L2 Motivational Self System or to part of it; for example, “Language Learning Attitudes” (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017), “Attitudes to L2 Learning” (You et al., 2016), “Attitudes to Learning English” (Islam et al., 2013; Taguchi et al., 2009), and “L2 Learning Attitude” (Kormos et al., 2011). It has been found that a number of variables have a direct effect on Language Learning Attitudes such as the Ideal L2 Self (Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009), the Ought-to L2 Self (Papi, 2010), and Parental Encouragement (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011).

2.2 Saudi Arabian Culture

It is important to shed some light on Saudi Arabia and its culture in order to provide a better understanding of the influence of a number of latent variables such as the Ought-to L2 Self, Parental Encouragement and Religious Interest. Saudi Arabia is a conservative Islamic, Arabic-speaking country that hosts the two holiest cities in Islam, Makkah and Medina. As a conservative country, many cultural practices can be attributed to “two inter-related main factors: the influence of religion, and the influence of tribal and family traditions” (Mellahi & Wood, 2001, p. 143). In addition, “most tribal and family values in Saudi Arabia are a product of Islamic teachings” (ibid.). Islam is regarded as the major force “in determining the social norms, patterns, traditions, obligations, privileges

and practices of society” there (Al-Saggaf, 2004, p. 1).

Therefore, any acceptable practice/action should follow Islamic principles first, then societal conventions. Saudi culture is “collectivist” as it “encourages strong links among members of a social group, who subordinate personal needs for the good of the group, or choose goals which do not threaten group harmony” (Caldwell-Harris & Ayçiçeği, 2006, p. 332). The collective nature of interpersonal relationships in Saudi society gives “minimal opportunities for Self-recognition” (Papi, 2010) as there is not much possibility for the younger generation to express their own views, especially those that may challenge the views of members of the older generation as they are regarded as being more experienced and possessing wisdom that youth do not have. Hence, significant others (for example, parents and senior members of the family) have a huge impact on the personal decisions and choices of their offspring.

2.3 Parental Encouragement

Parental encouragement refers to the social impact of the immediate learning environment, the so-called “civil sphere”. The impact that parents have on their children’s motivation is of considerable importance as it forms “an important constituent of the motivational complex” (Dörnyei et al., 2006, p. 14). In parallel with contemporary perspectives on the dynamic relationship between context and motivation, “current analyses of family and parental influence draw attention to the bidirectional nature of the socialisation process between parents and children, as well as interactions with multiple socio-contextual forces” (Pomerantz, Grolnick, & Price, 2007, cited in Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 30).

A number of previous studies have highlighted the important role that parental encouragement plays in forming and sustaining students’ L2 learning motivation. For example, Csizér & Kormos (2009) found that parental encouragement was one of the main determinants of L2 learners’ self-concept as it positively contributed to the formation of the Ought-to L2 Self. Their study also showed that parental encouragement has an effect on students’ attitudes to English as an international language. In a previous study, Kormos & Csizér (2007) found that Hungarian L2 learners received help and encouragement from their parents regardless of their parents’ ability to speak English on the basis of their belief in the importance that acquiring English had for their children. Parents’ influence on their children’s L2 motivation is even stronger in Asian and Arab cultures, as previous L2 motivation studies have revealed (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017; Islam et al., 2013; Lamb, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009).

2.4 Religious Interest

This latent variable, which has been proposed recently by Alqahtani (2017), was found to have an impact on the motivation to learn English of Saudi respondents. It represents the perception of Saudi L2 learners of the benefits of learning English as a means of presenting a positive image of Islam to the international community. Religious interest can be regarded as a long-term and distal goal in language learning, which can be characterised as instrumental. This underscores the crucial role of English as an international language (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2005) in the Saudi context.

In addition to its motivational connotation, the notion of interest involves “a salient cognitive aspect—the curiosity in and engagement with a specific domain—as well as a prominent affective dimension concerning the joy associated with this engagement” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 93). Hidi and Renninger (2006) view interest as “an outcome of the interaction between a person and a particular content”, therefore, “the potential for interest is in the person but the content and the environment define the direction of interest and contribute to its development” (Hidi & Renninger, 2006, p. 112). Interest may change over time based on issues such as feelings, stored knowledge, and stored values, which makes interest “experienced-based, and is not necessarily age-related” (Renninger, 2009). Since media coverage of the international war on terrorism and political rhetorical has done much to promote negative images of Islam, Alqahtani’s (2017) study has revealed that religious interest affects Saudi students’ motivation to learn English. Nevertheless, religious interest may not be relevant to the Saudi learners’ motivation to learn English if Islam is not being represented negatively.

2.5 The Criterion Measure: Intended Learning Effort

In order to “draw more meaningful inferences about the impact of various motives it is more appropriate to use some sort of a behavioural measure as the criterion/dependent variable” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 200). They added that “motivated learners will demonstrate more effort and persistence in their task behaviour” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 201). Therefore, this study used “intended learning effort” as the criterion measure which refers to participants’ perceptions of the effort they put into their English learning. Intended learning effort has been included as a criterion measure in a number of recent L2 motivation studies including (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017; Islam et al., 2013; Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009).

3. Method

3.1 The Hypothesised Model

Based on previous research in the field of L2 motivation (mentioned above) the hypothetical model for this study is formed of eight latent variables (see Figure 1). In accordance with previous studies using similar instruments (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017; Islam et al., 2013; Kormos et al., 2011; Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009) the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System (Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and Language Learning Attitudes) were linked to the intended learning effort (i.e., the criterion measure). In addition, as been found in previous studies (Alqahtani, 2017; Islam et al., 2013; Taguchi et al., 2009) two types of instrumentality (promotion and prevention) were hypothesized to affect the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self, respectively. Finally, the future L2 selves (both the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self) of the Saudi L2 learners were hypothesized to affect their attitudes towards learning English. This assumption is supported by studies that have been conducted in similar Asian contexts including Saudi Arabia, Iran, Japan, China, and Pakistan (Alqahtani, 2017; Islam et al., 2013; Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009).

In a conservative collective environment like Saudi society parental encouragement was hypothesised to be of considerable importance. Therefore, parental encouragement was linked with the Ideal L2 Self on the basis that Papi (2010, p. 471) proposed that the influence of parents and significant others in collective societies might affect the constituent of the ideal selves of the youths, forming “what is known as a social ideal self”. Furthermore, in previous studies (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; Taguchi et al., 2009) there is a consensus that parental encouragement directly affects the Ought-to L2 Self; therefore, it was hypothesised that parental encouragement would contribute to the Ought-to L2 Self. The new proposed latent variable “Religious Interest” was regarded as an instrumental language learning goal; therefore, it was linked to the Ought-to L2 Self that supposedly contains extrinsic motivational forces (Kormos et al., 2011).

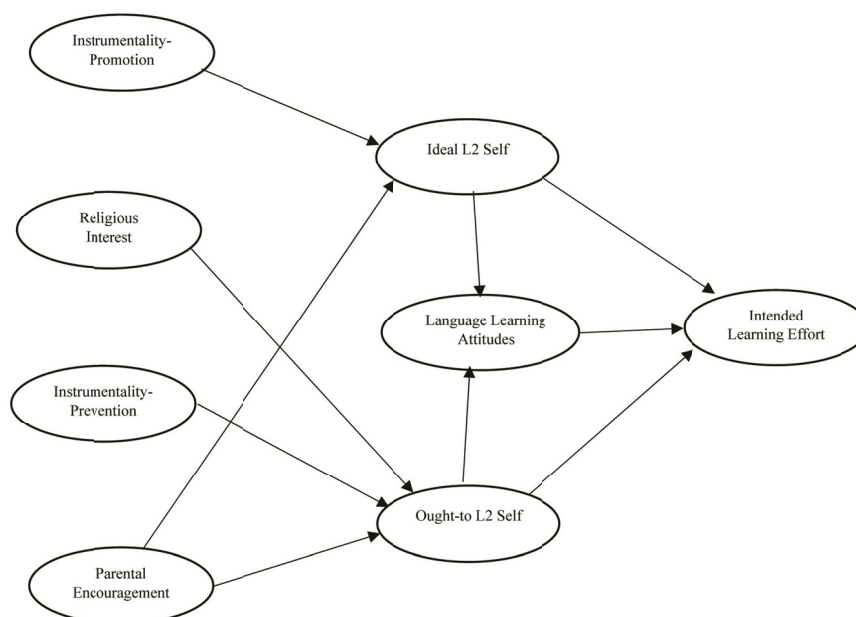


Figure 1. Schematic representation of the initially tested model for the sample

3.2 Participants

The population of the study consisted of KAMA cadets. Saudi young men who have successfully completed their high school studies are eligible to join KAMA where they spend three years (elementary, intermediate and final) studying a variety of subjects in two major domains: military and civilian. English forms part of civilian studies and all cadets must study this throughout all six terms of their course at KAMA. After successful completion of their studies, they graduate as lieutenants with a bachelor's degree in military sciences. Ten colleagues volunteered to administer the questionnaires, distributing them among their students and then collecting in the completed questionnaires. Some 384 (19%) of the 1988 cadets at KAMA participated in the study, more than half of them being from the intermediate level. See Table 1 for details.

Table 1. Participants of the study

LEVEL	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
Elementary	138 (36%)
Intermediate	208 (54%)
Final	38 (10%)
TOTAL=384 (100%)	

The average age of participants was 18.75.

3.3 Instrument

This study used a five-point Likert scale questionnaire with each response being allocated a score ranging from one to five (strongly disagree = 1 and strongly agree = 5). The questionnaire items in this study were adapted from a number of recent studies that investigated learners' L2 motivation in various EFL contexts; for example, Saudi Arabia (Alqahtani, 2015, 2017), Pakistan (Islam et al., 2013), and Japan, China, and Iran (Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009).

A number of suitably qualified lecturers at KAMA were asked to assess the wording, comprehensibility and suitability of the questionnaire items. Some items were reworded or eliminated on the basis of their responses. The questionnaire was then piloted with the help of 43 cadets. Following analysis of the data obtained any necessary changes were made.

The final version of the questionnaire consists of 43 items representing 8 variables. After being appropriately briefed, staff volunteers administered the questionnaires and respondents were assured about anonymity before the questionnaires were distributed. A brief summary of the definitions of the latent motivational concepts that the questionnaire intended to measure with sample items is given below:

- *Parental encouragement*: measures the extent to which the parents of participants support and encourage their offspring's English learning. Example: My parents encourage me to study English.
- *Ideal L2 Self*: investigates the imagined personally-desired self of respondents as future L2 users. Example: Whenever I think of my future career, I imagine myself being able to use English.
- *Ought-to L2 Self*: represents "the imagined future English-using selves" of participants as demanded or expected by their significant others. Example: I believe that learning English is necessary to me because people surrounding me expect me to do so.
- *Language Learning Attitudes*: investigates whether respondents enjoy the experience of English learning. Example: I really enjoy learning English.
- *Intended learning effort*: is used as the criterion measure to determine respondents' perceptions of the effort they put into their English learning. Example: I am working hard at learning English.
- *Instrumentality promotion*: is associated with participants' specific practical aspirations and hopes for their future. Example: I think knowing English would help me to become a more educated person.
- *Instrumentality prevention*: concerns respondents' duties, obligations, and fears in the future. Example: I have to learn English because without passing the English course I cannot graduate.
- *Religious interest*: Measures participants' perceptions of the benefits of learning English for presenting a positive image of Islam to the international community. Example: As a Muslim, I think the knowledge of English would help me to represent Islam to the international community in a better way.

3.4 Data Analysis

In order to prepare the collected data as a usable input for running the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis using Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS) version 21.0, they were first submitted to SPSS 20.0. Prior to starting data analysis, a number of checks were run to spot errors and outliers following Dörnyei's (2007) instructions for conducting such probes, which resulted in eliminating three questionnaires from the sample (less than 0.8%); therefore, such a low proportion was regarded acceptable. Then a reliability analysis was conducted for the eight variables, which showed that all the variables attained internal consistency as they obtained acceptable Cronbach's alpha values (i.e., above .60). This meets the standards for social sciences research (Pallant, 2010).

The general SEM model is comprised of two sub-models, the measurement model and the structural model (Byrne, 2009). The estimation of parameters in this study was based on the maximum likelihood method. Based

on theoretical considerations outlined in the above literature review, the measurement model was drawn up first. Following this, the various latent variables were combined into a full structural model. In order to evaluate the overall model fit, the author used the indices that are most frequently advised in the SEM literature (Byrne, 2009; Tseng, Dörnyei, & Schmidt, 2006). Besides chi-square (CMIN) and CMIN/df (chi-square divided by the degrees of freedom) statistics, additional indices were reported: goodness of fit index (GFI) (Hu & Bentler, 1999), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) (Tseng et al., 2006), incremental fit index (IFI) (Tseng et al., 2006), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Fan, Thomson, & Wang, 1999; Hu & Bentler, 1999).

4. Results

Figure 2 contains the schematic representation of the final model with the standardized estimates for the sample studied, while Table 2 presents various joint goodness of fit measures for the final model. Chi-square is considered to be one of the most important indices, and should not be significant. Nevertheless, “it has an inherent bias against sample sizes that are larger than 200” (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004, p. 100). Therefore, getting a significant chi-square was inevitable. A conventional way of dealing with this effect on the chi-square statistics is looking at other fit indices (e.g., CMIN/df, GFI, AGFI, IFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA), and these showed very good levels. Hence, it can be concluded that the final version of this model was an acceptable representation of our dataset concerning the measured variables.

It can be seen from Table 2 that the hypothetical model provided acceptable joint model-data fit indices for the sample. However, four relations turned out to be not significant for the sample (Ideal L2 Self → Intended Learning Effort, Ought-to L2 Self → Language Learning Attitudes, Parental Encouragement → Ideal L2 Self, and Religious Interest → Ought-to L2 Self); therefore, these paths were removed from the initial model. In addition, two new paths were included in the model (Parental Encouragement → Language Learning Attitudes and Religious Interest → Language Learning Attitudes). Thus, the final model contains eight significant relationships.

Table 2. Selected fit measures for the final model

Index	Current level	Accepted level
CMIN	p < .001	p > .05
CMIN/df	1.82	< 3
GFI	.92	> .90
AGFI	.90	> .90
IFI	.94	> .90
CFI	.95	> .90
TLI	.93	> .90
RMSEA	.04	< .05

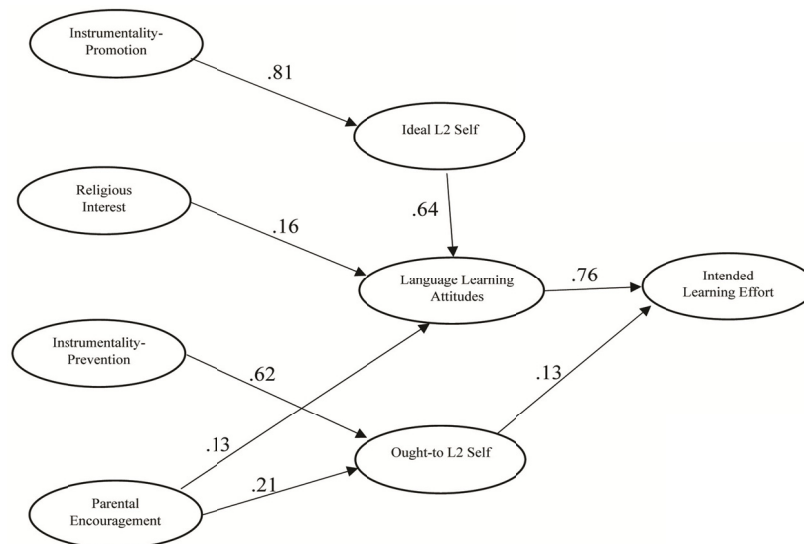


Figure 2. The final model with standardised estimates

5. Discussion

Taking a closer look at the impact of the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System (the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self, and the Language Learning Attitudes) on the intended learning effort, it can be seen that the three constructs of the L2 Motivational Self System affected the intended learning effort either directly or indirectly. Similar to the findings of the previous studies (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009) Language Learning Attitudes had the highest impact on the reported intended learning effort of the Saudi learners. The significant influence that the Language Learning Attitudes had might be due to the fact that in the Saudi educational context English is regarded as just another subject either at school or university level. Therefore, the learning experience that the students have in the classroom highly influences the effort they invest in their L2 learning. A number of factors such as teachers, tasks, and teaching materials exert a significant impact on what learning experiences students go through, which in turn affect the effort they invest in language learning (Nikolov, 1999). This lends more support to Dörnyei's (2001) view that it is the teacher's responsibility to motivate students.

In addition, the Ought-to L2 Self contributed to the reported English learning effort of the investigated sample, which was in line with the findings of a number of previous studies conducted in other Asian contexts such as Japan, China, and Iran (Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009). These findings underscore the significant impact of the collective nature of Asian societies, including Saudi society, where family expectations serve as a powerful source of motivation, which in turn lends more support to the views of a number of L2 motivation scholars such as Dörnyei et al. (2006) and Kormos et al. (2011). Furthermore, it is worth mentioning that as is the case in North-Asian contexts such as China and Japan (Taguchi et al., 2009), English language education in Saudi Arabia is highly exam-oriented (Al-Mohanna, 2010; AlAhmadi, 2007; Alqahtani, 2015), which places great pressure on Saudi L2 learners and therefore affects their effort and persistence in English language learning.

However, the Ideal L2 Self indirectly contributed to the reported intended learning effort of the investigated sample by impacting on their attitudes towards the L2 learning environment. This finding is contrary to those of previous studies that reported that the Ideal L2 Self contributed directly to the intended learning effort (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; Papi, 2010; Taguchi et al., 2009). The absence of the direct effect of the Ideal L2 Self on the participants' intended learning effort might suggest that due to the collective nature of the Saudi society that gives minimal opportunities for Self-recognition, the investigated sample might not have had the chance to create a more concrete vision of themselves as future English users. Furthermore, the vast majority of the Saudi students have not had the chance to make contact with speakers of English (Alqahtani, 2015), and therefore, it is possible that they do not yet perceive the importance of being English users in the future.

As expected, the study found a significant link between the future self-guides (the Ideal L2 self and the Ought-to L2 self) and the two types of instrumentality (promotion and prevention). This lends more support to Dörnyei (2009, p. 31) assertion that "traditionally conceived "instrumental motivation" can be divided into two distinct types: promotional and preventional" that relate to the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self. Similar results were found in previous studies; for example, Alqahtani (2017), Islam et al. (2013), and Taguchi et al. (2009). In addition, the effect of instrumentality-promotion and instrumentality-prevention on the intended learning effort was indirect, being mediated by the Ideal L2 Self and the Ought-to L2 Self, respectively, which was in line with the results found in other Asian contexts such as Japan, China, and Iran (Taguchi et al., 2009). This might suggest that when the Saudi L2 learners started learning English they were focusing on a desired end-state like a future career (instrumental motives with a promotion focus) or avoiding a feared end-state like failing an exam or disappointing one's parents (instrumental motives with a prevention focus). This might have helped them to establish future L2 selves (Ideal L2 and Ought-to L2 selves), which in turn encouraged them to invest time and effort in their L2 learning.

Parental encouragement positively contributed to participants' Ought-to L2 Self, which was in line with the findings of previous studies conducted on various continents including Europe, South America, and Asia (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011; Taguchi et al., 2009). This indicates that the Ought-to L2 Self is "entirely socially constructed", meaning that students' views concerning "what attributes they should possess to meet the expectations of their environment are formed by the attitudes of their immediate learning environment" (Csizér & Kormos, 2009, p. 107). In addition, the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) asserts that an individual's ought-to self is primarily shaped by their significant others. In the Saudi setting, the environmental influences regarding English language learning originate primarily from students' parents. The influence of Saudi parents on their offspring was salient in interviews previously conducted with Saudi language learners at same age as the population of this study (Alqahtani, 2015) with Saudi language learners reporting that regardless of their parents' own ability to speak English they were keen that their children successfully acquired English. Therefore, Saudi

parents provide their children with a great amount of support and encouragement to learn English.

Parental encouragement also contributed to language learning attitudes, which was in line with the findings of a number of studies conducted in various contexts including Hungary and Chile (Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Kormos et al., 2011). The influence of parental encouragement on students' language learning attitudes might have reflected views held by their parents that education is highly valued. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the vast majority of the Saudi students live at home with their parents until they secure a job and get married; some continue to live at home even after marriage. This means a constant influence of parental expectations and values.

The model shows that religion interest has an indirect effect on the effort and persistence that the students invest in language learning with the mediation of their attitudes towards language learning. The impact of religion interest on the effort invested in language learning lends more support to the findings of a previous study conducted in Saudi Arabia (Alqahtani, 2017). In addition, the influence that religion (Islam) has on attitudes towards learning English in Muslim countries has been mentioned by a number of researchers. For example, Al-Haq and Al-Masaeid (2009, p. 283) found that Jordanian students were motivated to learn English in order to spread "the true teachings of Islam". Similarly, their Saudi counterparts invest in learning English in order to enhance their national identity and religious commitment as they view it as "a religious and a national duty" (Al-Haq & Smadi, 1996, p. 307). Since media coverage of the international war on terrorism and political rhetorical has done much to promote negative images of Islam, Saudi L2 learners are likely to consider learning English as an obligation in order to restore "the health and reputation of their religion as one of tolerance and compassion" (Alqahtani, 2017, p. 170). The commitment of Saudi learners towards their religion is likely to generate attitudes that are favourable towards the language learning process, which may, in turn, induce greater levels of effort and persistence. Finally, the responsibility which the Saudi students felt for representing the true image of Islam to the international community of which they consider themselves to be members, reflects their intention to use English as a lingua franca to communicate with other people in the world. Such contact underscores the crucial role of English as an international language in today's globalised world (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2005).

6. Conclusion

Using SEM, this study investigated the internal structure of the motivation to learn English of a group of Saudi military cadets from KAMA. Our model showed that language learning effort was partly determined by the students' attitudes towards the language learning process. This suggests that the positive learning experiences that the students gain in the classroom greatly affect their effort and persistence in language learning, which underscores the significance of motivational teaching practices (Dörnyei, 2001). The language learning effort was also determined by the Ought-to L2 Self which may highlight the influence of other socio-educational factors in the Saudi education system including educational requirements (mainly exams) and pressure to compete with peers. Factors of this kind focus on student achievement and make English highly exam-oriented. Nevertheless, the Ideal L2 Self contributed to language learning effort indirectly with the mediation of students' attitudes towards language learning. This could be due to the fact that the students do not yet perceive the importance of being future English users due to the lack of contact with speakers of English.

In addition, the model showed that parental encouragement contributed to students' Ought-to L2 self as well as their language learning attitudes. This may reflect the substantial influence that parents have on their children in a conservative and collective society like that of Saudi Arabia. Last but not least, the model revealed that religious interest contributed to students' language learning attitudes. The Saudi students may have learned English (the international language) based on their sense of commitment towards their religion (Islam) in order to be able to refute the distorted image of Islam that has been created by media coverage of current political events and the international war on terrorism. This in turn may have helped them to enjoy their language learning experience and invest time and effort in their L2 learning.

This study is not without its limitations. Since KAMA does admit males, this study focused exclusively on young male Saudi military cadets. This could have affected the results of the study as gender may possibly have influenced the internal structure of L2 motivation. Therefore, it would be useful to investigate whether a study examining language learning motivation within a different learning environment such as a university that includes a representative mix of male and female participants, would yield different results.

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